



Our Virtual Presence

Conversation about Virtual Meeting Etiquette and More

Our Twelve Traditions in a Virtual World

When we attend a meeting by way of phone, video conference, or any other virtual style outside of a physical meeting, many members experience awe and bewilderment. We hear members share their stories and participate in a meeting. Even if virtual meetings may not feel the same as in-person meetings, we are excited to hear that the message is clear: an addict, any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

"A Narcotics Anonymous group is any meeting of two or more recovering addicts who meet regularly at a specific time and place for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. All Narcotics Anonymous groups are bound by the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions."

The Group IP

As the Group IP defines NA groups, all meetings must adhere to the principles embodied in the 12 Traditions. Our literature shows many benefits of doing so, but the Traditions are especially valuable to ensuring that virtual NA meetings provide a similar atmosphere of NA recovery that addicts can find in an in-person meeting. Anonymity, endorsement, and the 7th tradition have been brought up as concerns. This pamphlet is to be used as a conversation starter for your group. The best way we have found to address these topics within our group is by relating these virtual meetings to our in-person meetings.

Anonymity

"Tradition Twelve in It Works: How and Why notes that many of our meeting formats include the statement that 'what's said in this meeting stays in this meeting.' We all benefit from the freedom that comes with being able to share from our hearts without being worried about public disclosure of what we said."

Guiding Principles Pg 227-228

Although personal anonymity comes first for every member, it is a group's responsibility to harbor a space of unity by allowing each member to preserve their anonymity. Members can choose to not participate in video or they can alter their names in the platform being used.

Endorsement

"To endorse is to sanction, approve or recommend."

Tradition Six, Basic Text

The concern might arise that, in choosing one platform over another, a group is endorsing that platform over other options in violation of the Sixth Tradition. When thinking of endorsement, we encourage groups to think of meetings that may be held at physical locations. Do we believe our group is endorsing a facility where we meet? Choosing a virtual platform has the same impact.

Seventh Tradition

The 7th Tradition is one of the biggest things we can partake in to ensure our meetings continue in NA. Everything from electing our trusted servants, to leading the meeting, to "passing the basket" still matters and still can take place virtually. Many of our groups decide to use an online payment service, such as a peer-to-peer service to collect member donations. Many of these services keep accurate logs for a treasurer's report, and each group is encouraged to look at all available options to decide what's best for your group. A simple internet search can reveal many choices for your group to consider.

The scarcest resource we have is the NA member. In this age of technological advancement, Narcotics Anonymous has been blessed with the ability to do amazing things to help our groups further their primary purpose. We must ensure that we are working together to help our members use and learn this technology. We want to remember those who are coming and those who have been here. Through mentoring, we can forge a strong connection for generations of addicts in our Fellowship.

"We cannot afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share."

Tradition Seven, Basic Text

Talking in a Meeting

Something else we may want to consider when hosting a virtual meeting is the "chat" feature. On a phone meeting this wouldn't be an issue, but various platforms offer this service. This can weaken our meeting experience by allowing us to focus on something other than the message being shared. When we choose to leave this feature on, we should think about the benefits of attendees being able to communicate with the facilitator and the cost of this. What is being shared in the chat? Is it recovery-related? Some have compared the chat to texting during a meeting while others will defend the right of a group to make its own decision. What are the benefits of leaving the chat on or off?

Etiquette in a Virtual World

The easiest way to talk about meeting etiquette or an atmosphere of recovery in a virtual setting would be to relate it to an in-person home group. Here are some questions that can help. Would an addict attend a meeting with partial or full nudity? Would an addict display using behavior while attending an in-person meeting? Would addicts talk over one another throughout a meeting?

It is important to ensure that the standards of the meeting are not forgotten. Some things can be done to avoid some of these circumstances. Each meeting will be responsible to express their group conscience about these topics.

We understand that many of us will attend a virtual meeting from our homes or a public place. These settings can be distracting to the participant and the other attendees of the meeting. Focusing on etiquette helps us here. Remembering that we represent NA in many settings is one way to focus on our behavior during these times. Am I in the middle of cooking dinner, getting my kids ready, grocery shopping or any variety of activities other than attending a meeting? These types of things are disruptive to our members. We ought to think about "what message am I sharing" when we participate in these activities during a meeting. At a minimum, we need to mute our microphones when we are not speaking to ensure that noises in the background are not broadcast to others. We may also want to turn off our video feed to avoid broadcasting distracting images.

Another issue arises when we attend virtual meetings in a public setting. To ensure that we are not disturbing others sitting nearby, we need to use headphones or other devices and turn off our device's speakers. We also need to be mindful of the anonymity of others on the virtual meeting. Will passers-by see faces on our computer screens that they may recognize? We need to make sure that our virtual meetings remain private. Our message is one of hope and deserves the utmost respect, we encourage our groups to talk about what we are displaying for the world to see when we use video meetings and when to turn off a member's video feed.

MOVING FORWARD

This IP has presented information that shows how virtual meetings can provide an atmosphere of recovery as long as we follow our traditions. In addition, we have addressed concerns specific to anonymity, endorsement of technology, and the 7th tradition. Finally, it is the hope of the Virtual Literature Development Team that this IP will be used as a conversation starter for all members of NA.

Additional Resources at www.na.org

This is Virtually Developed Literature by Members of NA.

Not to be confused with Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship Approved literature.

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