

In June, the GSA received an email from concerned ABA members regarding instances of sexual harassment and violations of anonymity. In response, the GSA formed an ad hoc committee, later named the Safety Committee, which agreed to address all forms of disruptive behaviors within the fellowship. In September, the GSA ratified the Safety Statement which will soon be available on ABA's website and sent to the groups.

The Safety Committee has been asked to address the following points. We have done so in close accordance with the 12 Traditions.

1. After gaining access to phone lists, some members harassed other members. Is there an appropriate way to safeguard member (especially newcomer) details on phone lists?
  - a. For groups as well as individuals, we encourage them to research alternative chat platforms that do not show phone numbers like WhatsApp does. We can still build a network without leaving ourselves vulnerable to people we do not trust or do not yet know. As relationships are formed, individuals can exchange numbers when they are comfortable sharing their private contact information.
2. Is it appropriate for a person who is behaving inappropriately, and causing harm to our members, to be permanently excluded from ABA meetings, and at what point would this be possible?
  - a. As per Tradition 3, we do not have the power to remove someone from the ABA fellowship.
  - b. As per Tradition 4, groups have the power to temporarily or permanently remove people from their meetings.
  - c. It is up to the group conscience to determine when and for how long removal is appropriate and we encourage participation in that process.
3. How does Tradition 3 apply to individuals who refuse to stop inappropriate behavior in and outside of the meetings, including before and after meeting fellowship?
  - a. Tradition 3 gives any individual the power to claim membership to the fellowship of ABA. It does NOT guarantee a right to attend any particular meeting or group. Tradition 4 empowers groups to determine whether or not a member of ABA should be allowed to attend THEIR GROUP.
  - b. Traditions 3 and 4 always apply to the fellowship and its members. In the case of an individual who refuses to stop inappropriate behaviors, the group conscience has the right to remove them from the meeting temporarily or permanently.
  - c. We encourage groups to come up with protocol on how to handle these measures.
4. How do we support members who are too afraid to take further action against harassment or unwanted attention?
  - a. Because the GSA has no authority in situations such as this, according to the traditions, we encourage you to determine protocol on a group level. The group and sponsors can empower these individuals to block offenders in their personal lives and take any other necessary actions and precautions. Using alternative platforms for contact lists may prevent ongoing or future unwanted contact.

5. Individuals have expressed concerns about maintaining anonymity in online meetings.
  - a. We would like to remind everyone that they may turn their cameras off during meetings and fellowshipping if they have concerns regarding screen captures and recording.
6. What can we do, as a fellowship, to address issues where a member of the fellowship feels the group has not adequately dealt with a situation?
  - a. As a 12 Step fellowship, we cannot address these issues. It is left up to the group conscience to decide how to manage these situations. We encourage members to attend groups that align with their own perspectives and concerns for safety and be active in the ongoing group conscience.
7. What right does a member have to take instances of harassment to a higher authority?
  - a. Individuals have the right to notify the proper authorities, as stated in the Safety Statement if they feel their needs cannot be addressed on a personal or group level.
8. How can we support our newcomers to be safe and protect themselves from harm?
  - a. We encourage groups to incorporate the new safety statement into their meetings.
  - b. Members are welcome to notify newcomers if there is a member who is particularly disruptive or behaves inappropriately.
7. What guidance can you give us to protect members? Does ABA need to have a safeguarding policy?
  1. 2ABA cannot have a safeguarding policy because of Tradition 2 (one ultimate authority), Tradition 4 (group autonomy), Tradition 5 (primary purpose), Tradition 10 (outside issues), and Tradition 12 (principles before personalities). Instead, we can encourage members to utilize the Tools of Recovery, thus growing our ability to protect ourselves.

Ultimately, each individual is responsible for their own safety in the world. Because we cannot be punitive with our groups or members, we cannot do anything to stop bad behavior among ABA's members. As a fellowship, we cannot ensure that we will have a conflict- or harassment-free experience in ABA. No organization can do that, nor is it within our purview as a 12 Step fellowship.

Recovery is about individual empowerment. In an effort to support this, we encourage all members to participate in group conscience, form a solid network of trusted individuals, and support each other. The group conscience is the ultimate authority in ABA. Where the GSA cannot provide protection, groups are empowered to take action.

In love and service,

The Safety Committee

Kheri T., Judy B., and Julie L.