

DUAL DIAGNOSIS ANONYMOUS

THE 5 RULES OF RESPECT

The title “The Five Rules of Respect” embodies the importance of our rules. We cannot over emphasize their importance. At the beginning of our meetings we read the five rules of respect first. We read the rules before any introductions or any other readings because we need to be sure that everyone at the meeting is aware that without DDA’s “Rules of Respect” there could be no meeting. To some, it is contrary to our fellowship to have ‘rules.’ After all, 12 Step programs are guided by a loving God of our understanding and the group consciousness of the fellowship. The 12 steps and 12 traditions of DDA offer tried and true “guidelines” they do not dictate or govern. However, if ever there was a need to establish concrete rules, it is in the case of our rules of respect. There can be no compromise to the dictum of respect necessary to attract the healing and spiritual nature of recovery. Our 12th Tradition; “Confidentiality and Anonymity are the spiritual foundations of all our traditions ever reminding us that trust is a cornerstone of our fellowship and to place principles before personalities,” is embodied in our rules of respect.

Rule Number 1. First, and most importantly, who you see here and what is said here, let it stay here! (Here! Here!) Confidentiality and anonymity are the spiritual foundations that keep our recovery possible.

As our first rule states, there can be no recovery in DDA without confidentiality and anonymity. It is what’s first and it is what’s most important. This rule applies to DDAers and friends of DDA. Nothing, absolutely nothing, should be taken out of a meeting of dual diagnosis anonymous. There are exceptions to this rule. An example of an exception is if a member of DDA gives her/his permission to allow their story, or what they share in a meeting, to be repeated outside of the meeting. Our founder is one such example. His willingness to have his story told outside of meetings is consistent with his belief that to do so would be for the greater good of others. Even so, he may share some things in meetings that he emphasizes are not to be taken out of the room. Many DDAers are willing to be guided by the principle of what’s best for the greater good and will oftentimes allow their story to be shared outside of a meeting. It is absolutely imperative that before anyone shares information about another, that they have their permission. Another important point to remember about rule number one is that although we are bound by confidentiality and anonymity, in regards to others in a meeting we can discuss our experience in a meeting, or the experiences of others help (or hinder) our recovery. Many of our fellowship have benefited from the experiences of others in meetings that they were unable to attend. If you have any questions about this please contact DDA of Oregon for clarification. We also see in rule number one the words Here! Here! Here, here is a “group acknowledgement of the first and most important section of this rule. Many of us tap the table, stomp our feet, or clap to emphasize the importance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Rule number 2. Questions and answers are welcome and positive feedback is given, when asked for.

In many ways rule number two separates the DDA program from other 12 Step Fellowships. Questions and answers, as well as, feedback, is considered to be “cross talk” in some of our sister fellowships. In DDA we have learned that healing from our dual diagnosis is positively influenced by the experiences of fellowship. Countless DDAers have gained invaluable information regarding issues with medications, symptoms, therapy, prescribers, clinicians, and recovery from the fellowship at a meeting. Also, we have found that for many of us, due to our dual diagnosis, that without feedback and answers it is all but impossible to remain clean and sober on life’s terms. Indeed, this rule lends a sense of “informality” to DDA meetings that many of our fellowship find refreshingly necessary.

Rule number 3. Keep it real.

In DDA we recognize that one person’s reality may be completely out of tune with another’s. Keep it real has little to do with the varying “realities” of our diverse membership. Sometimes symptoms of our mental illness may contribute to a reality that others in our fellowship may not understand. Keep it real essentially means be honest. Be honest to the very best of our ability. If we are rigorously honest, remaining focused on ourselves and our recovery, we are keeping it real!

Rule number 4. Try not to disrupt the group.

The operative word of caution in this rule is “try.” A little history is appropriate here. The five rules of respect were originally written as the six rules of respect by the Columbia River Correctional Institute, Bridgepoint Chapter of DDA in January 2003. The six rules of respect were condensed to five rules by our founder in July of 2003. Originally, rule number four was much more direct stating; “Do NOT disrupt the group!” It was at an evening DDA meeting in 2003, a meeting attended by Corbett, that this rule was assertively applied to a DDAer that happened to be experiencing auditory hallucinations. These hallucinations resulted in laughter and mumbling, somewhat distracting the other DDAers. When a DDAer reminded the fellow who was responding to his voices, of this rule by saying, “Hey, do not disrupt the group” Corbett changed the rule later that night to “Try not to disrupt the group.” After all, it seemed that Corbett and many other DDAers can be quite disruptive as a result of their inability to remain focused and on track. Another point, coming from Corbett; “It’s dangerous because I think I can be funny and inject a certain ability to laugh at myself and my life experiences. This ability may in fact appear disruptive so I commit to “Trying” not to disrupt the group!”

Rule number 5. It is ok to pass if you do not wish to share.

Rule number five is another important rule that cannot be emphasized enough. For many of us, it is important to “just show up” at a meeting. Countless among us, learn from listening to others. As is heard in other 12 step fellowships when you begin our program; “take the cotton out of your ears, and put it in your mouth!” We must not insist or require others in our fellowship to share. The rules are, after all, rules of respect, and we must honor ones choice to “pass’ during a meeting. Sometimes, meetings that are scheduled for an hour may last 30 minutes because DDAers chooses not to share. DDA recognizes this and therefore, meetings remain very flexible in this regard.