

How Safe Is AA? Introduction

Safety Statement read by Tracey...

Respect boundaries before hugging, ask first

Goal: to help AA to be safe for all

Today is about what we can do; our responsibility

Actions we can take will be addressed during this day

No blame or shaming of others

Yellow card a 30 second warning to wrap up

Red card, time is up

Linda T – Trauma Specialist (on Zoom)

Trauma Informed Creating Safety in AA

Sometimes talking about trauma can be a trigger. Go talk to someone, take care of yourself.

What does trauma have to do with AA? Trauma and addiction from same place in the brain.

Trauma can trigger addiction.

76% with substance abuse have underlying trauma

1 out of 13 adults will be treated for trauma in life time

It affects women more than men. Unresolved or unexplored trauma is #1 cause of relapse.

More have recovered in AA than anywhere so we can help.

What is trauma? Any disturbing experience that can have long lasting effect on a person's functionality. This is important: It is dependent on how the individual perceives it.

There are lots of different kinds of trauma. Relational trauma will be the focus.

--Someone finds themselves unacceptable

--Covert or overt discrimination

--Experts used to think some traumas were little but not anymore; trauma is really big

Physical responses include: rapid heart rate, GI issues, heart attack, stroke

Emotional responses: increased anxiety, depression, flashbacks to traumatic event, inability to sleep, feeling jumpy, decreased concentration.

What can we do in AA?

Be open minded

Maintain confidentiality – this makes things safe

Educate self on what trauma looks like

Be respectful

Be open minded (repeated because of its importance) keep judgment aside

Listen

Be ok with outside help

What is harmful?

Touching and hugs...even asking if you can hug...people are programmed to not say no

Saying..."I didn't need anything but the steps." But others may need other help

“What is your part in this”? is a damaging statement
Terminally unique – need to have that understood

Reading material – non-approved

Trauma and the 12 Steps by Jaime Marich

A Women’s Way Through the 12 Steps a Covington Way

Contact info of speaker: 701-318-7794

Q&A

Mimi, Literature Chair for D04, thanked Linda for resources.

Trauma event – being open minded as far as what trauma is to a person is important

How are trauma resources used with the Big Book? We use the two books mentioned, and the steps from those books.

District 04 2024 Safety Survey Preliminary Results

Survey Results and analysis

Michele D. Chair of Sub-Committee on Sexual Harm

Survey response quote: “Remember it takes a lot of courage to disclose these hard experiences even under the cloak of anonymity. Handle with care, please!”

Goals of survey – to gain understanding about how safety affects the experience of AA members, provide insight into changes we can make that will improve safety, not intended to generalize to all of AA or all of district 04 AA members.

Data shows significant issues

Online survey over 4 months, May 5 to Sept 3, 2024

Advertised at meetings, via email and text or district website

Translated into Spanish

Completely anonymous

256 respondents (244 English and 12 Spanish)

59% female

33% male

2% Trans or non-binary

17% LGBTQ

47% Christian

29% atheist

18% agnostic

15% disabled

Race; not very diverse, similar to area membership

What will be addressed today:

Individuals experiencing sexual predation and harm of different kinds

Individuals experiencing discrimination based on LGBTQ status; disability, including taking medication; race and ethnicity; and religious affiliation. Data also collected on what people heard or witnessed but that will not be addressed today.

Unsafe and unwelcome almost ½ experienced this
47% answered yes to “have you ever felt unsafe in AA?”

--53% women

--33% male

Disabled more likely to feel unsafe and those on medication too.

“Have you ever felt unwelcome in AA?”

38% yes; 62% no

Over ½ of disabled responded “yes”

32% not disabled felt unwelcomed

Individual experiences with sexual predation and harm of various kinds

Examine 6 different types:

Sexual harassment

13th stepping

Hostile sexual environment

Sexual assault

Intimate partner abuse

Stalking

50% experience one or more of the above

Women 3x more likely than men

Unwanted attention; 44% women; 7% men

Examples on survey:

Hugging when I indicate I don't want to be hugged

Asking for phone number when they knew I had only 14 days of sobriety

Pretending they want me to share to get my phone number

Oldtimers give rides and then assaults women laughing at someone/make fun of

Timing of sexual misconduct occurrence— most in first 6 months of sobriety

25% of women experienced sexual misconduct 6 or more times

27% were victimized by 3 or more AA members

23% left AA for sometime

47% didn't feel safe or supported by how it was handled in AA

60% told someone in AA; most told sponsor, one took to a group conscience

Suggestions given: attend only women meeting, avoid perpetrators, set boundaries, go to another meeting.

Discrimination based on LGBTQ, disability based on medication, race and ethnicity and religious affiliation.

"Have you been subject to mistreatment or insensitivity about race, gender identity, disability, immigration status or religion?"

40% yes

60% no

Most at risk: disabled on medication, LGBTQ, atheist/agnostic/spiritual,

Number of incidences of discrimination by disability/medication status.

1-5 incidence: disabled 31%; not disabled 15%

More the 10 incidences: disabled 26%; not disabled 8%

disability increased, LGBTQ increased, non-Christians increased

Quotes:

"I heard that I needed to stop taking meds"

"Beliefs of Atheists treated as somehow not part of AA"

"Gay jokes at meetings which makes me feel unwanted"

"I racist joke about Mexicans, which I am, and it was highly insulting"

Leaving AA because of discrimination:

26% all victims of discrimination

38% disabled

38% LGBTQ

Oregon A58 Bonnie, Safety Inclusion Chair

Ad hoc committee x 6 months

Survey done

70 people participated in first survey

Became a Standing Committee

Latest Survey July 2023 with 315 respondents

Most respondents were Caucasian, female and categorized themselves as primarily Spiritual

Most respondents had home group positions

Not a very diverse group; wanted to encourage more diversity

Questions similar to previous survey (D04)

Top issues in field:

19% experienced predatory behavior

8% Spiritual

4% Gender identity

Digital survey done but some don't use this technology so emails were sent to DCM to send out a paper survey instead. This done, 60 paper surveys were returned.

Search "Oregon Area 58 Safety & Inclusion Committee" to find the website for more details of this survey.