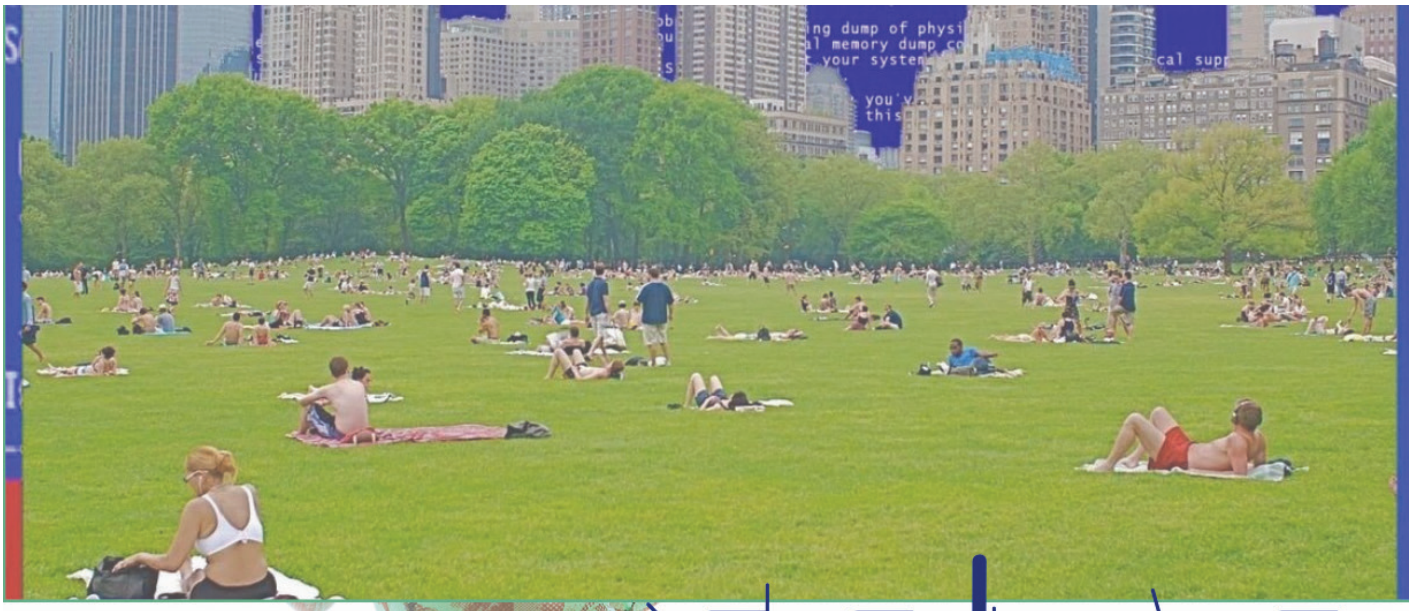
YEAR XLI - NO. 7 - SEPTEMBER 2026



SERENIDADE



SPECIAL: ONLINE MEETINGS

NA-PT.ORG

SERVICE EDITORS

EDITORIAL

PAULO O. - GRATEFUL ADDICT

"Let's have a moment of silence for the addicts who are still suffering, both inside and outside these rooms, for their families, and for those who have already passed away."

That's how a meeting ends, give or take, concluding with the Serenity Prayer.

Sometimes I find myself thinking about the number of addicts who have passed through our meeting rooms–whether briefly or persistently–but who didn't stay and are still suffering or, in the worst cases, have already passed away. Since I have a vivid imagination, it occurs to me that these are the most anonymous of all, and that perhaps we should have a statue or a day dedicated to the addict who died from this illness. Then I remember that I didn't even serve in the military, take a deep breath, and get on with my life.

On a more serious note, it was an addict who couldn't stay clean and ultimately died from this illness, the first person in recovery to tell me he liked me, that I was a cool guy, and to treat me like a friend. Did it make a difference? A huge one. He passed away a few weeks ago, and I hope he has finally found peace.

The peace that comes from recovery has become even more attainable with the proliferation of online meetings during the pandemic. Some people like it, some don't; some embrace it, and some are repelled by it–but the message has reached farther and more addicts since online meetings became the norm. We're taking this issue as an opportunity to feature a special section on these meetings, offering some perspectives and opportunities (for those with an open mind) to reflect on the subject.

We also have the usual recovery testimonials and reports on some events, in the words of those involved, along with a touch of humor.

We (really) hope you enjoy it. +24



If you'd like to see your story published, or send in an opinion, ideas, or even drawings, contact us by email: **serenidade@na-pt.org**

Débora S.

PRHI
NA Behind Bars

Gratitude is the feeling that best describes what I feel for this fellowship. Just imagine – I feel privileged to be able to attend a meeting every 15 days. They're few and far between, I know, but they're powerful; they're very important to us. If only you knew how valuable they are...

I discovered NA many years ago, but for whatever reason - I mean, my dishonesty - I couldn't bring myself to accept that I was sick, which led me to fight against all the help that was always offered to me. Thanks to my Higher Power, who is stubborn as hell and who never gave up on me, people from NA kept showing up to pull me out of the depths and back to the surface. I think He also brought me to the women's group in Santa Cruz do Bispo, so I could start attending meetings, hearing life stories so similar to mine–stories that have led to lives that are, at the very least, clean.

Seeing that it's possible to live without using and that life just goes on is wonderful. It feels good; I've stopped running away. I'm trapped, yet I'm free. I love to laugh, cry, despair, and yearn–all the things I never wanted to feel. Now I cherish them; I love waking up to another day of group meetings, of laughter, of annoyances, but of inner growth. I like the mature woman I've become; I'm grateful every day for being alive and for having a wonderful family. I like feeling love–for myself and for others.

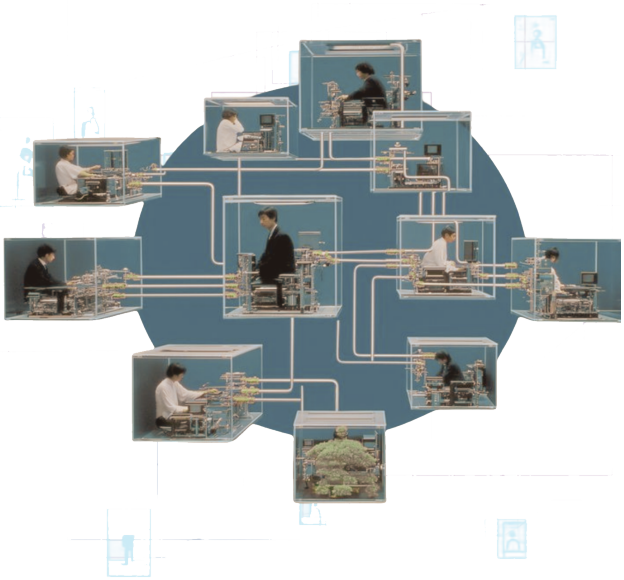
I'm truly grateful that NA doesn't forget about addicts who are behind bars and for making us feel like we're part of something magical, because it's us–the people–who give the greatest meaning to this, which is life. We all need each other, because we can't do it alone.

Thank you, Sofia, for everything you do for us, and Catarina, come back as soon as you can. We miss you, and you're our "little girl."

Thank you so much, on behalf of all the female addicts who are in prison and even on behalf of those who have been released and remain involved in NA.
You give us a purpose in life.

Débora S.

WE ARE PRESENCE *



**WHERE I AM NOT,
YOU DO NOT EXIST** * * *

Fernando F.

Retiring while in Recovery

Hello, my name is Fernando, and I am an addict.

I have been in recovery since April 20, 2001. I was born in Mozambique in the former city of Lourenço Marques–now Maputo–in 1956.

I started using drugs at age 17. I came to Portugal in 1977, finished my fifth year of high school, and joined the military in 1978. I always used drugs - even while I was in the military. I lived with my parents until the day they passed away; I was in prison when I lost them.

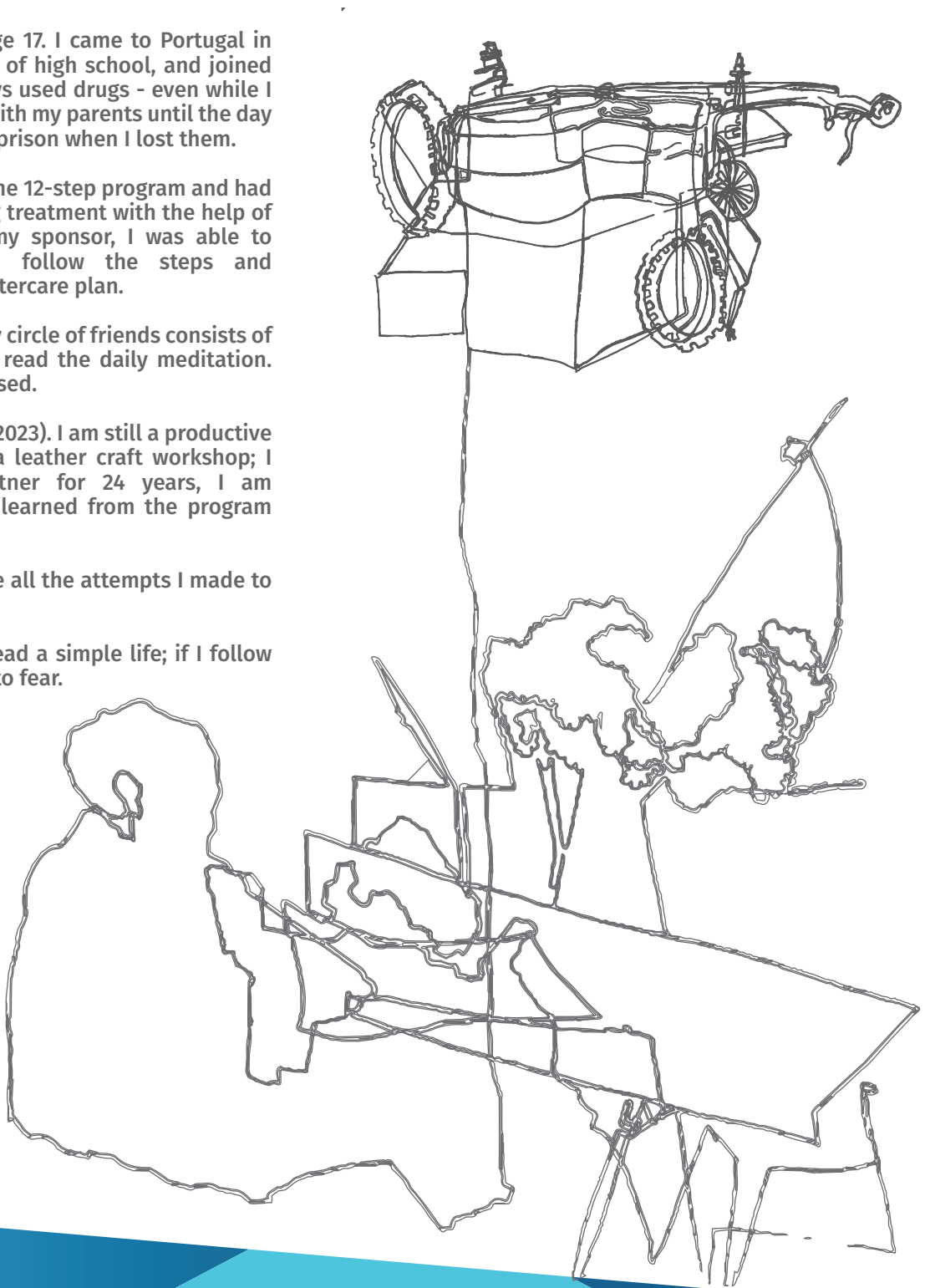
When I was introduced to the 12-step program and had the privilege of undergoing treatment with the help of the person who is now my sponsor, I was able to complete treatment and follow the steps and recommendations of the aftercare plan.

I attend my home group. My circle of friends consists of family and NA members; I read the daily meditation. Twenty-five years have passed.

Today I am retired – (since 2023). I am still a productive member of society–I run a leather craft workshop; I have lived with my partner for 24 years, I am self-sufficient, and I have learned from the program how to be happy.

I am grateful to NA because all the attempts I made to stop using never worked.

Today, I'm more likely to lead a simple life; if I follow this path, I'll have nothing to fear.



Lileana

Recovery travels with me, too

For a long time, Lisbon meant many things to me.
It was a dream; it was freedom; it was opportunity; it was an escape.
It was loneliness; it was excess; it was loss.
And, at one point, it was also the place where I destroyed myself.
I can't tell my story in Lisbon without acknowledging the choices I made, the people I let into my life, the people I let stay, the places where I lost myself, and all the times I looked outside myself for what I didn't know how to find within.
I went through different phases, people, environments, and different versions of myself.
I drifted further and further away from who I was, and without realizing it, I built a life that, on the outside, might have seemed one thing, but on the inside was becoming increasingly empty.
Until one day I could no longer pretend that everything was fine. It was in Lisbon that I began my recovery.
And perhaps this is one of the greatest contradictions in my story: The city where I destroyed myself so much was also the city where I began to save my life.
I walked into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting without really knowing what to expect.
I remember arriving filled with fear, shame, suspicion, and an enormous difficulty in believing that those people could truly understand what was going on inside me;
But they did understand. I didn't need to explain everything. I didn't need to justify who I had been. I didn't need to hide the parts of myself that I was ashamed of.
I met people who accepted me just as I was.
Recovering addicts who showed me, through their own lives, that it was possible to stop. That it was possible to stay clean. That it was possible to feel again. That it was possible to rebuild.
And I found my sponsor.
Someone who came into my life in that place and who, ever since, has become an essential presence on my journey.
Lisbon thus came to have two meanings for me.
It's the place where I lost myself. But it's also the place where I found my way back.
Over the years, I've formed very strong bonds with people who are part of my recovery. People who saw me arrive – broken–and who watched me grow.
People with whom I've shared tears, laughter, fears, doubts, meetings, hugs, and so many of those moments that only another addict can truly understand.
So when I decided to move back north, one of the hardest things wasn't packing my boxes.
It was saying goodbye to people.
Because I wasn't just leaving a city. I was physically distancing myself from a part of my recovery family.
And there were moments when I wondered if I was doing the right thing.
My move back north happened for several family-related reasons. There were roots I felt I needed to return to. There was my family. There was a home. There was a story calling me.
But there was also a reason that took me longer to recognize: I needed to reconnect with the child that was Lili.
About that girl who grew up in the North.
About the girl who used to play, who had animals, nature, her family, her grandparents, the land. About the girl who existed before I learned so many ways to run away from myself. Perhaps this change is, in part, an attempt to tell her:
"I'm back."
I didn't come back because everything is resolved.
I didn't come back because I now know exactly what I want to do with my life.
I didn't come back because I'm no longer afraid.
I came back because today I can look back without needing to run away from what I see. And that's very different.
The truth is that coming back has also been difficult. Being close to family brings beautiful things, but it also brings challenges.
Some family members understand my journey, respect what I'm going through, and realize that recovery isn't simply "stopping my substance use."
And there are others who don't understand.
Maybe because they haven't lived through what I've lived through.
Maybe because they still see me through the lens of the past.
Perhaps because, for those on the outside, it's hard to realize that stopping using is just the beginning of a much greater transformation.
Sometimes I have to accept that not everyone will understand.
And that, too, is part of my recovery.
I'm learning that I don't need everyone to validate my path in order to keep moving forward on it.

Recovery travels **with me, too**

And it was precisely when I began to feel these difficulties that something happened that had already happened to me in Lisbon.
I arrived at the recovery meetings in the North.
And, once again, I met people who didn't need to know my whole story to welcome me.
They welcomed me. Simply. With open arms.
Once again, I met addicts who made me feel like I belonged. And that touched me deeply;
Because I realized that what had saved me in Lisbon wasn't Lisbon. Nor was it a particular meeting room.
It was the people. It was the sense of connection.
It was being able to walk into a room and find someone who knows what it's like to wake up with a head full of thoughts we can't silence.
Someone who knows what it's like to fight against obsession.
Someone who knows what it's like to be ashamed of who we used to be.
Someone who knows that recovery doesn't happen just when we stop using, but when we begin, little by little, to learn how to live.
And I realized something very beautiful: I can move to a different city without losing my recovery.
I can leave Lisbon and still stay connected to the people I love.
I can form new bonds without replacing the old ones.
I can have a new home and still carry with me everything I've learned. I can belong to more than one place.
And, above all, I can continue to be myself.
Today I'm in the North.
I'm still learning to be here.
I'm learning to be closer to my family, to deal with what that stirs up in me, to build a new professional life, to make new friends, and to discover who I am at this stage of my life.
There are days when I feel at peace.
There are days when I feel homesick.
There are days when I question everything.
There are days when I'm afraid.
But today I have tools I didn't have before. And when I don't know what to do, I no longer need to destroy everything.
I can stop.
I can ask for help.
I can call someone.
I can go to a meeting.
I can talk to my sponsor.
I can listen to another addict.
I can simply wait.
I can choose not to act on what I feel. Perhaps this is the real change.
It's not Lisbon or the North. It's not the old house or the new house. It's not being close to or far from family. It's knowing that, wherever I am, I don't need to lose myself again.
For a long time, I thought I needed to escape Lisbon.
Today I realize that what I really needed was to leave a place where I could no longer grow in the same way.
And maybe I also needed to return to the place where an important part of my story began, to rediscover a part of myself that had been forgotten.
My childhood self, Lili.
I don't know exactly what will happen from here on out.
And, for the first time, that doesn't scare me so much.
Because I no longer need to know how the story ends to keep writing it.
My little Lili.
I don't know exactly what's going to happen from here on out.
And, for the first time, that doesn't scare me as much.
Because I no longer need to know how the story ends to keep writing it.
Lisbon was part of my downfall.
Lisbon was part of my recovery.
And now the North is part of my rebuilding.
I take with me the people I met along the way.
I take my godmother. I take the rooms. I take all the hugs.
I take all the times someone told me I could do it when I still didn't believe it.
And I also take the certainty that, once again, when I arrived at a new place, the Sisterhood opened the door for me.

Maybe that's what "just for today" means to me.
Not knowing where I'll be tomorrow.

But knowing that, wherever I am, I'm not alone. And this time, when I say "I'm back home," I'm not just talking about the North. I'm talking about myself.



Unity Day

It's one of the most beautiful Recovery celebrations.

The reason is obvious: There are so many of us, all over the world, with the same purpose, the same Program, in so many languages – yet we don't even need to translate or understand; all we have to do is walk into a meeting room and choose a seat.

We are among Brothers; we understand one another. We all feel the same way.

It is a wonderful feeling to belong to something Greater, when we join hands and pray with the entire World Fellowship–the Prayer that saves us every day, the hope we seek to convey to those who still doubt this path, and the silent respect for those who have passed away as victims of this disease.

"This circle symbolizes that together we can achieve what we were never able to do alone."

And hand in hand with a friend or a stranger, we whisper or shout an appeal transformed into a prayer–that we may be serene, courageous, and wise, we and our brothers and sisters, regardless of race, gender, or creed, in a universal union.

It's two or three magical minutes. A time when you feel both love and determination.

My son turned 23, and on his birthday, he got a tattoo of the three words from the Serenity Prayer.





VCNAAS
Side by Side

On the weekend of September 5 and 6, the 5th NA Convention of the Southern Area took place in Barreiro. I've never written about a convention before, so I'm not sure what's most important to highlight–whether it's the program, the theme, the speakers, or the organization itself... So, I'm going to focus mainly on what I felt.

It opened on Saturday at 11:00 a.m. A huge auditorium, great audiovisuals, and the Marathon was also online. There was also a merch stand, and registration was super efficient, using a QR code.

And it was two jam-packed days! Full of positive messages, reunions with people I hadn't seen in years, spending time with those I consider close to me, with my Service colleagues–in short, it was butterflies in my stomach, catching up with old friends, laughter, more serious conversations–everything I usually experience and love at Conventions.

Someone who didn't know me offered me a ticket to dinner, and she was so genuine about it that it moved me deeply.

The venue was fantastic, with a lake, ducks, and a charming little bridge–the kind that makes for a great spot for the usual selfies. And the heat.....!!!!!!

So, between the auditorium, the sharing sessions, and the outdoor coffee break, I spent my time savoring the company of my friends and their smiles.

Dinner was duck rice, which was great (yes, I thought the same thing, but no!!!!), salad, and dessert, and the service and the entire organization were impeccable.

Halfway through dinner, we followed the Unit's schedule. We all got up from the table and formed a giant circle to shout the Serenity Prayer at the top of our lungs, along with the rest of the world.

There was a party, but we were exhausted, and by midnight everyone was already snoring.

The next day, we took the opportunity to stroll a bit along the shore (river? ocean? oh, don't ask me these things!!!), had lunch, and returned to the Convention for another afternoon dedicated to recovery.

I should mention that I was accompanied by a newcomer, whose perspective on what she was experiencing really piqued my curiosity. But if there's one thing that truly stirs the heart of someone seeking recovery, it's a Convention.

The final shares in the Auditorium were so moving they brought tears to my eyes–because of their depth, their message, and also the joyful atmosphere.

And after a break during which I had–surprise, surprise–a lesson on how to use a mop (ahahaahahahahahahahaah), we joined our Area, our everyday companions, and SIDE BY SIDE, we celebrated our clean times, lived one day at a time.

Congratulations to the Organizing Committee of Área Sul! It was a convention filled with unity, friendship, lots of laughter, a few tears, and above all, a reminder of just how good life is on this side...

Thank you for moments like these, for this camaraderie – thank you for everything!
And +24h!



European Convention in Norway

Hello! I don't think I'm the best person to write about this topic. I'm very laid-back, and my passion for conventions is always the same no matter where in the world they take place—to feel life that was once "dead," to feel the people... and that's it!

In Norway, we were all there—from every corner and place—representing our brotherhood with joy, unity, love, and respect, smiling at one another without needing to speak the same language.

The country is beautiful and unforgettable, carved by the northern seas, awakened by the long hours of daylight. I left a party where the light made it feel like I was leaving an after-hours party—and it was 1 a.m.!!

I set aside three days for myself to try to participate in almost all the sharing sessions in the auditorium. One of the women in the room was staying nearby, and the fact that her hotel was right next to the event venue was wonderful (I even went to her place to use the restroom) xD

Recovery in Norway is the same as it is in Portugal: together we're stronger, more sensitive, more beautiful, and more grateful, and the convention recharged my batteries for a while.

The gratitude I feel always reminds me that as long as I continue to feel grateful for what I have, recognize where I came from and where I might go (for better or worse), I'll never stop being in recovery and will keep attending conventions with joy.

Maria

A Year of Service, A Convention of Hope

From July 31 to August 2, the Netherlands hosted the 2nd International LGBTQIA+ Convention of Narcotics Anonymous in Amsterdam. This event was carefully planned and took place during WorldPride Amsterdam 2026, which brought thousands of people from around the world to the city.

We, the trusted servants who made this convention possible, worked for about a year to make this dream a reality. One of the biggest challenges was finding a venue where everyone could feel safe, welcome, and free to live their recovery. Organizing a Narcotics Anonymous convention during WorldPride required a great deal of preparation, responsibility, and dedication.

We know that many people in the LGBTQIA+ community also struggle with the disease of addiction. It was precisely for this reason that a group of LGBTQIA+ members of Narcotics Anonymous believed it was important to organize this convention: to offer a space of belonging, hope, and recovery to anyone who might need it.

Over the course of many months, countless meetings were held. Several service committees were formed, and little by little, an international team was assembled, made up of members from the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The diversity of nationalities, cultures, and experiences was extraordinary. Despite their differences, they shared a common goal: to carry the message of recovery to the addict who is still suffering.

I had the privilege of serving on the Decoration Committee. Our idea was to repurpose materials from previous Narcotics Anonymous conventions and give them new life. We restored decorations, refreshed paintings, and added the colors of the LGBTQIA+ flag, creating a more welcoming and joyful atmosphere.

One of the most special adventures was renting a heat press machine to produce Narcotics Anonymous symbols in the LGBTQIA+ colors so we could press the NA symbols onto T-shirts and bags that members brought. It wasn't an easy process. We had to learn, experiment, and sometimes start over. But with perseverance and teamwork, we managed to achieve the result we had envisioned.

As with any major service project, we also faced challenges. There were differences of opinion, moments of tension, and very distinct personalities working together. However, the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous proved stronger than any differences. Whenever difficulties arose, we returned to dialogue, respect, humility, and our common purpose. Instead of giving up, we continued to move forward together.

When the convention finally opened its doors and we saw members from so many countries gathered in recovery, we realized that all the effort had been worth it. The smiles, the hugs, the meetings, and the spirit of unity reminded us that the message of Narcotics

Anonymous transcends borders, cultures, and differences.

For me, being part of this convention was an unforgettable experience. Not only because of the work we accomplished, but because it showed me, once again, that when we put principles before personalities, we are capable of building something truly special.

I will carry this experience with me for the rest of my recovery. And I hope this convention is just one more step toward helping more and more addicts find hope, a sense of belonging, and a new way of life.

José

Amsterdam LGBT Convention
Living Clean Living Proud

Hi, I'm Maria, and I'm an addict. I've been clean and in recovery for 19 months and 13 days.

I'm here to share my experience at the LGBT convention in Amsterdam.

I really wanted to go, but until almost the very last day, I wasn't sure if it would be possible, since I was in Italy working. I had to hand it over to my sponsor! I'll tell you about my Saturday, from the moment I set out until I finally made it to Amsterdam. I never gave up!

I woke up at 5:30 a.m., since I had an Uber at 6:10 a.m. to catch my flight to Lille, France. It was finally time to return to Belgium. My nerves and anxiety were really getting to me! When I arrived at the airport, the flight was delayed! Oh no... "Just let it go," as my godmother says...

We landed in Brussels and I had to run to catch the train to get to my car. Another hour, but it was finally happening!

I finally got home at 2:00 p.m., dropped off my suitcase, and packed a backpack.

Off to the car. I got to the street where I'd left the car, and it wasn't there. Seriously?! I'm sure I parked it right there on the street without paying. What could have happened? My mind immediately went into self-pity mode—"Everything happens to me"—and I thought, "Fine, I'm not going anymore!" But the program taught me to step back from the problem and find a solution. I went back home, grabbed the electric car, and headed to the police station. I got so angry that the officer told me to calm down and said she would check where the car was. So what happened was that they put up the street-cleaning sign, and since the car was still parked there, they towed it!

And where did they take it? Keep in mind that since it was Saturday, everything was closed. But by then, my mind was already focused on figuring out the train situation! The officer gave me the number for the person in charge of the impound lot where the cars are towed. I called, and since it hadn't been towed with a ticket, it was outside the closed parking lot. And off I went, finally on my way to find the car. I got off the tram and headed out!

I managed to get to Amsterdam, to the convention, at 5:00 p.m.—just in time to hear the two final sharing sessions. My NA friends were waiting for me, ready for that hug we always share!

This was my 6th convention! There were 253 recovering addicts there! When I walked in, I have to admit the addicts seemed "different"! I felt like I was being watched, but I was made to feel welcome! In any Narcotics Anonymous meeting or convention, I always feel like I belong and am among my own! It's magical.

The sharing session was about Acceptance. That is, accepting that I'm an addict and that I have a disease—and that the speakers, in addition to their addiction, have to accept their sexuality. That was the big "difference" I felt at this convention. The sharing focused heavily on sexuality, as it pertains to the LGBT community—that is, bisexuals, trans people, and non-binary individuals (a term for people whose gender identity doesn't fit into the traditional male-female binary).

I felt that it's quite difficult to deal with our sexuality and everything that surrounds it as we grow up, within our families, and as we integrate into society.

Drugs, in addition to numbing our emotions, also lower our inhibitions, and sexually, in some cases, we have experiences that show us we enjoy other things—or even being with same-sex partners! But stepping outside the norm and speaking for myself, I, too, had my own bizarre experiences while under the influence of drugs!

Well, the sharing sessions were over—so what was next on the agenda for a good addict?! My group of friends and I still had time to catch the Gay Pride Parade in downtown Amsterdam on our way to a meeting! For an addict, it's never enough—not even after coming back from a convention!

It was once again about being home and reconnecting with other addicts! And receiving my 18-month keychain, which I hadn't gotten yet! And celebrating 20 years of recovery with another addict. Next up: dinner and lots of laughter!

On Sunday, we went to the convention at 10 a.m. The sharing sessions focused on gender issues: personal acceptance of sexuality, transformation in some cases, acceptance by family and society, entering recovery, and being in environments where drugs and alcohol are present. I felt that this group of addicts faced added challenges. But even so, the program works—if we work at it.

Speaking of the convention venue, decor, activities, and service/organization! The venue was spacious and offered a fantastic view of the city. It had a terrace that got plenty of sun! In the entrance hall was the reception desk where you could buy your ticket. I'd like to mention that, in my opinion, it was quite expensive: 45 euros.

There was a merchandise booth with pre-printed convention T-shirts and a booth selling jewelry and other souvenirs. There was an area for painting mandalas and printing T-shirts with other designs. There was also a yoga room, though I didn't have the pleasure of using it. On the first floor was the sharing room. The decor was very colorful, and the staff members were very well dressed. Long live creativity!

I thought it was very well organized, even though there was a moment of tension among the staff due to differences of opinion—but it was quickly resolved in unity!

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for this experience and the entire atmosphere of this convention, for the way I was welcomed, and to my new friends—for yet another wonderful weekend! Never alone, never again, because Together we can!

Thank you to Narcotics Anonymous for bringing me back to life!



Tamara

Borderless Recovery

Hi everyone, my name is Tamara, I'm an addict, and I'm from Germany.
I
attended my first meeting in June 2009. Back then, I was really afraid to show my face at the meetings, and I was ashamed that I even had to turn to a support group. I had really tried everything to make it on my own - and eventually had to admit that it wasn't possible.

I was welcomed so warmly. People told me, "It's great to have you here. Come back." And that's exactly what I did.

Even though I couldn't stay clean consistently at first and had several relapses in the first year and a half, I kept coming back. I knew that this fellowship was my last hope.

Thank God I kept coming back.
I had friends at the meetings and around the tables who, even after my relapses, kept telling me, "It's great to have you here- keep coming back - it'll get better."
And they were right: It works.

Today I know how much strength lies in those simple words.

Back then, I couldn't have imagined where this path would lead me. I didn't know that my fear of putting myself out there would eventually give way to the courage to speak at international conventions. I didn't know that I would one day meet people from so many different countries and form friendships that still endure today.

My first international convention was "Borderless Recovery" - the first Iberian NA Convention in Santiago de Compostela in March 2024.

For me, it was something very special. My Spanish and Portuguese friends had organized the convention with so much love, openness, and warmth that I felt welcome from the very first moment.

It was also the first time I'd been invited to share at a convention abroad - and not in my native language. Of course, I was nervous. But the people around me made it so easy for me to feel safe and like I belonged. I didn't feel like a stranger; instead, I very quickly felt like I was part of something bigger.

That experience changed something inside me.

I've become braver and feel freer to be myself. After my tentative first share, a few friends came up to me. That's when I realized how beautiful and important it is to share experiences, strength, and hope with one another.

I've grown through this. My faith and my trust in the fellowship have grown stronger. I feel like I belong, and I know now that I'm no longer walking this path alone. No matter where I am, no matter what country I'm in - you're there.

And above all, I've learned to do things even when I'm afraid - or especially then.
Over time, I've learned: I do things whether I'm afraid or not. I just do them. I go to meetings - no matter what.

And it works.
In April 2025, the NA Convention took place in Portimão, celebrating 40 years of NA Portugal. This convention, too, was organized with an incredible amount of love and dedication.

In the large convention center, at many English-speaking meetings, and with people from all sorts of different countries, I once again felt what our fellowship makes possible: people who may never have seen each other before coming together, and within no time at all, a connection is formed.
We laughed together, shared experiences, made new friends, and overcame our initial reservations. And at the same time, we share a serious illness.
But time and again, I realized: We are so much more than our illness.

We are people of different ages, backgrounds, and life stories. We are women, men, and FLINTA* individuals - people with different sexual orientations, with different religious beliefs, or with no religion at all. We speak different languages and come from different countries.

And yet, there is this connection between us.
We share more than just a serious illness. We share experience, strength, and hope. For me, it was overwhelming to see how quickly strangers can become friends.

In May 2026, the NA Convention took place in Arcos de Valdevez, a beautiful town in northern Portugal. Thank God this convention was a bit smaller than the one the previous year in Portimão. There, I had been somewhat overwhelmed by the size and the number of people. In Arcos de Valdevez, I was able to experience the fellowship in a whole new way.

In this idyllic setting, I felt a very special sense of fellowship. Once again, I was able to witness the love and dedication with which the Portuguese fellowship had organized this convention.

Food and refreshments were provided, along with special T-shirts and new designs, creative ideas, and little surprises.

You could really feel how much time, effort, and passion had gone into it all. Many friends had started preparing well in advance and met regularly to make this convention a special experience for so many people.

And that's exactly what was most noticeable: It was all about fostering connection and bringing people together. Honest conversation. Sharing meals. Laughing and being happy together. Maybe even crying together.

It was this blend of lightheartedness, creativity, care, and genuine fellowship that made this convention so special to me.

And what's special is this: these encounters are not limited to the convention itself.
To this day, I'm still in touch with friends from Portugal and Spain. I've also formed friendships in France and the United States. People I met at these conventions have since become part of my life.

I have yet to encounter an NA fellowship that consistently brings people from so many different nations together in this way as the fellowship in Portugal does.

And for that, I am deeply grateful.
In July 2026, I finally had the opportunity to experience the ECNA in Norway. Yet another country, a different setting, a completely different atmosphere.
And yet, there was something familiar right away.

Seeing familiar faces again. Meeting new people. Laughing together. Making memories. Sharing experiences. And time and again, that wonderful opportunity to forge bonds.

Perhaps that is precisely one of the greatest gifts NA has given me: belonging.
Because our disease wants to isolate us.
It can tell us: "Don't call anyone. Withdraw. Stay alone. You're different. You don't belong." The program shows us another way.

We can pick up the phone and call someone. We can go to a meeting. We can attend a convention. We can meet people from other countries and discover that, despite different languages and cultures, we understand each other on a very basic level.

We can support newcomers. We can share our experience, strength, and hope with people who are just starting out on their journey. And we can share our experiences with people who have been on this path for a while.

Keep it simple.

It's the same for all of us, no matter how long we've been clean. The most important question always remains: How do I manage to stay clean just for today—and then again tomorrow and the day after tomorrow?

We share this experience with one another. We know what it's like to live one day at a time and to choose life again and again.
And as we continue down this path, something truly wonderful happens over time: We find our way back to life.

We form friendships and relationships. We start families. We find work or new career paths. Some start businesses. We go on vacation, discover new places, develop interests, and make plans for our future.
The possibilities grow.

Not because we eventually have to do "more" recovery, but because, through the time we spend clean, we get more and more back from life.

For me, international conventions are therefore not a goal that must be achieved. They are an opportunity that has arisen from my life.

Each of these experiences has made my life a little more beautiful and colorful. They've given me new friendships, opened up new perspectives, and shown me time and again just how large our fellowship really is.

And perhaps that is one of the most beautiful experiences of all: realizing that a sense of belonging knows no national borders.
Whether in Spain, Portugal, France, Norway, America, or anywhere else in the world—we can meet, laugh together, share with one another, and be there for each other.

We don't have to give in to isolation.
We can choose to reach out to one another.
We can choose to bond.
And every time I see familiar faces somewhere in the world, I become a little more aware that I am truly part of something very big.
Borderless Recovery.
For me, that means: Recovery knows no borders. Fellowship knows no borders. And friendship knows no borders. The most important thing remains quite simple: Just for today. And tomorrow is a new today. One day at a time.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for your openness, your warmth, and your friendship. Thank you for our connection. You are all the greatest gift in my life.

I wish us all an amazing 24 hours.

Online Meetings in our Fellowship in Portugal

Hello, everyone! First of all, I want to thank you for your service in producing this edition of the Serenity Journal, and for the invitation and challenge to write about the topic of online meetings in the Portuguese Fellowship—it is a privilege, as this topic touches me deeply.

It was 2012. After an in-person meeting had ended, Fernando B. introduced me to our fellow member Eddy, who was in London, and Ricardo, who was in Switzerland. Both were communicating via Skype to share in their native languages, as they felt that need. During our conversation, I proposed the challenge of creating an online meeting via Skype; my experience of several years of service on the H&I Subcommittee reminded me well of the importance of a meeting for the addict who is unable to attend our regular NA meetings.

Thus, out of the need for addicts in the Portuguese diaspora to be able to share their recovery in their native language, the first online meeting via Skype was born, on May 19, 2012, duly registered with the Portuguese Region of Narcotics Anonymous under the code RP001-Grupo Hora NA. This group continues to hold its meetings every Saturday at 6:00 p.m., so that any addict, wherever they may be, can join in!

The meeting grew, filled with an excellent atmosphere of recovery and great emotional intensity; since, at that time, the platform was audio-only, and as addicts that we are, we felt every word with deep emotion. As members began to arrive, they started another meeting on Tuesday, then another on Thursday, and the female addicts also started a special-interest meeting (women-only meetings).

Whenever there was an Area and/or National Convention, we would ask the COC for a room to hold a hybrid meeting, with someone sharing from the convention site in order to bring the celebration of recovery to addicts who couldn't be there in person and, in some way, to introduce this new tool to the Portuguese Fellowship.

I particularly remember, at one of those conventions, holding a hybrid meeting with the H&I subcommittee from the Western Area and sharing the meeting with addicts who were incarcerated in a correctional facility. It was one of the moments that touched me deeply, and I felt the immense importance of online meetings and of carrying the message of recovery to the addict wherever they may be.

I could mention many other heartwarming stories here—for example, that of a member who was in Asia (and now lives in Porto), who would wake up at 6:00 a.m. to do coordination work; of members from Brazil who regularly attended our meetings; of members from Latin America; and of a visually impaired member who told us that, despite her disability, she performed service and transcribed the World Board minutes into Braille so that other visually impaired members could read them and stay informed about what was happening in our Fellowship—so many others that I no longer have space here to share, given the breadth and importance I have come to experience through online meetings.

Following this growth, the groups decided it would be important to create an Online Area, but our proposal was rejected twice by the Portuguese Region's Service Committee, with our meetings almost being deemed not to be NA meetings.

The Skype Groups, recognizing the need to support one another, decided to create CASGON (Online Service Support Committee), which served its purpose; however, when the "infamous" COVID-19 pandemic struck, this unity—strengthened by CASGON—allowed us, within a week, to hold 26 weekly meetings to welcome the Fellowship, which was no longer able to hold in-person meetings, while simultaneously helping all in-person groups to host their meetings online, complete with literature, opening remarks, etc. After this period, it became clear that online meetings are indeed an important tool.

I joined a working group with 17 members from across the country, which collaborated with other NA regions on this topic; after six months, we submitted our report and a Guide to Best Practices for Online Meetings to the Portuguese Region Service Committee; and it was agreed that online meetings comply with our 12 Traditions and are acceptable and valid within our NA Fellowship in Portugal.

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Currently, some meetings are registered with an Area, while others are not affiliated with any Area—as is the case with the Hora NA Group, code RP001 (where I perform service)—and we send our donations directly to the Portuguese Region Service Committee.

I still feel that online groups are neglected because they do not communicate with one another, and our First Tradition is weakened. This is because, in an in-person Area, if an online group presents a problem specific to online meetings—whether technical or spiritual—the response it is likely to receive is: "Talk to one of the online groups..."

I continue to believe deeply that our Unity (First Tradition) among online meetings is at stake, and for this reason, I believe that the creation of an Online Area is essential for all online groups. Brazil was the first country to create this Online Area; last week, a Portuguese addict (living in the Netherlands) told me that the Netherlands has just created its Online Area and is participating in the affairs of its Region.

I feel that this challenge to write about online activities was no coincidence; I believe my Higher Power is reminding me once again that together we are stronger, and the more we strengthen our Unity online as well, the greater the power of our message will be—so that every addict, wherever they may be, can be ON! In Fellowship.
Thank you, and +24h. Karim



Hi everyone, I'm an addict named Afonso, and I'm here – at your invitation – to share a little bit of my opinion (which, please don't forget, is worth what it's worth – that is... nothing 😉) and my experience on the topic of ONLINE.

It all started with the pandemic – I mean, online meetings had existed long before that, but they weren't widely publicized, weren't widely accepted, and, perhaps for that reason, weren't used much. But when the pandemic hit and lockdowns were imposed, we were all forced to turn to online meetings. Those who didn't know how, weren't used to it, or didn't like it had no other choice – or simply stopped attending meetings.
It was a period of some chaos and even disorganization. The lack of experience in using online platforms raised many doubts regarding adherence to Traditions and even led to situations of a lack of mutual respect among members, which were gradually overcome with patience, courage, and determination by the various groups that were formed – some new, others already existing – which established themselves online, adapting to the new reality.

Previously, platforms like Skype were used, but when Zoom came along – offering more advantages for coordinators in terms of security and meeting management features, with cameras turned on so people could see each other and recognize who was present – it became the most commonly used tool, even though there are many other platforms, such as Jitsi, Meet, Blujean, and even virtual reality meetings in the Metaverse – commonly known as virtual avatars – but Zoom was really the one that best served our needs.

Right at the beginning of 2020, during that first lockdown, some groups from the northern part of Lisbon – such as Ericeira, Santa Cruz, and Torres Vedras – came together to organize a sort of convention in which I also participated. It was called the Sharing Festival, and we held 12 consecutive hours of sessions centered on the 12 Steps, one per hour. For the breaks between each sharing session, we asked several musicians to record short videos of their songs, which we played during those times; some even performed live, and it worked extremely well.

At one point, there were 300 people online simultaneously. This clearly demonstrates the event's success and, at the same time, the support we were able to provide to those who were, in some way, experiencing that fear – not only of addiction-related problems but also of the issues stemming from isolation and worry, particularly regarding children, family, and vulnerable people falling ill and passing away. It was a very dramatic moment and, at the same time, the moment when this solution came about; for many, it was their first experience with online meetings and even with NA.

For me, it was a blessing.

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We ended up holding a second festival, which also went very well, but nothing like that has been organized since then; perhaps one of these days, someone with the willingness and time might consider doing it.

In the beginning, many people didn't participate because they felt that our core principle – anonymity – wasn't being upheld. There were also people who thought this tool – because that's what I want to call it – didn't deserve attention and didn't see it as just another recovery tool; they didn't participate, didn't help develop it, and simply didn't show up at all.

There are in-person meetings, there is literature, and there are the Steps and Traditions, the sponsor, service, and so on. There are various tools, and the online platform has become just one more. Of course, some suffered consequences because they were left without the support and help of one addict to another – which, as we know, is unparalleled and is one of our mottos – and without that help, they ended up making decisions that harmed them, such as not returning to recovery or even relapsing. Fortunately, some came back, but others did not.

As is to be expected, there has always been "resistance to change"; this is not only intrinsic to our condition as addicts but also to the Portuguese character, for which anything new seems difficult to accept. Consequently, there was a group that did not accept it and did not participate because they did not see much value in this tool, creating some resistance in the decision-making process to improve the functioning of the online meetings themselves; however, there was also great openness and participation on the part of many people, which resulted in the online welcoming of newcomers, thereby fulfilling our purpose. Just a few days ago, I was speaking with one of those who joined at that time and who is still in recovery.

This tool allows us to reach the person who is truly in need, even though the pandemic is over, since nowadays, on top of everything else, internet access is much easier and simpler – and for younger people, it goes without saying. I think we've basically lost six years during which we could have done much more to spread the word about our existence, including through the internet.

We have the 11th Tradition, which says we shouldn't promote ourselves and that we operate by attraction, but it's obvious that people must know we exist – otherwise, how can they come? The answer is: "90% come through recovery centers ," but I'll leave that question for another time.

I've seen public information campaigns on billboards and in other formats, but so far I haven't seen any online – with those banners like the online casinos use (what a plague! 😔). There might have been some already, but I don't remember. I do remember perfectly well suggesting that such campaigns be conducted online during the second wave of the pandemic, but what they did instead was launch a billboard campaign on the streets when people couldn't even walk outside – but that's okay; we're all growing. I understand our process – both as people and as addicts – of being slow to accept changes, new developments, and shifts.

At that time, a Working Group for Online Groups in the Portuguese Region of NA was created (the minutes – which I keep religiously and which can be consulted at a later date, since that's what they're for – state the following: "We welcomed the approval of this Working Group at the CSRP." 😜🎉, bottom line, it was tough.) It was in that group that we focused, among other things, on drafting a guide to best practices for online meetings, which was shelved along with many other suggestions 😔. Anyway, we were 12 addicts with an average of 20 years clean, yet very little was approved at the CSRP. I'll never forget that we held over 30 meetings without ever having to put anything to a vote – always by consensus. It was beautiful 💙.

For me personally, being online saved my life, because I was going through a very difficult time after a breakup; I was alone at home with two young children, facing all the fear that was instilled not only by our government but also by the media worldwide – and that fear was very real, because many people died, many of whom were relatives, some were addicts I knew – anyway, I really feel that... it saved my life. 🙏💙

But more than that, it began to bring me much more recovery, much more awareness, and much more sharing of experiences with people who were physically far away – people I probably would never have heard from or learned about their experiences, whether in Portugal or abroad.

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At the time, I attended online meetings from Brazil, the U.S., and pretty much everywhere. All over the world, there are online meetings that are easily accessible at all hours – all it takes is a click on the computer... and we're in a meeting. Once I wanted to attend a meeting led by a well-known actor who'd been clean for over five decades; he was sharing in a meeting that already had more than 600 addicts.

The internet connection dropped, and by the time I tried to rejoin, the participation limit – which in this case was 1,000 – had already been reached. You heard that right: more than a thousand addicts in an online meeting. And so, I owe a great debt of gratitude to this tool. But if you ask me, it's obvious that I prefer an in-person meeting – not least because there's nothing like seeing and feeling the people there and giving each other a big hug at the end; it's truly warmer, but at the same time, being online allows us to reach further – to places and people we otherwise wouldn't be able to reach – and the message that it's possible to recover and live a drug-free life still gets across. So I've been able to make the most of this tool, and I'm super, hyper grateful, 🙏💙🔷

Now, I'm disappointed that within the world service structure – and particularly in Portugal – there hasn't been greater attention, whether at CSA or even at CSRP, to accepting and providing better and more guidance on how we can operate by offering workshops so that we can make the most of this and reach even further, namely in prisons, hospitals, or institutions where we don't even have the people, money, or resources to travel to, but where, through these online meetings, it would be very easy to provide support to those who truly need it in those institutions.

So I feel there has been little "time" to develop this, even on the part of people who don't use online meetings. And what saddens me – yes, because nobody gets any younger, and so we're all going to grow older (a sign that we're staying in recovery 🙏) – and one day we might find ourselves, who knows, perhaps in a nursing home or somewhere far away from everyone, and that maybe at that time those people might miss seeing familiar faces, even if only through those little online squares (this is where I sometimes remember our fellow member J. Penão, with whom I had the opportunity to connect online toward the end of his life) 🔷🙏💙.

And that's it – I'm sorry that certain people don't seem to realize this. But that's okay; I hope this article will help raise awareness throughout our organization that it's time to do much more online.

Recently, I suggested to ENAS – which organizes workshops on various topics and essentially spreads the message of service – that we discuss this specific issue, but they haven't been receptive to the idea, at least for now. I feel it will happen eventually, but what I regret is how long everything takes, because we've already made a lot of progress, but always by "trial and error" 😔.

Last year, that activity wasn't even streamed online. This year it will be 🙏, but I still feel that topics specifically related to online platforms weren't chosen for this year – maybe next year 🤔 – but that's okay (sometimes I wonder how many addicts could have been saved if we were less complicated 😔).

I know that each of us does our best; this is constructive criticism. Sometimes we can't see the bigger picture. I speak for myself in several areas. But in this case, I think I can see just how much time we're wasting when it comes to better developing this tool – with everyone's input, with everyone's participation – from those who attend, those who don't, those who like it, and those who don't, all opinions are important, but there needs to be room for debate. On the other hand, someone suggested creating an online space, which doesn't seem like a good idea to me at all. Why? Because it will create a barrier between us and them – those who hold in-person meetings and those who hold online meetings – which doesn't seem healthy to me (just read the First Tradition). Right now, we're integrated into some in-person groups, and the message is the same, regardless of the tool; therefore, we must all be united in the same spirit.

There are many people who attend both in-person and online meetings, like myself; others attend only in-person meetings; others attend only online meetings. But everyone's participation is extremely important, and I would like to one day see some ideas implemented – namely those from a group where I serve, where we ask a few things of those who wish to participate, namely keeping the camera on at all times, so that everyone feels comfortable knowing who is present, and arriving on time, so that people we don't

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know don't join in the middle of the meeting – which can cause discomfort, particularly for those who are sharing intimate matters, such as sensitive issues and personal struggles that are private and personal, so that in this meeting they don't feel those fears.

Thus, we made this decision, also because it is an online meeting (it wouldn't make sense in an in-person setting). Let's not forget that in an online meeting we're just a click away from joining another meeting, so anyone who doesn't show up on time can easily join a different one – but this has caused some friction here with a few members (the ones with time to spare... , who think there are no obligations 🤹, even though, at the very least, we have to respect the group's collective decision – these are all difficult issues 😜🤹 – what's certain is that we've never had a hacker attack – anyway, some people are still very misinformed and don't realize that the group is autonomous, and each group should reflect the group consciousness – where we invite a Higher Power to participate – and should make its own decisions. Then, those who identify with it come and go; those who don't, don't come – simple.

I also agree with meetings in various formats – for example, those focused on women's issues, the LGBT community, or closed-door sessions where everyone can come and go as they please, and where it's okay to eat or smoke. I agree that there should be meetings like that, too. And then everyone can attend the ones they want and where they feel comfortable. 😎

In this case, the important thing will be to share and exchange experiences from all types and formats of online meetings that may exist, so that each meeting can make its own decisions in good conscience, always respecting traditions.

In my view, I think we should discuss three basic issues, which I'll explain very briefly:
First, recovery meetings, with a strong focus on welcoming new members and sharing our message (this topic alone could fill volumes).

Next, service meetings – this was another benefit of going online: it allowed us to stay more connected to the subcommittees and to everything related to the service structure, which is volunteer-based and therefore only requires that each person contribute their available time and goodwill. Even before online meetings, we had to drive our cars to attend in-person meetings in order to participate; all of this meant that the greater opportunity and ease of serving were concentrated in the big cities.

This ended up being more of the same, with always the same grateful addicts serving 👆, but with little new blood, no critical mass, and no fresh ideas – often it was the sponsor (who you can't challenge 😜) and the sponsor's sponsee's sponsee, and so on – a whole lineage of inflexible attitudes and ways of thinking. 😔

And a third aspect is the online component at major events – whether conventions, ENAS, or other gatherings. Those large events where people who can't attend in person can still be present. (I just finished watching the online livestream of the Southern Region Convention, and the atmosphere was FANTASTIC. Everyone involved now has more experiences to share, which will help us improve for future events.

So, these are the three extremely important topics to be discussed, whenever the service structure deems it appropriate. 🤔

To sum it up, in my view, ONLINE came to save NA – this is my opinion, for what it's worth... which is to say, nothing. 😜😂

I believe that our Higher Power knows what it's doing, but it needs us to put its plans into action. 🙏💙🔷

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Serenity Journal once again – to which I'm also grateful, as I've had the pleasure of serving there – and thank everyone who's interested in these topics. 💙

(I say 😎, if you've read this far, believe me... you're in recovery). 😜😘😎🎂💙🔷

In service, all the best, and +24 hours to all of us.



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Narcotics Anonymous Meetings: The Path to Freedom from Active Addiction –The Way to Renew Our Commitment to Recovery; To Believe That Together We Grow and Recover.

One of the pillars of recovery – perhaps the most important one–is NA meetings. Without meetings, there is no sharing, and without sharing, there is no transmission of the message of recovery.

Meetings are, therefore, par excellence the place where addicts gather to recover and share their recovery, where the only requirement is a desire to stop using. It is, therefore, a place where addicts can pause, listen, connect, and disconnect, but above all, it is a safe haven where thousands of people renew their commitment to recovery every day–staying clean and connected one day at a time.

With no major obligations and protected by our traditions, NA groups are the foundation of our structure.

Many of us, through the service we provide there, have relearned or learned to live in community, to regain our self-love, and to feel part of something. They felt welcomed, received a hug, and heard for the first time in many years that they were welcome; they thus found comfort in being in a safe, free place where the message is–or should be–accompanied by love and empathy.

Meetings are, in this sense, the foundation–the starting point for a new life. Lately, because of the technological advancements we've witnessed, we've had the opportunity to hold online meetings. These meetings, just a click away, have become available and have gained prominence in many recovery processes for members–some by choice, others due to a lack of options.

When I first entered recovery, members who couldn't attend in-person meetings relied solely on letters or phone calls; I remember a yellow-covered book that was available back then, titled, if I recall correctly, "Recovering in Isolation" or something like that!

Online meetings are now a reality! They aren't competition for in-person meetings! They complement one another and serve as a tool that has facilitated recovery for many newcomers who have stayed in the program and celebrated their first clean day. They have also allowed long-time members to reconnect with the foundations of recovery and enabled members to resume service once again.

Without taking a romantic view of recovery and the relationship between members and meetings, we have witnessed a neglect of the importance of commitment to service, of sponsorship in service, and of disinterest in service–and, closer to home, an attitude among many that meetings are a given and, consequently, recovery is also guaranteed.

We have witnessed a growing shortage of service members, meetings where personalities take precedence over principles–forgetting that the only requirement is the desire to stop using–and meetings where traditions are simply forgotten, with the rule of a select few prevailing to the detriment of a most loving God; the common welfare and the unity of NA, with sponsors and service members guiding individual recovery, have ceased to be important; instead, excessive importance has been placed on the autonomy of groups regarding the flow of money and donations, with groups establishing their own rules and forgetting the importance of the whole and the quality of the message conveyed; we have often witnessed recruiters soliciting members for treatment centers, or the allocation of contributions being controlled according to pre-existing interests, disregarding the service structure in an attempt at unbridled control and a total lack of faith and trust in the process. We have seen groups where controversy reigns and where anonymity is nonexistent.

However, these groups are holding on; the members–some more resentful, some more resilient–are finding room to recover, surviving attacks on their emotional and mental well-being, and, with more or fewer written steps, with more or less creativity, they are gradually recovering and finding their way.

We can also consider the soundness of our meetings and the quality of the message, but there, once again, it is up to us to have faith and believe in natural selection and in a most loving God.

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But if we are attentive and honest and focus on the fact that what matters is the message and not the messenger–if we stop looking at our differences and believe in the message being conveyed–the appeal is much greater, and the responses are more effective. Love overcomes resentment, and the desire to grow and give us to others without reservation overcomes self-centeredness, reservations, and the resulting withdrawal into ourselves!

There's one indicator that never fails: remembering the sharing or shares we've heard. When that happens, the meeting was good... because it allowed for empathy, listening, and self-reflection!

In my case, I'm an unconditional fan of online meetings. For some, they're the ugly duckling; for others, a lifesaver.

I'm part of the second group. I live 100 km from the nearest in-person meeting and have already found it closed; or 200 km from Lisbon, which makes it difficult to attend. I also advocate for hybrid service meetings so that we can all have the same opportunities for service! I also advocate for keeping the "recovery celebration"–the conventions–where reunions, hugs, physical contact, and sharing fill me with gratitude.

I also believe that the most important thing is to stay clean, and everything else will follow; freedom from obsession and the peace that comes from being involved in NA provide the knowledge and will help us gain wisdom–wisdom to live clean one day at a time, wisdom to make choices, serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the courage to change the things I can.

We all have the right to recover, the right to love and be loved, to live by principles, to be productive members of our society, to achieve our dreams, and to live a life focused on others. This is only possible through recovery, and without meetings, there is likely no recovery.



Online Meetings: A Reality Across NA

It is undeniable that online meetings are now an important tool for fulfilling our primary purpose–just as important as any other. This holds true not only in the Portuguese region but throughout NA worldwide, not just with regard to recovery meetings but also, increasingly, to service meetings and events themselves. The proof of this lies in the fact that the main service bodies currently meet in an online or hybrid format, such as the CPNA, the upcoming ENAS, the CSAs, the CSRP, the EDM, or the WSC itself–the latter two with online-only participation by members who are unable to obtain entry visas–why? Because, in my experience, service on these service bodies is more appealing and far less controversial, but that's another matter...

Gone are the days when there was resistance to online meetings–resistance with which, I confess, I identified until a certain point. But NA is a program of change, based on spiritual principles such as surrender, open-mindedness, acceptance, group conscience, and consensus. From my perspective, the debate over whether or not online meetings are a reality in NA is increasingly becoming a "non-issue" that fuels an "us versus them" mentality and does not contribute to unity.

In 2023, the Conference approved the recognition of online groups as "NA Groups." This means that the fellowship as a whole has made a decision on this matter. We may have different personal opinions, but we also have a responsibility to respect the collective process by which decisions are made in NA. The same principle applies to other issues, such as literature that is or is not approved by the fellowship. If it is not approved–no matter how much one may dislike it–it is not okay to distribute it; doing so is disruptive behavior, and we must surrender and accept this.

In the meantime, however, resources and guidelines for recovery and service for online meetings have been developed and are available to everyone at https://na.org/virtual/, just as there are other resources that stem from the fellowship's accumulated experience. The pandemic naturally accelerated the recognition of virtual meetings as NA groups. From that point on, groups, areas, and

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committees kept pace with this evolution, and online meetings became part of NA's daily reality. And if we stop to think about it, all of this happened naturally, without us imposing our will on one another.... "The full fruit of a labor of love is in the harvest, and that always comes in its proper season..." (Preface to the Basic Text).

But this development also teaches us an important lesson: in our fellowship, forcing change, imposing ideas, or reducing the collective consciousness to a mere "group opinion" tends to divide rather than unite, and is not the model to follow. The controversy surrounding APNA and the 29th CPNA showed us how certain service issues can quickly go beyond healthy debate and raise questions with a much broader impact on NA and on our individual members, even putting our association's legal status in Portugal at risk.

When we talk about NA, we should not personalize service or the setting. No service is more important than the one performed where it is needed: at an online meeting, in a prison, on a PR panel, at a World Conference, or simply by putting away the chairs at the end of a meeting. Our program speaks of love, honesty, and assertiveness; it speaks of unity and helping one another–not of imposing ourselves on others or attacking one another.

That is why it is important for us to identify and discuss certain sources of conflict or instances of people taking center stage without turning these discussions into personal attacks. When certain topics begin to consume too much energy, we run the risk of diverting our attention from what truly matters: to quote our 5th tradition from the book *It Works: How and Why*, "when we feed the influences that distract us, the one who loses out is the addict who remains," who, as we have come to realize, is often not just the newcomer.

My experience–still limited–with online meetings has been, on the whole, positive. I've encountered formats that are more creative and different from what is "traditionally and mistakenly established," some of which have challenged patterns that, over time, have been accepted without much discussion and are now met with a certain degree of resignation and resistance to change. Issues such as the "resentment period" or "newcomer time" are examples of practices that have become completely standardized over time; they are entirely unprecedented in NA Worldwide, but here in our "farm" they seem to have taken on a permanent and untouchable character–and "woe to anyone who questions them." These, in my opinion, are indeed relevant topics that should be discussed openly in our group conscience meetings.

However, we continue to see service committees insisting on creating literature kits and coordination guides for the groups, in a complete subversion of the principles of autonomy, delegation, and authority.

This is precisely why I believe it is important to maintain space for mature debate. Recognizing that some things may not have been done in the best way throughout the history of our fellowship is not a criticism of those who came before us; it is an opportunity to learn, grow, and change.

In this context, online groups can (and to some extent already have) play an important role. They can help groups effectively assume their autonomy and responsibility, rather than delegating to service committees what rightfully belongs to them, as the 2nd Concept of Service reminds us. Healthy groups are participatory groups, aware of their responsibilities and capable of working with their trusted servants. And this holds true regardless of the medium. Service issues, the Traditions, the Concepts, and the spiritual principles contained within them cut across NA. There are no different principles for virtual NA and in-person NA. Over-customizing these issues fosters an "us versus them" mentality, when in reality, all service is important–especially where it is needed.

Sometimes there's a perception that online meetings carry a higher risk of disruption. Personally, I don't agree with that theory! I believe there's actually a lack of knowledge or experience about how to deal with certain behaviors–something that, once again, applies to both virtual and in-person meetings.

It's true that in online meetings we encounter behaviors that are less common in in-person meetings: members eating, smoking, lying down, or being in environments where privacy and anonymity may be compromised. But we also encounter challenges related to disruptive or predatory behavior, sexual advances, recruiting members for organizations outside of NA at the door of meetings,

Online Meetings in our Fellowship in Portugal

sharing about topics unrelated to the purpose of the meeting, or references to people, other fellowships, or addictions that are not directly related to drug use and that conflict with our 5th Tradition and the requirements outlined in the pamphlet *The NA Group*.

These phenomena are not unique to the virtual environment.

The future of NA will depend, to a large extent, on how we continue to address these issues. We need to develop a mindset that focuses more on what we can give and contribute to the fellowship and less on what we can take from it for our own "benefit."

It will also be necessary to encourage member participation and group accountability (even though this is largely an individual choice), to prevent committees from becoming–even unintentionally–structures of self-management or governance, and it seems to me that the Portuguese region has consistently contributed to organizing activities that promote constructive debate, through workshops that raise members' awareness of specific issues.

The future belongs to God alone, and NA is a "just for today" program. What we can do is work today to ensure that NA in Portugal continues to be a safe space, one of respect, of autonomous yet collaborative development, of greater participation in NA matters as a whole, and of less controversy–which, as our traditions state, exists and will never completely disappear.

And in that sense, to speak of NA is to speak of something comprehensive and cross-cutting, regardless of whether the meeting or service takes place virtually or in person.

If there is one challenge I find particularly concerning for the future, it is maintaining consistency between what the fraternity decides collectively and what we do in practice–particularly with regard to the proliferation of unapproved literature.

We have witnessed a phenomenon of the dissemination of unapproved literature within group settings, which is considered disruptive behavior that is in direct conflict with our traditions and, in particular, with our Fellowship's Intellectual Property (FIPT), and we cannot be strict on matters concerning certain issues that affect "our own backyard," while at the same time turning a blind eye to one of the most important matters in our fellowship–literature–not only because of its importance in the individual recovery of members but also because of its very contribution to the sustainability of our global program. To achieve this, we need strong, engaged groups that are aware of their responsibility, and we also need some discipline on the part of members, who have an increased individual responsibility to stop the proliferation of these materials the very moment they receive them.

In the end, perhaps the issue isn't whether to debate virtual versus in-person NA, because that's a discussion that fuels–I repeat–the "us versus them" mentality – the real question is whether, regardless of the setting, we continue to apply the set of principles contained in our traditions to everything we do in NA, and in particular at the heart of our choices and decisions, so that NA in the future will be a safe and welcoming space for all members, regardless of the setting.

This, in my humble opinion, is the discussion that should guide future discussions in our fellowship.

Glossary:
NA – Narcotics Anonymous
RP – Public Relations
CPNA – Portuguese Convention of Narcotics Anonymous
APNA – Portuguese Association of Narcotics Anonymous
ENAS – National Service Meeting
CSA – Area Service Committee
CSRP – Portuguese Region Service Committee
EDM – European Delegates Meeting
WSC – World Service Conference
FIPT – Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust




17 E 18 OUTUBRO 2026
CASA DA CULTURA
LÍVIO DE MORAIS
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3º enas
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2 DIAS EM QUE
VAMOS FALAR DE SERVIÇO
E TROCAR IDEIAS
CONTAMOS
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Funny In Recovery

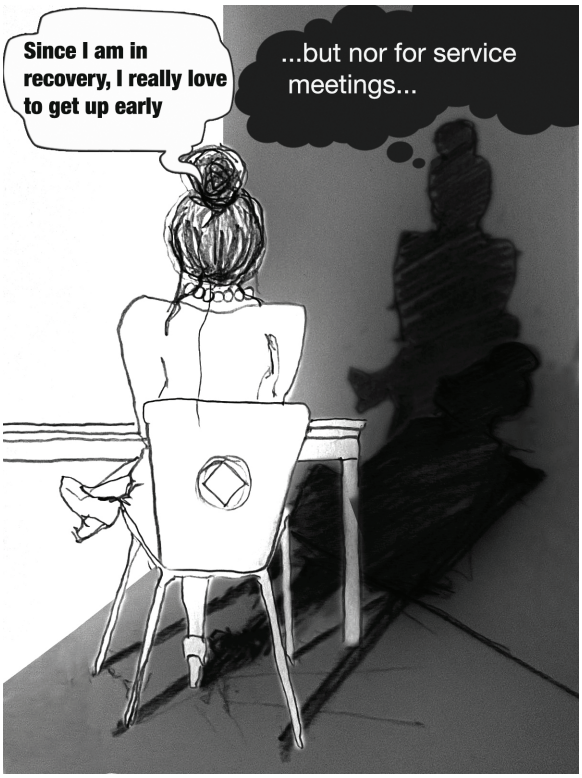
MOCKING THE RECOVERING

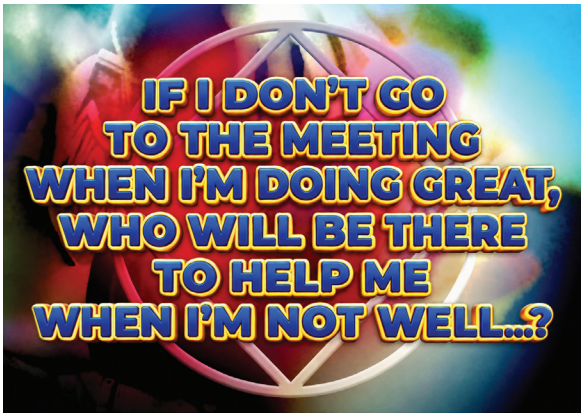
JOE FIX





STEPPIN' MARY





Anniversaries:
NA Vitória Meeting - Albufeira - July 18, 2005
Vitamina Meeting - Portimão - September 16, 1994

Bibliographic Note:
They used drugs together and got clean together, but while this member committed himself to the program, his brother did not. This member from Saudi Arabia found in the loss of his brother a powerful motivation to carry the message.

Story from "Carrying the Message"—6th edition, Basic Text

LAST SHARE

Serenidade 2.0 magazine is published in Portugueseand English and is available in digital format.

Its contents are a way of contributing to the recovery of NA members by publishing information on recovery, activities and services related to recovery.

The magazine also seeks to introduce a component of entertainment and debate on issues relevant to its recipients.

All NA members can and should suggest topics to be covered, simply by contacting us by e-mail.

The magazine is also open to other forms of collaboration from NA members. All contributions are welcome.

The Chairs reserve the right to evaluate the conformity of texts and other contributions with the 12 traditions of NA.

All material must be original and, once published, is the property of the journal, implying permission to publish.

The articles published represent the experience and opinion of individual NA members and do not necessarily express the principles and philosophy of NA as a whole.

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YOUR SERENE TEAM

Chair: Alexandra T.
Secretary: Paulo O.
Graphics: José S.
Resident Collaborator: Maria S.

Collaborators of this edition: Afonso, Débora, Fernando, José, Karim, Liliana, Maria F., Maria L., Miguel, Tamara and Anonymous ... and all fellows that would like to be part of it!



CONTACT:
serenidade@na-pt.org