

## Our Common Welfare

Our common welfare is vitally important. Each member of Cocaine Anonymous is but a small part of a greater whole. Therefore, it is important that we address the issue of health and safety and the procedures we might consider to ensure that the Fellowship remains a safe place for all members.

Occasionally situations may arise that threaten the safety and well-being of a C.A. group or its members. This pamphlet is offered for those who may or may not be aware how their behavior impacts others, to support change on the part of the individual, and to support groups in addressing unhealthy and/or unwanted attention or behavior while remaining mindful of C.A.'s Twelve Traditions.

C.A. groups are meant to be safe places where people gather for the primary purpose of staying sober and helping others to achieve freedom from addiction to cocaine and all other mind-altering substances. The conscience of each group is derived from its members. However, we are not immune to behavioral issues and difficulties that affect others within society both inside and outside of our meetings.

C.A. membership has never been contingent on any set of behavioral or moral standards. Our Third Tradition states, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using cocaine and all other mind-altering substances." However, if our common welfare comes first, certain behavioral standards are necessary. A person could achieve sobriety in C.A. yet still lack understanding as to what might be considered "acceptable" or "appropriate" behavior. Some behaviors that can compromise the group as a whole and its members include but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate sexual attention or activity;
- Aggressive, violent or confrontational behavior, such as shouting at, intimidating or bullying others;
- Racial, religious or gender-based prejudice or intolerance;
- Pressuring members into adopting certain views or beliefs on medical treatments, medications, politics, religion or other outside issues.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of behaviors that may cause issues within the group and therefore affect welfare, unity and safety.

Our common welfare is the responsibility of each member and the group as a whole. If any situation arises that compromises a person's safety or is in breach of the law, that

person is encouraged to take appropriate action. Asking the individual acting in inappropriate or unacceptable ways to temporarily leave a meeting does not go against any of our Traditions. When such action is taken, it is important that group members specify behavioral changes that will help the individual to return, as recovery is afforded to all those who seek it.

Also keep in mind that our anonymity is not a cloak to protect criminal or inappropriate behavior. When it comes to any behavior that violates the law, calling the authorities may be an appropriate course of action. Talking about the situation with the home group members is a good start and may provide clarity on how to proceed.

Our hope is that each person reading this pamphlet will take their own inventory regarding their conduct in the meeting rooms, asking themselves, "Am I following the group conscience? Or am I acting in a way that is contrary to our spiritual principles?" C.A. unity ensures the welfare of the group and is paramount to personal recovery. As stated in the Unity pamphlet, "Unity is a common bond that transcends all differences. We've discovered no matter how different our circumstances or the paths that brought us here, we all suffer from the same disease: addiction."

Groups and members can discuss the topic of safety through a Traditions Group Inventory or by developing a group conscience on the subject, keeping in mind the practice of placing principles before personalities. Through sponsorship, workshops, and in our meetings, we can raise awareness in the Fellowship and acquire the knowledge and experience necessary to create a safe environment where recovery is possible together.

Some helpful suggestions:

- Talk about safety issues as they arise.
- Communicate clearly what C.A. is as well as what it is not.
- Encourage sponsorship which teaches appropriate behavior, pointing out warning signs or potentially unhealthy situations for sponsees and newcomers.
- Conduct a Group Inventory, which includes the topic of individual behavior and meeting safety.
- Consider developing group guidelines and safety procedures for all attendees.
- If you have any concerns regarding your own safety or that of another C.A. member, please report your concerns to the Group Secretary and/or any other longstanding group member.

- It is also acceptable to speak with the local social service agencies if you feel that there is risk of harm to a vulnerable adult or child.
- If there is an immediate risk of abuse or injury, please call the police emergency number.

Our hope is that through clear communication and the practice of appropriate safety protocols, mutual understanding can be achieved, and our meetings and Fellowship can continue to grow, flourish and be a place of kindness, understanding and love. Toward this end, groups may also wish to include the following reading as part of their meeting format:

*Anyone who has a desire to stop using cocaine and all other mind-altering substances is welcome in Cocaine Anonymous; membership looks different for everyone in the rooms of C.A. We do after all come from various backgrounds with diverse beliefs and cultural norms. By conducting ourselves appropriately, we ensure that our common welfare comes first.*

*We grow along the lines of spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection, but we also acknowledge and address behavior that can cause harm to those who attend the Fellowship. We want all our members to recover from a hopeless state of mind and body through the Twelve Steps of C.A. In so doing, we are introduced to a manner of living that brings with it peace of mind not just for the individual, but for all whose lives they may touch.*