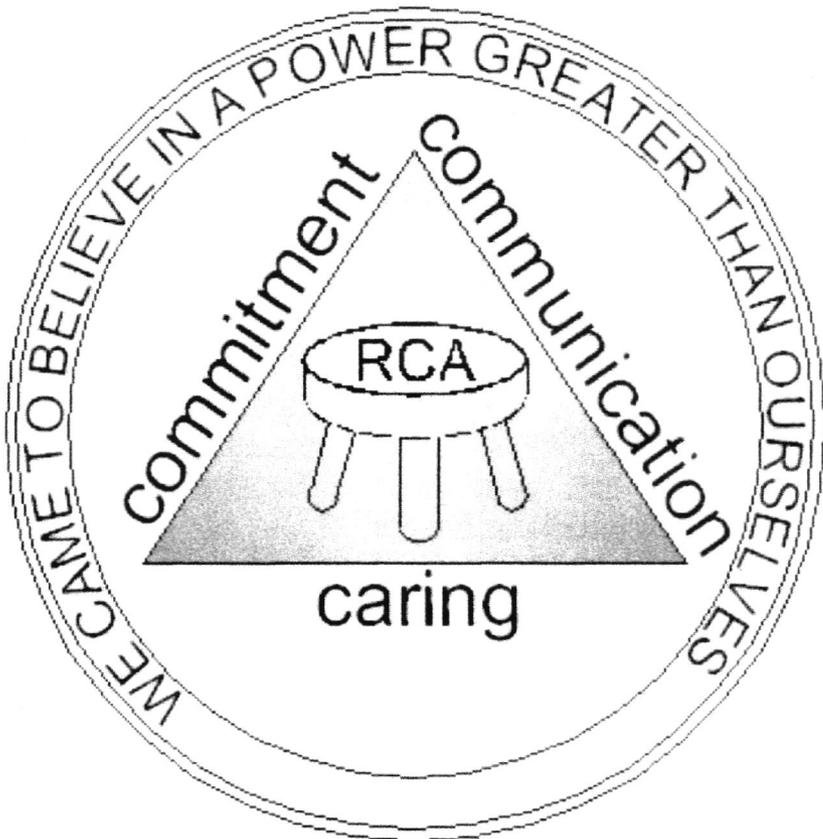


**RCA**

# **Safety Guidelines for Couples' Step Work and Recovery Meetings**

*Three of RCA's Founders Share  
Their Experience, Strength and Hope*



Many recovering couples have found that the following guidelines greatly enhance their ability to communicate.

### **1. It is OK to feel.**

As you share at RCA recovery meetings and as you work RCA's Twelve Steps, you may find that old and sometimes forgotten memories will surface. Some of you will be familiar with the emotions these memories elicit, but for others, this will be a new experience. There will be times when you'll feel anger, sadness or anxiety about the problems you are discussing. It is perfectly okay to feel the emotions that arise and to talk about them with each other.

Occasionally some of your feelings may seem stuck or blocked; in fact, one of your difficulties as a couple may be that one or both of you are not able to feel emotions. At other times, you may feel like your emotions are overwhelming.

Your work here may trigger the memory of some type of abuse you experienced in the past. If it does, an overwhelming feeling of sadness, anxiety or anger is likely to surface. As these memories and feelings surface, you are encouraged to take time out and talk over your feelings with your partner or your couple sponsors.

You have permission to feel your emotions. Your body / mind will allow you to feel only the level of emotion you are capable of handling at any given

time. You are encouraged not to judge each other's feelings. Your feelings are never right or wrong, they are simply your feelings -- real for you at the time you are feeling them. Remember that it is always okay to feel.

## **2. It is OK to make mistakes.**

Some of us were told in our growing-up families that we were worthless and wouldn't amount to anything. We were always seen as making mistakes or causing trouble. No matter what we accomplished, it never seemed good enough. We felt inadequate and became afraid of making mistakes, and we may have covered up our actual mistakes through dishonesty. For us, mistakes equal failure and self-disappointment.

Some of us concluded that only if we could be perfect could we be acceptable as people. Because of the shaming and blaming we experienced, we've become defensive about being criticized and accused of making mistakes.

Some of us suffer self-criticism stemming from our need to be perfect in our relationship, leading to a kind of wall that keeps us apart and distant from our partner. It is okay to let our partners see our imperfections and limitations. It is okay to ask for advice, and to involve others in our decisions. It is okay to talk about our anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. It is okay to admit our mistakes and see our own limits.