
Florida Regional
Conference Workgroup
on Predatory Behavior

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Predatory Behavior

This information was gathered by addicts, for addicts about a behavior that has the potentiality to damage, destroy lives and create havoc in the fellowship. Collectively and individually addicts have been expressing concern about the health and welfare of our fellowship if this behavior does not abate. Local and State officers, whether it be drug court or probation officers etc that will not send their probationers or offenders to Narcotics Anonymous. Many people who could potential members are not able to hear the life-changing message of Narcotics Anonymous. There is a reputation in some areas that people who are sent to NA are not safe and are preyed upon by other members. Our hope is that we can bring to light some information that will help recovering addicts identify where there has been concern and how to deal with the situation if and when it arises. Most of all it will hopefully cause people who are engaging in predatory behavior to take a good long look at just how damaging this behavior can be to addicts in our fellowship and those who have yet to join us.

- PREDATORY-of or living by plundering and robbing, preying on other animals .
- PLUNDERING-to take by force or fraud
- BEHAVIOR-way of behaving, conduct or action. Something that can be observed and measured.

The definition for predatory or plundering behavior can conjure visual images of large birds of prey like hawks or eagles' etc hunting or

preying on other smaller, slower animals, those less able to protect themselves. They do this means of survival; this is how they eat. The predators we are discussing here are a different kind of predator; human predators. Human predators prey upon people who they deem weaker than, not as important as, expendable, easy prey, lame, defective, or unable to protect themselves, etc. The term predator is used as a label for anyone who “preys” upon others. The predator may not even know or realize that this is how they view the people they are preying upon. Sometimes the person is unaware of what they are doing, other times the person is very aware of the behavior and is making a conscious decision to participate or act out in this behavior.

When we think about predatory behavior in the NA fellowship, we can all come up with scenarios or pull from our own experiences of being either predator, prey or witness to these scenarios. We come to the rooms of NA from varying walks of life or varied reasons and in various stages of addiction. Some of us will turn from prey into predator. Often times, people who are abused will be come abusers. Many of us have been abused; some of us have been abusers. People come to the rooms for differing reasons. Not everyone who is in the rooms is here to “...stop using loss the desire to use and find a new way to live”. Some of us weren't parented, or didn't have adequate role models. Some of us were raised in decent loving homes and strayed from the path. Some come to the rooms through the criminal justice system. We all arrive in the rooms because something is wrong with the way we are living and we need to find a different way to live. Many arrive at the doors of NA broken, battered or badly damaged by the disease of addiction and the lengths we had to go to so we could continue using. Many of us arrive with the “scars” of addiction and/or abuse evident on our physical person, others carry those wounds deep within. You may not

be able to see them but the scars are there. People arrive in NA trying to get clean, stay clean or maybe they come because they want the pain to stop and they fall victim to other people who are using others to get their own selfish, self-seeking, self centered needs met. When we get in the way of newer members building a foundation in recovery we do them a huge disservice. We hinder their ability to build the necessary relationships that are vital if they are to stay clean.

When we think about predatory behavior we may only think about sexual predators but there are many kinds of predators in our midst. Examples of predatory behavior could be; borrowing money with no intention of paying it back, borrowing possessions, “bumming” cigarettes, etc from a person who you know is unable to say no. It could be someone selling or attempting to sell drugs in or around our meetings. It could be an attractive person currying favor from someone to get money or things. It could be a person with time “scooping up” a newcomer and beginning a relationship with someone who is newly clean (thirteenth stepping). Many people will resort to getting in relationships after the drugs go. It is one of the most prevalent and natural decisions people make when getting clean. Using relationships to feel better is very common when people are getting clean. When the drugs go people look for something outside themselves to fill a void left by active drug use. Often times the newcomer is excited or thrilled that someone with time is interested in them. They may not know yet that they don't have to get involved in romantic/sexual/intimate relationships to stay clean. There are several relationships that are imperative for early and on-going recovery: a relationship with a fellowship, a sponsor, a support/peer group, the steps, a home group, a service position, consistent meeting attendance schedule etc. Adding a romantic or sexual relationship at an early stage of recovery can

shift the focus off of recovery and onto the new relationship. This can happen subtly without the people involved even knowing. When someone, female or male gets involved in a romantic/sexual/intimate relationship with someone who is new or returning to NA it is a problem for both parties. It may not be evident immediately but ultimately it could cause damage. Often overheard when a person with time is confronted about getting into a relationship with a returning newcomer, "Well they aren't a new newcomer, they have been clean before" So, is it a good idea for this person who, for what ever reason didn't stay clean in previous attempts to get involved in any relationship that shifts the focus off their own recovery? No it is not.

People come into the rooms of NA and many have issues with interpersonal relationships. Many were raised in abusive homes or have some sort of abuse history. Some grew up people pleasing to get by; others used manipulation to get what they needed. Some believe they need to engage in sexual activity to be loved, etc. Everyone has the right to feel safe to recover in the rooms of NA. We have the responsibility to ensure that the rooms are a safe place for people in any stage of recovery. When the rooms of NA are unsafe for any addict they are unsafe for every addict. When the rooms of NA are unsafe then addicts may not want to come to the rooms and they may die. We have a responsibility to make the rooms of NA as safe as possible. This may require that this behavior is confronted when observed.

Talking to people who are engaging in this behavior should be considered like doing a twelfth step call, this should not be done alone. Some may believe that confronting someone with more than a one-on-one would be intimidating. There is strength in numbers and we are more likely to act with spiritual principles if someone is there to support us. Some believe

that this is "an outside issue" and we don't have the right to confront people engaging in this sort of behavior. We need to ensure that we are coming from a place of love and compassion when talking with someone about this sort of behavior. It says in our literature that "we are each others' eyes and ears" this implies that it is acceptable even advisable to approach someone who is engaging in predatory behavior and explaining why this behavior is dangerous.

Predatory behavior can be brought up as a topic in recovery meetings. Anything that affects and addict's life is relevant and can be shared about with a sponsor, peers or support group.

Predatory Behavior is a manner of behaving or acting that can become over bearing, greedy, and always has selfish motives.

Every individual is precious to the group and the group is precious to the individual. We never experienced the kind of attention and personal care that we found in the program. We are accepted and loved for who we are, not in spite of who we are. No one can revoke our membership or make us do anything that we do not choose to do. If a predator interferes with our purpose, then addressing that becomes our primary purpose

Some things to think about:

Obsessive behavior is a common denominator for addictive people. We have times when we try to fill ourselves up until we are satisfied, only to discover that there is no way to satisfy us. Part of our addictive pattern is that we can never get enough. Sometimes we forget, and we think that if we can get enough food, enough sex, or enough money we'll be satisfied, and everything will be all right. Self-will still leads us to make decisions based on manipulation, ego lust, or false pride. We don't like to be wrong. Our egos tell us we can do it on our own, but loneliness

and paranoia quickly return. We find that we cannot really do it alone; when we try things get worse. We need to be reminded of where we came from and that our disease will get progressively worse if we use. This is when we need the fellowship.

How can we "enforce" or encourage a group to address a problem individual or encircle a vulnerable person? Yes, the group's autonomy stops when their actions or lack thereof affect NA as a whole, but we've seen examples of groups that were resistant to an areas pleas/requests. We're not here to protect or prosecute. If someone is placing someone else in danger, it may need to be addressed outside the group/NA, not as addicts, but as friends or sponsors. Encourage Areas to regularly inventory themselves as to whether or not they are creating and maintaining an atmosphere of recovery. This stated in a different context-We don't represent or speak for NA, however this is something to think in addressing this issue. How do we confront the predator or offer support to the predator or victim? Either of them might not see the confronting person (s) as friends trying to help, but rather "The Group or The Fellowship" meddling in their life. This is something we as a group would have to think about to come up with a solution.

While autonomy gives us certain freedoms, it also implies responsibility for our actions and for the continued well-being of NA. As groups, we exercise our responsibility to the fellowship by taking inventory of our behavior and how we hold meetings. Our group exercises its autonomy in a responsible way when it takes care to consider the common welfare of the fellowship as a whole before it acts.

Something happens when we practice the steps and learn to apply principles in our individual lives. We develop an awareness of our behavior and its effects on ourselves and others. In other³

words, we develop a conscience. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power.

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision and reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in our groups by greeting them at the door, sharing with other addicts before or after the meeting and exchanging telephone numbers. We try to make sure that any addict who attends our meeting is not turned away. To the extent that it is possible, we choose the most accessible locations for our meetings. We may choose a format that reflects an invitational tone. Most of all, we encourage every addict to keep coming back.

The group will also want to examine its identity as a group. When we were using, most of us looked out for ourselves and ourselves alone, not giving any thought for another's welfare. An NA recovery group, on the other hand, is founded on its' members' commitment to one another.

Does the Tenth Tradition tell us that, as individual recovering addicts, we must not talk in meetings about the challenges we face? No, it does not. While a particular problem may be an outside issue, its effect on our recovery is not; everything affecting and recovering addict's life is material for sharing. If a problem we are having impacts our ability to stay clean and grow spiritually, it is not an outside issue. Many things can put us off balance and challenge our recovery. We often discuss such challenges with one another at our meetings, seeking to ease our personal burdens by sharing them with our fellow NA members. We ask others to share how they have applied the principles of the program in similar circumstances, recovering their balance and strengthening their recovery.

We need no one's permission to talk about such things in meetings.

The conscience of the group takes shape and is revealed when its members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of that group and the needs of NA as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a Higher Power when sharing with the group. As members listen carefully to each other and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens. Solutions to problems become apparent, solutions that take into consideration the needs of everyone concerned.

Our best talent in service is the ability to reach other addicts, offer identification and welcome, greet the addict waking in the door or the first time and help ensure that newcomers return again and again. Any one of us is capable of offering that service. With the guidance of a loving Higher Power, we become better able to help others and part of our responsibility as a group is to keep an atmosphere of recovery and part of the atmosphere of recovery is ensuring that all addicts have a safe place to go.

Recommendation/Suggestions that may be helpful.

- It is the responsibility of every home group member to be the eyes and ears of other members and look out for predatory behavior from anyone.
- Have 2-3 home group members discuss with the offending member after the meeting.

- Make a "No Predatory Behavior Tolerated" statement as part of the format
- Discuss that this type of behavior is not just sex; it is also money, clothing, rides, places to live. It can evolve into many different behaviors
- Confront your friends if they engage in predatory behavior
- Home group members should take the lead in making everyone feel comfortable- walking the walk that everyone is welcome regardless....
- Get out of your own comfort zone and reach out to groups isolated geographically, by common culture etc.
- Creating and maintaining an atmosphere of recovery is up to every individual member setting a personal example for others to follow we can prove that no addict anywhere need die from the horrors of addiction.