**Sexual and Gender identity in Recovery**

In this pamphlet, we share our experience, strength, and hope on how we, as recovering addicts from the *rainbow community*, have dealt with some of the issues that have concerned us. How do I navigate life in the *rainbow community* while in recovery? Our intention is to show that Narcotics Anonymous also offers a program for people from the *rainbow community* to find a new way of life, free from drugs use. We hope you give the program a chance, that you find a sense of belonging, and that you keep coming back — because you are worth it!

**(Self) Acceptance**

Most of us came into the rooms of NA in desperation. We had created a certain image in an attempt to meet the expectations of others. Often, we wanted to belong somewhere, sought validation outside ourselves, or led a double life. Many of us also felt guilt and shame for the things we had done and the lies we had told. Some of us lived with trauma. After choosing to get clean and start our recovery journey, we noticed a spiritual void that we had previously filled with drugs, often combined with other addictive behaviors like dating and/or sex. We felt confused about our personal (sexual) identity and wondered who we truly were. This personal process can often lead to significant inner confusion and fear of rejection by those around us. Soon, we realize that we are not alone. We find others with whom we can share our personal

stories in confidence and a sponsor who guides us through the recovery process of the Twelve Steps. We learn to be courageous, vulnerable, and, above all, honest. Ultimately, we come to know and accept our true identity.

**Rainbow community**

For many of us, the *rainbow community* was a place where we could discover ourselves and where we first connected with like-minded individuals. However, for some of us, this was also the place where we eventually hit rock bottom. When we came into recovery, our involvement in this community could become problematic, especially when it involved places where we frequently used drugs. We each dealt with this in our own way. Through the experience of other NA members, we learned to first focus on our recovery and the fellowship before returning to the *rainbow community* in any form. It was a challenge for each of us to rediscover what our involvement with the subculture could look like. For some of us, completely letting go of the *rainbow community* was important; for others, it was about creating safety. We discussed this with our sponsor and other NA members who faced the same challenge. Finally, we want to emphasize that the *rainbow community* is as diverse as the rest of society. Alongside destructive elements, there are also positive, constructive, and unifying aspects to be found.

**Sponsorship**

The gender and sexual orientation of the sponsor may be relevant, but the most important factor is the connection and the right motivation. A sponsor doesn’t need to be a friend or buddy but should be someone you feel safe and trusted with, so you can share everything with them. This allows you to do step work together in full openness and discuss the challenges of recovery. In the white booklet *An Introduction to NA*, the pamphlet on sponsorship is included, providing important information about sponsorship. For members of our community, finding a sponsor can sometimes be challenging. The text in the NA pamphlet *Sponsorship* (IP No. 11) is written with the assumption that people are attracted to the opposite gender. When looking for a sponsor, the important suggestions are that the sponsor is well-grounded in recovery, has the time and space for a sponsee, and that you are not sexually attracted to your sponsor. Discuss it with others first and examine your motivations for choosing someone as a sponsor.

**Special interest-meetings**

Within the NA community, special interest meetings have been established for specific groups. An example of this is the rainbow meetings. These NA meetings provide an opportunity to share about our sexual orientation and/or gender identity in a safe environment, and to find like-minded individuals in a setting free from drugs. For certain topics, you may find identification in these meetings that may be harder to find in general meetings. However, we must be vigilant that addiction doesn’t use our sexual orientation and/or gender identity as a reason to exclude ourselves. It’s important to remember that every NA meeting can provide a safe environment. Our suggestion is to share honestly about your feelings and to find an NA meeting where you feel at home and safe.

**Inclusivity and a Higher Power**

Inclusivity is a core value in the NA program. Everyone is welcome, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or lack thereof. NA is a spiritual, not religious, program. However, the role of a Higher Power within our program can be a sensitive issue for both newcomers and those who have been in the program for some time. Some of us associate a Higher Power with exclusion. In NA, we believe that we may choose a Higher Power that is inclusive for every NA member. The only suggested guideline is that this Power be loving, caring, and greater than ourselves. We need this Power to stay clean. The literature often refers to God and He, but everyone is free to assign their own meaning or gender to this Power. The inclusive nature of our program is also reflected in our meetings. There can be many barriers to attending an NA meeting. In reality, NA members who identify in any way find the meetings a warm welcome and a sense of belonging. In recovery, we focus more on the similarities rather than the differences, and it is the diversity that makes our NA community so vibrant!

**Phone Numbers**

 For more information about NA and its meetings, we refer you to the websites:

[*http://wwww.nanederland.nl/*](http://wwww.nanederland.nl/)

[*https://na.org/*](https://na.org/)

**Sexual and**

**Gender Identity**

**in Recovery**

This pamphlet addresses five topics that many newcomers from the *rainbow community* have questions about when starting the NA program:

**(Self) Acceptance**

**Rainbow community**

**Sponsorship**

**Special interest-meetings**

**Inclusivity and a Higher Power**

 This pamphlet was developed by:

**Queer in Recovery Netherlands Committee**

in collaboration with

**the Rainbow & Friends Meetings.**



This is (not yet) apprroved NA literature.