



DUAL DIAGNOSIS ANONYMOUS

ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Introduction

In DDA we find the references to confidentiality and anonymity at Rule Number 1 in the 5 Rules of respect and Tradition Number 12 of our 12 Traditions. Rule Number 1, which is read at the beginning of every DDA meeting states: “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.” Tradition 12 also reinforces this rule by asserting that: “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.”

CONFIDENTIALITY

In DDA the meaning of confidentiality is found at rule number 1 of the 5 rules of respect, “...what is said here, let it stay here.” It is also emphasized within Tradition 12 of our 12 Traditions, “...trust is a cornerstone of our fellowship...” Confidentiality embraces the importance of keeping in the strictest of confidence anything we hear within the walls of our meetings. The difference between confidentiality and anonymity in DDA is that confidentiality refers to “what is said and what you hear” and anonymity refers to “who you see.” Whether a person in a meeting is in recovery from dual diagnosis or a member of DDA’s extended family,*all must hold true to this vital requirement.

ANONYMITY

In DDA the meaning of anonymity is found in the 12th tradition that admonishes us to “place principles before personalities.” Simply put, this means that it is the MESSAGE of the principles of recovery in DDA that transcends the individual. No matter what one’s status or station in life may be; or their reputation in the world; or how well known or popular they may be; or how much power one wields in their surroundings, in DDA, because we place principles before personalities, we are equal in our fellowship as brothers and sisters in recovery. This principle extends to DDA’s extended family* as well. We cannot overemphasize this tradition.

For it is the recovery principles of our fellowship that drive our spiritual journey of recovery and lead to DDA's assertion that "we do recover and that this recovery is evidenced in the quality and life satisfaction of those of us who follow the DDA way." (Tradition 11) We also find the essence of anonymity in Rule Number 1 of the 5 Rules of Respect that are read at the beginning of every DDA meeting: "First and most importantly who you see here and what is said here, let it stay here! Confidentiality and anonymity are the spiritual foundations that keep our recovery possible." This rule underscores the reality that we could not, indeed we would not, be able to successfully experience the power of support in the fellowship of DDA if one or more persons in a meeting were to violate our trust by sharing anything about us outside the walls of our meetings without our permission.

In DDA we hold in equal esteem an individual's right to openly identify as a DDA'er or to remain anonymous. DDA acknowledges that the stigma associated with mental illness continues to carry a most profound negative perception. The ignorance and misunderstanding of mental illness often leads to ostracizing and/or discrimination, and thus, many among us have readily forsaken our personal anonymity with the perceived understanding that to do so would be for the greater good. Oftentimes this perception is based upon the recognition that to self identify as a person with a mental illness would contribute to a greater understanding and acceptance of mental illness. There may be no better example of this than to consider the impact of former first lady Betty Ford's candor regarding her own struggles with substance abuse. Her courage changed how substance abuse is viewed and "promoted the importance of treatment and access to care for all." (Betty Ford Center)

There are many in our fellowship who hold their anonymity, as well as the anonymity of others in the highest regard. In DDA, one's personal choice regarding their personal anonymity is honored with equal emphasis. The decision regarding one's anonymity is deeply personal and we insist that all within our fellowship respect and honor each DDAer's choice. Please note a strong word of caution here. If one is not certain, beyond a shadow of a doubt, whether or not a DDA'er has given her or his permission to share their personal information outside of a meeting, one must NEVER do so! The only certain way to know a DDAer's personal stance regarding their anonymity is to learn of it directly from that person and never through second parties.

*Our extended family includes all those who, although not identifying as dually diagnosed, support the DDA 12 Steps plus 5 program of recovery. These persons include; family members, friends, prescribers, clinicians, clergy and/or any other supportive persons.