

Workshop on Predatory Behavior

...

By Addicts For Addicts
September 2020

FACILITATOR

Today's Agenda

1. Why Are We Here?
2. Workshop Goals & Purpose
3. What This Workshop Isn't
4. Principles Before Personalities
5. Defining Terms
6. Breakout Sessions
7. Wrap-Up

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'One of the deepest challenges for groups is to remain open to all and still create a safe, hospitable atmosphere.

Group unity and a powerful sense of community can protect us from the challenges that come with open membership.

We do our best to safeguard those who are vulnerable without making others feel unwelcome....

We gain little by ignoring difficulties, and stand to lose much if we avoid the challenges we face"

(Guiding Principles, Tradition 3).

FACILITATOR ASK FOR VOLUNTEER

“There are many distracting influences that can divert us from our primary purpose... But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out”

(It Works How and Why, Tradition 5).

FACILITATOR ASK FOR VOLUNTEER



Why Are We Here?

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We're here, first and foremost, because predatory behavior, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate or problematic behaviors are in direct conflict with our primary purpose as stated in Tradition 5.

Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

FACILITATOR ASK FOR VOLUNTEER

Why Are We Here?

- This issue may not affect us all personally or equally, but it does affect our groups and NA as a whole. (refers to Traditions 1, 4 and 12).
- To continue a conversation that's been going on for decades.
- Our first experiences in and around meetings are critically important to our healing.
- New or returning members are especially vulnerable to being taken advantage of.
- But not only newcomers or members who are preyed on are affected.

FACILITATOR READ:

- Though this issue may not affect us all personally or equally, we're doing this workshop because it does affect individuals, groups, and NA as a whole. (this relates to Traditions 1, 4 and 12).
- We're continuing a conversation that's been going on for decades. The disease of addiction is life or death for us. Our perspective on the possibility of recovery and hope for a new way of life is often shaped by our experience in our first meetings with other members and during fellowshiping before and after meetings. **New members or members coming back after a relapse may be especially vulnerable to manipulation.**
- Newcomers may also not be able to discern the difference between NA meetings and activities with NA members after the meeting. Some people might claim that activities that occur outside meetings are of no concern to us. But when members use the NA name for the purpose of promoting activities outside our primary purpose or take advantage of vulnerable people they find in meetings, then it is our concern.
- Not only newcomers or members who are preyed on are affected: people who engage in this behaviors often end up getting loaded because of it too

Why Are We Here?

- We aim to practice spiritual principles in all our affairs (refers to Step 12)
- These issues affect NA's reputation (refers to Tradition 11)
- These are not outside issues (refers to Tradition 10)

FACILITATOR READ:

- Also it's critical mention here: The NA program of recovery isn't just comprised of meetings: it's NA meetings, NA service, NA activities and events, fellowshiping with one another, stepwork with sponsors, relationships with ourselves, each other, and—as representatives of NA—with entities outside of the program. What happens outside meetings with members of our NA group potentially affects the group. We are NA members and recovering addicts; what we do outside NA can affect NA. In Step 12, it says "...we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." We need to keep trying.
- Whatever our opinion is about this, it's our responsibility to offer everyone a safe space to recover. Doing so also protects the newcomer and the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous; **these are not outside issues** (this relates to Traditions 10 and 11).

Workshop Goals & Purpose

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Workshop Goals & Purpose

- Developed by an Ad Hoc Committee of Greater Hollywood Area of Narcotics Anonymous.
- Includes guidance from:
 - Many NA members besides the committee.
 - The 12 Traditions
 - Existing Fellowship-approved literature
 - Materials posted on the NAWS website that have been created by other NA Regions for a similar purpose.
- By addicts for addicts, by NA members for NA members.
- If you're here, we assume you share some of our concerns and are looking for solutions.

FACILITATOR READ:

- This workshop is the culmination of work by an Ad Hoc Committee of Greater Hollywood Area of Narcotics Anonymous. It has incorporated the collective perspectives and ideas of many members who've participated in meetings and other members have otherwise been consulted by the committee.
- We've used the 12 Traditions to guide the process, consulted existing Fellowship-approved literature, and materials posted on the NAWS website that have been created by other NA Regions for a similar purpose. This workshop was developed by addicts for addicts, by NA members for NA members.
- Members of the ad hoc committee don't claim to be experts. We're not here to tell you what to think or do about this issue. If you're here, we assume you share some of our concerns and hope that the resources we've gathered will support additional conversations among NA groups, sponsorship families, and friends. Thank you for being here.

Workshop Goals & Purpose

- To engage each other in **solutions-based approaches** for dealing with the issue of harassment and behavior that injures or exploits other members.
- To present a guide for NA groups to use and implement as they see fit. It's meant to spark conversation, not controversy.
- We're not here to debate about whether or not these experiences occur—but what we can do about the problem.

FACILITATOR READ:

- Today we want to engage each other in **solutions-based approaches** for dealing with the issue of harassment and behavior that injures or exploits other members as they come up in our groups and with each other.
- This workshop is designed to be conducted within NA groups. **It's a guide to use and implement as a group sees fit.** It's meant to spark conversation, not controversy.
- **We're not here to debate about whether or not these experiences occur,** but what we can do about the problem and how we can help all addicts involved...and maybe even prevent it from happening as much as it currently does.

Workshop Goals & Purpose

- Develop a shared understanding of predatory behavior and the damage it can cause individuals, groups, and NA
- Provoke self-reflection, critical thinking, and clarity about our own perspectives and experience
- Neutralize any bad vibes or defensiveness while empowering each of us to engage in conversations about a highly charged topic

FACILITATOR (READ SLIDE AS IS)

What This Workshop Isn't

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What This Workshop Isn't

- We aren't calling anyone out or blaming a particular meeting or type of addict
- This isn't just a response to recent online incidents
- No one can "kick someone out of NA" as per Tradition 3

We should be clear to all addicts: You are welcome. Behavior that harms others or disrupts the atmosphere of recovery is not welcome.
(as per traditions 3, 4 & 5)

FACILITATOR READ:

- This is not just a Hollywood NA problem, a zoom/online meeting problem, a new problem, or a uniquely heterosexual problem. While men aren't always the perpetrators and women always the targets, we'd be remiss if we didn't point to the fact that most of the experiences we've had, witnessed or heard about from other members are men preying on women.
- And while it's not an issue that exclusively affects newcomer and/or younger female members, again, many of the examples cited and experienced that will be relayed do fit that bill. We aren't hanging the blame on a particular group of addicts, nor are we painting another as overly victimized and disempowered. We just want to address this problem together, in unity, and be forthright and honest about it.
- We aren't here to call out specific members or groups by name. This isn't about a particular person or meeting or incident. It's about safeguarding NA as a whole and ensuring that everyone can recover in a safe environment (Traditions 4 and 5). You may be aware of recent incidents that occurred online, but this kind of behavior pre-dates the pandemic.
- No one can kick someone out of NA. (This comes up a lot when these issues are brought up in NA meetings and in conversations among members. We're here today because of Tradition 3, which is "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." That membership is not revocable.
- ***We should be clear to all addicts: You are welcome. Behavior that harms others or disrupts the atmosphere of recovery is not welcome.***

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- ***We should be clear to all addicts: You are welcome. Behavior that harms others or disrupts the atmosphere of recovery is not welcome.***

A large, solid dark blue rectangle occupies the upper half of the page. Inside this rectangle, the text "Let's Get Started." is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Let's Get Started.

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Principles Before Personalities (Tradition 12)

What NA spiritual principles might we need to practice during this workshop and when we're dealing with these issues in our groups?

Please share responses in the chat.

FACILITATOR: acknowledge responses in chat then go to next slide

Principles Before Personalities (Tradition 12)

What NA spiritual principles might we need to practice during this workshop and when we're dealing with these issues in our groups?

- Unity
- Open-mindedness
- Empathy
- Acceptance
- Anonymity
- Respect
- Courage
- Others?

FACILITATOR acknowledge additional spiritual principles.

Defining Terms (or attempting to...)

- There are not clear, widely agreed upon terms or definitions for this type of behavior.
- This workshop attempts to define terms in a way that is constructive for today's conversation.
- Examples provided later in the workshop will help to more clearly illustrate these behaviors and definitions.

FACILITATOR READ:

- Many members wanted clear definitions of “predatory behavior,” “sexual harassment,” “inappropriate behavior,” etc. The ad hoc committee did our best to define those terms, because we agree that language IS important.
- However, there isn't consensus among all NA members -- or even the internet -- on what terms to use or what those terms mean.
- We hope the definitions provided will help guide the conversation. We'll provide examples of these semi-defined behaviors later on in the workshop.

OLD NOTES FOR REFERENCE (not necessary to read) --

- There was definitely pushback regarding which terms we should be using. For instance, some felt that “predatory” was too harsh, or thought “inappropriate” was too generalized. Language *is* important, but there isn't consensus among all the NA members we consulted of what terms we should be using. We call it what we call it.
- That said, we made an attempt to deliver on the definition request and found that there isn't airtight consensus out there either. These terms are interrelated and not mutually exclusive. They mean different things to different NA members (and to the results of internet searches). Hopefully, the definitions provided will help guide the conversation, and the multiple examples provided later will illustrate the problem more clearly.
- Again, **language is important**. It's a tool and it's necessary, but we don't want to get overly hung up on technicalities. We can't instruct each other to use particular language to describe our experiences.

Predatory Behavior

- For the purposes of this workshop, predatory behavior will be defined as:

Behavior inclined or intended to injure or exploit others for personal gain or profit
(*Merriam Webster*, 2020)

FACILITATOR READ:

- We'll get into examples of how this manifests in meetings, but for now it's important to note that these behaviors are:
 - often characterized by manipulation.
 - Sometimes outright, sometimes subtle.
 - Often chronic/ongoing, obsessive and compulsive. Just like addiction.
 - Predatory bx is often demonstrated by friendly, seemingly confident people who express concern about others.
 - They often prey upon people who they deem as weaker than, not as important as, expendable, easy prey, lame, defective, or unable to protect themselves, etc.
 - They push boundaries.
 - They often are defensive and play the victim when called out.
 - Sometimes the person is unaware of what they are doing (many of us take issue with this idea); other times the person is very aware of the behavior and is making a conscious decision to participate or act out in this behavior. They know exactly what they're doing.

Sexual Harassment

- For the purposes of this workshop, sexual harassment will be defined as:

Uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate
(*Merriam Webster*, 2020)

- Note: Sexual harassment falls under the umbrella of predatory behavior, but it's not the only type of predatory behavior

FACILITATOR READ SLIDE AS IS

But...

Not everything fits neatly into one of the two categories we just described. There are behaviors that don't rise to the level of predatory but are still problematic.

Sexual intimacy and romantic relationships are complicated, especially in early recovery.

We get to NA with *issues*. Who doesn't?

We don't have to initiate or respond to each other's sexual advances.

We can be real with ourselves: "Am I the best person to show this newcomer the ropes? Is my interest in them really *about their wellbeing* or *about my own self interest*?"

FACILITATOR READ:

- Not everything fits neatly into one of the two categories we just described. There are behaviors that don't rise to the level of predatory but are still problematic. BUT Sexual intimacy and romantic relationships can be very, very complicated for addicts to deal with, especially in early recovery....
- Many of us have histories of difficult interpersonal and sexual relationships.
- We have experienced abuse, and some of us have been abusers.
- A lot of us acted out sexually in active addiction and carry some of those behaviors into the rooms, which can impact the atmosphere of recovery.
- Many of us 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.
- Though many of us when we're new compulsively seek attention and validation, we as more established members do not have to respond in kind.
- We can give each other space to recover.
- Instead of serving our own interests, we can take a moment to be real with ourselves: "Am I the best person to show this newcomer the ropes? Is my interest in them really about their wellbeing or about getting my own needs met?"

Breakout Sessions

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Breakout Sessions

If the group does not feel empowered to confront predatory behavior from members wherever it may happen, they are sending a message that this type of behavior is condoned at this meeting and therefore are carrying a message to the addict who still suffers that is not in line with our principals as a whole.

In each of your breakout groups, it should also be discussed how each one of these statements or situations should be handled by groups.

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Breakout Sessions

We will be going into breakout rooms to discuss problematic statements and situations that have been shared between and experiences by addicts. We are not here to debate whether or not they happened. We are just here to have a conversation about how such incidents affect the fellowship at the individual level, the meeting level and NA as a whole.

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Breakout Sessions

We will now break everyone into small groups to discuss phrases and scenarios.

You will have a moderator in your group who will read the phrase and provide questions for discussion, followed by a scenario and questions for discussion.

Please select a member of your small group to share when we return as a large group for discussion.

FACILITATOR READ SLIDE AS IS
Disseminate Breakout Guide.

Group Discussion

- What was your group's phrase and situation?
- What was the biggest challenge for your group?
- What solutions did your group come up with?
 - Please share additional solutions in the chat!

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Workshop Wrap-Up

Please share in the chat:

- What's one thing you learned today that surprised you?

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Workshop Wrap-Up

- This workshop is intended for you to take back to your groups. The committee is available to answer any questions or provide additional support if you need it!
- You should feel free to adapt this workshop as you see fit for your group.
- The presentation materials will be available at HollywoodNA.org

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EVERYONE IS HERE TO RECOVER

Again, Traditions 1, 3, 5 and 12 apply here:

- All of us are NA members trying to stay clean a day at a time.
- Each of us has worth as a part of our whole.
- Carrying the message is our singular purpose.
- It's why we're here.
- We must do everything we can to promote an atmosphere of recovery where everyone is safe to attend our meetings and that we're able to get what we came for -- recovery.

FACILITATOR READ SLIDE AS IS

What responsibilities does an NA group have? The first and most important responsibility of any NA group—its “primary purpose,” according to the Fifth Tradition—is “to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.” And the single most important thing a group can do to fulfill that primary purpose is to conduct meetings that provide a welcoming atmosphere in which NA recovery can be effectively shared between addicts. Groups conduct the details of their meetings in very different ways, but all of them seek the same end: to make recovery from addiction available to any addict in the community who seeks it. -- *The Group Booklet*

FACILITATOR ASK FOR VOLUNTEER

Thank You!

Breakout Rooms:

- Once in your breakout rooms, you will select your statement and Situation based on Breakout room numbers.
 - For example: If you are in Breakout room #3 you will have situation and statement #3.
- If there are fewer than 6 breakout rooms, pick two to three statements/situations to go over. **Ideally, each group should be assigned one statement and one situation.** The AdHoc Committee will let you know before breakout rooms happen if we'll have fewer than 6 rooms.
- Your job is to be a moderator who brings the situations and statements to the groups and uses the questions to keep conversations going. You are expected to join in conversation as a member and participate as such.
- Please try to keep the conversation on track if you can and keep an eye on the clock! Thanks for being here!

Remember to assign someone who is going to share with the other groups what your team's big *aha!* moments were and what solutions you all came up with!

STATEMENTS

Statement #1

"Predatory behavior has always been a problem in NA, there is nothing you can do about it"

1. Why do you think members are so apprehensive about talking about predatory behavior? What can we do about that?
2. Why is this a problematic Statement?

Possible Solutions: Read the service IP on Predatory Behavior

Statement #2

"Back when I got clean, we all had sex with each other and everything turned out just fine"

1. What does this Statement tell a new member about NA?
2. How does this statement support the primary purpose of NA?

Possible Solution: Treat this as a 12th step and confront this person with the help of another addict to educate them on why this is a problematic stance for NA members to take.

Statement #3

"You can't take a stripper off the pole and expect them to keep their clothes on"

1. Have you or anyone you know in NA dealt with these types of conversations. How was it handled? How do you think it should be handled?
2. How does this statement support predatory behavior?

Possible Solution: Ask this addict to read Predatory behavior Service Pamphlet
<https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/FTP/English/Workshop%20Resources/Predatory%20Behavior%20-%20Florida%20RSC%20-%20202018.pdf>

Statement #4

“One of my friends was invited to those after hour zoom rooms and the person that invited them excitedly said they might see some boobs if they come. My friend was so turned off they have been attending AA meetings ever since”

1. How does this statement affect NA as a whole?
2. How does advertising gatherings in this way tell members about our atmosphere of recovery?

Possible Solution: Make announcement in Meeting directing members to the Activities Committee for outside of meeting fellowship opportunities.

Statement #5

“NA is sexually transmitted”

1. What does this person mean?
2. What does this statement say to the addict who still suffers?
3. Is this true?

Possible Solution: Possible Solution: Treat this as a 12th step and confront this person with the help of another addict to educate them on why this is a problematic stance for NA members to take.

Statement #6

During a member share, another member types in the chat an eggplant emoji & water squirt emoji.

1. How does this negatively impact the atmosphere of recovery?
2. What message does this send to the newcomer about NA?
3. Should this group consider adding the safety statement to their format? (see bottom of this doc for safety statement to copy and paste into chat)

Possible Solution: Disable chat during meeting, safety statement in format

SITUATIONS

Situation 1: During an NA meeting, members invite other members to a Zoom fellowship event that has NA in the name. During the fellowship meeting, members are asked to take off their clothes, experience sexually explicit remarks, and are shown pornography via the screenshare.

Situation 2: A member speaks at a meeting. During the sharing portion, an other members use their sharing time to comment excessively on the speaker's appearance.

Situation 3: A newcomer member sends a member with time unsolicited nude images and makes continued sexual advances.

Situation 4: During a Zoom meeting, a member on camera is not fully clothed and is seated in front of artwork depicting naked people.

Situation 5: A member identifies as newcomer and then at the break is approached by a member with time who has been known to 13th step newer members.

Situation 6: A member arrives at a meeting and states they dressed in a way to try to combat the unwanted sexual attention they've experienced there, and another member mentions that their "best asset" is still showing!

Questions for Breakout Groups (Use the same questions for all situations):

- How does this situation limit the group's ability to carry the message to the still-suffering addict?
 - Should this group consider adding the safety statement to their meeting format? (see bottom of this doc to copy and paste in the chat)
 - What can a bystander do to stop this interaction?
 - What can a group do to stop this interaction? (safety statement?)
 - Who is best suited to hold the person making these comments/doing the action accountable?
 - What traditions might this situation violate or impact?
-

Safety Statement (copy and paste in the chat)

We strongly discourage any harassment, threats, or disturbing behavior before, during, and after our meetings. This includes unwelcome sexual, romantic, financial, and religious solicitation. Our meetings are for sharing NA recovery. If you feel harassed or threatened, share your concerns with the meeting leader or a trusted servant. (Excerpted from [IP #29: An Introduction to NA Meetings](#))

Link to Predatory Behavior Service Document (from the Florida Regional Conference Workgroup on Predatory Behavior)

<https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/FTP/English/Workshop%20Resources/Predatory%20Behavior%20-%20Florida%20RSC%20-%202018.pdf>