

Tradition Three:

The only requirement for RCA membership is a desire to have a healthy, committed relationship.

This tradition forestalls any exclusion due to economic or cultural class, race, beliefs either religious or political, sexual orientation, monogamy or polygamy, type of dysfunction be it gambling, CODA, sex addiction, drug addiction, or no previous 12-step experience.

Sometimes meetings have a special focus for safety of its attendees, such as a gay couple meeting or a sex addicts meeting. Since groups are autonomous, this is OK although such special focus RCA groups must clearly label themselves as such and preferably not be the only RCA meeting available in an area as this might affect RCA as a whole, making it unavailable in that area to couples not having that special focus. The purpose is to enhance RCA, not diminish its availability to a geographical area.

How about singles? We are couples, but within our coupleships we are individuals. This makes Tradition 3 for RCA different from other 12-step groups in that we all began life as “singles”, have spent time “between” relationships, and may due to death or separation or divorce, find ourselves desiring to be in a healthy committed relationship but without a partner. Are we then ineligible for RCA membership? Groups can designate themselves “closed” meetings for currently committed couples only, but some groups may choose to designate themselves “open” meetings for both singles and couples. We have found that open meetings that draw singles show people who have experienced severe pain of dysfunctional coupleships that they have given up on couple love, resigning themselves to a life of loneliness rather than “gamble” again on coupleship. These people come to RCA, see couples working the program together and have hope as they see RCA as the missing link in their past broken relationships, giving them hope that healthy relationship is possible in RCA. This may give them the hope and tools they need to “try again”. We have found that these “singles” RCAers often come to a few meetings and then do not attend regularly, until they find themselves in a “new” coupleship or are restarting a previous one. It is possible, because of their single membership participation, that they know RCA is here for them when as opportunity for couple love presents itself. They do not have to say “no” due to the painful memories of past coupleships undiluted with the hope RCA brings.

And how about loss of coupleship status due to separation or divorce? One member of the couple has the desire to “remain” in a committed relationship while the other does not. And, what about widowhood? How can any of us withstand the grief of loss of our partner to death if suddenly we find ourselves no longer members of RCA? Suddenly without our primary support group of people who knew our coupleship and thus can empathize with our loss? These situations are unique to RCA. How does RCA handle them and remain RCA? By acknowledging that these are all parts of coupleship: just as an alcoholic is an alcoholic before, during, between and after drinking and can benefit from AA during all these phases, we as individuals are at various stages in coupleship:

Pre-coupleship: dreaming that our prince or princess will come

Early-coupleship: when all happiness seems within our grasp

Hurting-coupleship: when the reality of our individual brokenness implodes on our coupleships

Recovering-coupleship: when we realize we are powerless over our relationships and begin working the 12 steps of RCA in a support group of other RCA members

Broken-coupleship: due to death, separation or divorce

When is coupleship not right for the individuals within it? Finding this out in the context of an RCA group can be much less destructive than fighting it out alone as a couple.