



Service Piece

Debtors Anonymous Guidelines for Safety and dealing with Inappropriate Behaviors  
In meetings and person to person.

Tradition Five of Debtors Anonymous shares:

“Each group has but one primary purpose,  
to carry the message to the debtor that still suffers”.

All D.A. members are responsible for the well-being of Debtors Anonymous. Individual recovery from compulsive spending and debting depends on meetings being safe places to explore and develop our spiritual life with other recovering debtors to provide support. The group conscience and vocal participation of group members will help a group to deal with a difficult issue.

Inappropriate conduct toward other members in or out of the meetings within the Fellowship of Debtors Anonymous is not acceptable.

Our Tradition of anonymity and our practice of confidentiality between members, in meetings or person to person, need never be interpreted to mean that a member must be silent about abuse of any kind, whether emotional, physical or spiritual.

The objectives of this document are:

1. To assist D.A. in continuing as a strong unified Fellowship in which we work together to fulfill D.A.'s mission of helping those who struggle with compulsive spending and debting.
2. To offer D.A. members and groups possible solutions to deal with inappropriate behavior including and beyond the decision of a group conscience.
3. To raise awareness within the Fellowship and encourage the creation of a safe environment for all members who may be targeted.
4. Ensuring professionals view D.A. as a safe place to refer new members.

## Definitions of Inappropriate Behavior

Discriminatory Harassment is any unwelcome, typically repeated offensive conduct that is directed at an individual because of his/her race, sex, age, finances, disability, religion, national origin, color, genetic information, and/or sexual orientation.

Sexual Harassment: is unwelcome sexual behavior, which could be expected to make a person feel scared, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written.

It can include:

1. Sexually suggestive behavior, such as leering or staring
2. Brushing up against someone and unwanted touching, fondling or hugging
3. Suggestive comments or jokes
4. Repeated requests to go out and/or requests for sex
5. Explicit emails, text messages or posts on social networking sites.
6. Sexual assault.

Predatory Behavior from constant requests to borrow money, or obtain free things from a newcomer or another member.

1. When a newcomer arrives at a meeting, it is suggested they should always be taken under the wing of experienced group members who have clear and strong boundaries.

Inappropriate Behavior can cause people to feel unwelcome, scared, discriminated against, excluded, ashamed or harassed. Vulnerable members could be prey to abusive behavior and cannot always be expected to have the knowledge and experience to handle certain situations. These actions could interfere with their personal recovery.

Examples of such behavior might be:

1. using vulgar language; shouting or screaming
2. aggressive/threatening language or hand gestures, aggressive attitudes
3. using bigoted language about any certain group of people
4. physical attack
5. describing sexual or violent acts in detail
6. interrupting another people's sharing.

Possible Solutions: In order to assist members, groups, and service bodies of the Fellowship, the following possible solutions are suggested.

1. In light of the Third Tradition, each group could have a group conscience on inappropriate behavior and how they will handle it. Discussing openly how to deal with distractions during a meeting and minimize the risk of escalation.
2. Discuss the issues as part of your business/group conscience meeting at least once per year. Ensure meeting chairs have read these guidelines and the group has discussed ways a chair can de-escalate inappropriate behaviors.
3. Members can take the offender to another room for a personal meeting to address their distress.
4. An open discussion on predatory behavior will make it known it will not be tolerated in your meeting.
5. Materials could be added to the meeting format. Making it clear that unacceptable behavior is not tolerated in the meeting.
6. Sponsorship in Debtors Anonymous is a powerful way of providing the newcomer with support they need. Suggesting to both Sponsors and Newcomers that they work with another member for whom they are unlikely to have a sexual attraction can be fundamental to everyone's safety and solvency.
7. Anyone who witnesses or is told about inappropriate behavior by a member, in or out of the meeting, need not deal with it alone. Talk about it with your sponsor or a trusted friend in the program.

If offensive, disruptive, predatory members do not change their behaviors:

1. Ask them to leave the D.A. function/meeting and come back with they can act appropriately.
2. Involve law enforcement any time there is illegal activity going on.
  - a. Protect yourself from violence and call the police if needed.
  - b. In the event of sexual harassment or predatory behavior call the police and report it.

The Traditions do not shield anyone from dangerous behavior.  
Calling the police is the next right thing when your safety is at risk.  
You do NOT have to accept unacceptable behavior.

Approved by the General Service Board of Debtors Anonymous, May 5, 2019