

Moving Forward

As we move forward by shedding light on predatory behavior in the fellowship, there are sure to be difficult discussions ahead. This is uncharted territory full of unanswered questions and we must navigate it together. This is how we grow as a fellowship. One important area of uncertainty is how we handle reports of harassment, abuse, or threatening behavior. Our collective experience is usually sufficient for dealing with the issues in our groups, but we are not professionals. There may be times when we should suggest that a fellow member seek outside help from a mental health professional or, in extreme cases, law enforcement. These suggestions are meant to help groups establish and maintain an atmosphere of recovery. This information is not meant to give groups authority to attempt to control other NA members. Keeping our unity and primary purpose as our focus will better allow us to resolve any potential problems or challenges.

(Disruptive & and Violent Behavior service pamphlet)

Spirituality in Action

There is a growing number of us, who want to make a difference and become part of the solution. It's especially important, now more than ever, for us to organize by holding learning days, workshops, speaker jams, conventions, conferences, and other forums that feature speakers and topics that address **predatory behavior** in the fellowship. We should try to seek out those individuals, groups, areas, and regions who have already been working diligently to make progress. Discussing this topic openly doesn't cast Narcotics Anonymous in a negative light, but instead demonstrates our honesty, courage, and willingness to apply spiritual principles to a problem that has been affecting NA members for too long. As we look toward the future, we should always be concerned with the safety, protection, and recovery of all our members, especially newcomers, young people, and other vulnerable addicts. We are not defined by how we treat our most experienced members, but by the actions we take to ensure the recovery of the addicts who need us most. Breaking the silence on this topic is a spiritual act of love, faith, and courage that has the power to help our fellowship **right now** and in the **future**.

ADDRESSING: Predatory Behavior

This pamphlet should be used by members, groups and sub-committees as a resource rather than being read in an NA meeting.

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WWCANA



What is Predatory Behavior?

Understanding predatory behavior requires one to look beyond individual acts of misconduct and toward the institutional nature of sexism and the ways it has granted dominance to men over the course of history. While it's true that men experience sexual misconduct too, most cases involve women. This is no less true in Narcotics Anonymous. These issues have always been prevalent in NA; partly because we are a fellowship of men and women who do not exist in a social vacuum. In other words, the problems in Narcotics Anonymous are often a reflection of the problems in society.

Other forms of Predatory Behavior:

- Financial (Borrowing Money, Pyramid Schemes).
- Endorsing outside enterprises
- Selling (Products)
- Bullying
- Manipulation

“Mostly we know when we are doing something wrong, taking advantage of someone who is vulnerable, being controlling, deceptive, or abusive—and we have a responsibility to ourselves as well as to the other person to stop it.”

Living Clean: The Journey Continues, Relationships

Responsibility & Accountability

Narcotics Anonymous doesn't enforce rules or regulate behavior, but a safe atmosphere is integral to fulfilling our primary purpose of carrying the message. If any member is harassed, threatened, or abused; our primary purpose is in jeopardy. When someone feels physically or emotionally unsafe due to the behavior of another NA member, they may be unable or unwilling to remain in the meeting or come back again. This situation prevents the member from hearing the message, participating in their recovery, and benefiting from the program and fellowship. Predatory behavior threatens the life of the addict and the survival of the fellowship. When we remember that, *“we differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery”*. It seems inevitable that some members will interfere with the recovery of others. There are times, however, when it is necessary for members to intervene in predatory behavior.

At the group level, experienced members are responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of recovery. This could mean.....

- Taking responsibility for ourselves and the members of our own sex who are acting in predatory or inappropriate ways.
- Ensuring newcomers don't get surrounded by members of the opposite sex before or after the meeting.
- Understanding regardless of what the victim says, does or wears, nothing justifies their mistreatment or abuse.
- We can speak with our fellow members about appropriate behavior and treatment of other NA members.
- We can model spiritual principles and demonstrate what it means to live the program.
- When this kind of atmosphere is developed in our groups, we can redefine the culture of Narcotics Anonymous one meeting at a time.

“In Narcotics Anonymous, we are concerned with protecting ourselves from ourselves.”

Basic Text, Tradition Two

What is the Safety Statement?

One practical step that groups might take to address predatory behavior is to implement the “Safety Statement” into their format. This can be integrated into the opening reports of trusted servants or included as a separate reading.

Safety Statement

We do not tolerate any harassment, threats, bullying or disturbing behavior before, during, and after our meetings. This includes unwelcome sexual and romantic advances towards members, especially newcomers. Our meetings are for sharing NA recovery. It is the responsibility of all group members to help maintain an atmosphere in which every addict is safe to recover. If you feel harassed or threatened, share your concerns with the meeting leader or a trusted servant.

Adapted from IP #29: An Introduction to NA Meetings