

Being Safe in Subud

By Karim Murphy

What does it mean to be safe in Subud? Financially safe, spiritually safe, personally safe, friendship safe, group safe. Have you ever been yelled at by another Subud member, or belittled, or talked about behind your back or pressured to go in a direction you didn't want to go? Cases of financial abuse need to be addressed, but so do other types of abuse, such as verbal abuse, threats, etc.

Is Subud a safe place to be? Are the funds we invest safe? Do we feel safe to fully let go and experience the truth of ourselves and our brothers and sisters in spirit? Are the relationships we have with our Subud brothers and sisters safe from abuse?

Unfortunately the answer is *no*. Subud does not at this stage take the steps needed to protect itself or its members from abuse by those who would wilfully do harm.

So, who do we blame? Do we blame the abuser? Or maybe we should blame ourselves, i.e. I am to blame; it's my lack of surrender that allowed this to happen. Maybe we should blame the committee or the helpers for not keeping it all under control.

The truth is that nobody is blamed. What seems to be happening is that we are all trying so hard to be spiritual that we tend to ignore or turn away from any and all controversy. We equate controversy with a lack of faith or surrender and we forget to be *normal*.

I don't believe we have ever truly addressed these issues and we don't have in place any concrete systems that everyone is educated about to deal with them. Can you really blame the perpetrator who possibly believes that what they are doing is a good and right thing? Or there's the person who states, 'I had a dream that told me to burn down the old shed', or claims, 'In my latihan I saw that a certain person is possessed by the devil and I have to attack the devil in them', or the person who is short of funds and then finds himself on the committee as treasurer and helps himself to some money (God put me in that position so I could get the financial help I needed).

Maybe we are not ignoring it, maybe we simply don't know what to do; maybe those who once used to deal with such issues have become worn out and just can't do it anymore and there is nobody else at this time to take on these challenges. So how do normal people in society deal with all these different issues?

What's normal, how do normal people make their lives safe, their finances safe, their churches safe, their friendships safe, and their group activities safe? This will differ from place to place, country to country and person to person. Also, what is normal changes as situations change. Like Bapak's testing about money. If I ask you to look after \$10 for a time, it's probably safe, but if I ask you to look after several million, it might not be so safe. Equally, as Subud changes and groups become bigger and members donate more money, the way we handle things needs to change. The dynamics of a group will be very different as it grows larger, and it becomes harder for members to be safe from those that are looking to do harm.

What's the answer? I wish I knew the definitive answer but I doubt there is one. All I can do is make a few suggestions that, if implemented, might help groups keep their members a little safer from those that would wilfully do harm.

1. Have all financial records audited annually and make the audit public for all members.
2. Make it mandatory for all groups to use registered book-keeping software such as MYOB or

MYBOOKS, for two examples. The only person who won't use this type of software is someone out to do harm.

3. Place all finances in a registered and managed trust fund and have a minimum of 5 to 7 trustees. This number of trustees will go a long way towards preventing collusion. Collusion is where two or three or more people get together and collectively choose to do harm.

4. Do not allow the promotion of projects that have no management plan or code of ethics or financial plan or professional managers.

5. Only invest money you would be happy to lose, i.e. money that, if you lost it all, would cause no feeling of regret. For most people this probably means less than \$100.

6. We all like to help our fellow Subud members when they are doing good. But how do you help your Subud brother or sister when they are doing harm? You help them by stopping them! Controversy is often associated with someone trying to hide their harmful intentions but it is often difficult to find the true source of the controversy.

7. Never test anything financial. Remember that money is not used in the next world and is only for this world. The latihan is here to prepare us for the next world and to help us live our lives in a better way.

8. Remember that committee members are there to do what the group wants and should never act without the approval and support of their group.

9. When fraud or financial irregularities are found, have it properly investigated by the police. Let the police decide whether a crime has taken place and help them to do their job. If no crime is found, then nothing will happen. Let the police make the decision to prosecute or not. We are not trained in law or in investigating and it's not the members' job or the helpers' job or the committee's job to make such decisions.

I am not advocating that we throw the book at people, I am simply saying that if we constantly let people abuse us and do nothing about it, then it will never stop; the threats, the lies, the extortion will continue unabated. What happens must be evidence based.

10. Take all members' complaints about another member's behaviour seriously. Investigate properly and report the findings, preferably in writing. Do not force adversaries to do testing together.

Provide real services to members. For accusations of intimidation, bullying or harassment, have the committee and the helpers ask the person to stop the action that is causing issues.

Make it easy for members to submit their concerns both to the helpers and the committee. People often leave issues unresolved because helpers are not available to do testing or the wrong helpers are active at times when they really need to be inactive.

11. Are the helpers doing their job? How would we know? It is when we see disharmony that we think there is an issue. It has always been stated that Subud will only move forward if the helpers are getting it right. Having a wrong active helper in a group can be very disruptive to a group. So how do we get the right helpers to be active or inactive as needed?

One method might be to have all local helpers tested yearly in front of the entire group as to whether it is right for them to continue as active helpers for the following year. And before asking this question, all the helpers should test before the group how it is when they receive something that is truly right. This way everyone has a starting point for measuring their receiving.

There is some precedent for this as all helper roles above that of local are tested in on a

short term basis, so why not the local helpers as well?

12. Maybe you have suggestions of your own that would help to make Subud a better, safer environment for all members.

In summary I would say when I feel safe, I feel happy. I want to feel when I come to Subud for latihan or various events that this is my home away from home, the family I wish my real family would be like. I don't want to be placed in a situation where I or others would be tempted to do harm.

Keep everyone safe and make everyone happy.