

# REFUGE RECOVERY

## A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

### Refuge Recovery Safety Statement

Safety is a topic within Refuge Recovery that groups and members may need to address to help ensure the ability to keep our program open to all who seek it. Our Guiding Principles provide a basic structure to help guide us. We hope that the additional information provided in this safety statement will be helpful if challenges arise at in-person or virtual settings. RR groups and members must remain constantly mindful of the Third Guiding Principle that states, "All are welcome to participate in Refuge Recovery. The only criteria for membership is a desire to be free from addiction."

Everyone wants to feel safe and comfortable, and we hope the majority of people's experience in Refuge Recovery is of feeling welcomed and embraced by the Sangha. We also understand that we live in a world where all things are impermanent and unreliable. It is impossible to find permanent external safety. Much of what we are learning in Refuge Recovery is to develop a reliable internal refuge in the midst of offensive, unskillful and even unsafe situations. As a group of recovering addicts it is inevitable that topics and or situations will arise that may trigger or offend some people. One of the powerfully healing aspects of our group meetings is the honest sharing with each other of our past or current confusion and ignorance. Some of these stories may create discomfort. Being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe. We are learning how to inhabit the conditions of our present reality whether pleasant or unpleasant.

While most groups operate with a healthy balance of spontaneity and structure, there are a number of situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group and its members. Our groups strive to create a warm and welcoming environment for both the addict who has not yet established abstinence as well as those firmly engaged in the path of recovery. This includes people who will act in ways that are unskillful, unwise, and offensive. It is important to remember that some of our members have not yet developed wisdom and may still be ignorant and deluded. We are committed to inclusiveness. We are confident that we are engaged in a process of healing that will gradually end the suffering and confusion that manifests as the unskillful actions of harassment, oppression, and ignorance. In the meantime, there will likely be unskillful behavior within the Refuge Recovery community. Each member needs to develop their own wise boundaries and groups need to hold members, who act unskillfully, accountable.

RR members can individually speak to those who are acting inappropriately. This is NOT the same as a group conscience and the individual must take care not to represent the group on their own. Discussions at business meetings may be warranted to collect a group conscience about how to handle certain situations. Online meeting hosts and co-hosts have the right and a duty to remove individuals who are being intentionally disruptive for the remainder of that specific meeting. In-person meeting Secretaries and Group Representatives have the right and a duty to ask someone who is being intentionally disruptive to leave, for the remainder of that specific meeting. ***No RR entity has the power to permanently exclude or prevent any individual from ongoing membership in the program or meetings of Refuge Recovery.*** RR groups and service entities are autonomous. There is no government within RR and no central authority, legal or otherwise, to control or direct the behavior of RR members. The formation and operation of an RR group resides within the group conscience of its members. In any situation, if a person's safety is in jeopardy, or the situation breaches the law, the individuals involved should take appropriate action to ensure their safety. Calling the proper authorities does not go against any of the RR Guiding principles. As a last resort, through a group conscience vote, the meeting could request that someone stop attending that meeting if the person is consistently disruptive and

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prevents the group from functioning properly (see next paragraph). Groups that take the drastic action of requesting a person not attend a meeting do so in order to preserve the common welfare of the group and to maintain RR unity.

Although each group has autonomy and the responsibility to make decisions and navigate these difficulties, RRWS suggests that groups be patient and tolerant in the process of deciding how to handle unskillful behavior. Please consider the three strikes approach by giving disruptive or inappropriate members three chances to return to the meeting before, by a group conscience vote, asking them not to attend for a period of 30 days. If after the 30-day hiatus the previously inappropriate member returns and again acts in unskillful or offensive ways, the group may then consider voting to ask them not to attend the meeting for a period of 90 days. If after the 90-day hiatus the member returns and continues to behave unskillfully, the meeting may then consider, by a group conscience vote, asking the member to no longer attend that meeting.

It may be helpful to have a statement at the beginning of your meeting to lay the foundation of expected behavior and clarity of what is and is not acceptable in the meeting.

Groups determine the formats of their meetings reflecting their needs, experience, and group conscience. Below are a few examples of language that may be used by some RR groups as part of their introductory announcements in their efforts to create a safe meeting place. Please feel free to select or adapt one of these statements if the group votes to do so.

- *Refuge Recovery strives to be a welcoming and safe space for all who join us. **Being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe. Remember, we are learning how to inhabit the conditions of our present reality whether pleasant or unpleasant.** Our principles encourage us to be careful with our speech and actions. We strive to be tolerant and inclusive, while also being committed to compassionate boundaries with those who have not yet developed wise ways of communicating and behaving. All are welcome here but anyone acting in ways that are intentionally harmful will be asked to leave the meeting.*
- *Refuge Recovery meetings are open to all who have a desire to be free from addiction. We strive to create a community where all forms of addiction are addressed and people from all walks of life are welcomed and included. Therefore, we ask that group members refrain from any behavior that might compromise another person's welfare, safety, or ability to participate in the group. **Being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe. Remember, we are learning how to inhabit the conditions of our present reality whether pleasant or unpleasant.***

*Refuge Recovery World Services  
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