

Experience, Strength & Hope During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected our Fellowship within our Region and around the world. However, we want you to know that you are not alone during this time. The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is here to stay. Online NA communities are experiencing explosive growth, and now more than ever is the time to stay in touch with your sponsor and other recovering addicts. Many groups within the Ontario Region and Manitoba Area are replacing their “face-to-face” meetings with online meetings. Some members were reluctant to try online meetings at first, but they’ve found them to be surprisingly beneficial. Many members feel that the safest way to carry the NA message in this current climate is online or over the phone.

Best Practices for Online NA Meetings

The following suggestions have been compiled based on the collective experience of many NA Groups within the Ontario Region and around the world.

Participating:

- Although it is possible to use Zoom and other online platforms on a phone, it is recommended to use a computer or tablet.
- Be sure to log into the meeting early in order to work out any technical glitches that may occur.
- Please try attending from a room with minimal background noise.
- Keep your microphone muted when not sharing. Allow one person to speak at a time.
- Use the “Raise Hand” icon if you’d like to speak and wait for the Chairperson to call on you.
- If using video, please act as if you are at a face-to-face meeting. This means don’t talk on the phone, walk around while on camera, or otherwise appear to be distracted. You can always turn off video to do these things.
- Just like a face-to-face meeting, drugs or paraphernalia are not allowed. Furthermore, harassment or threatening language will not be tolerated.
- Be sure to contribute to the 7th Tradition, if you can. This money is often used to pay for the hosting platform and to contribute to other levels of service. This can be done with a PayPal account, e-transfer, etc.
- Non-addicts are welcome to attend “open” meetings but are asked not to share.
- Don’t record any part of the meeting. Respect the anonymity of others by ensuring that you are in a private space or using headphones. Also, if you’d like to maintain personal anonymity, you can use an alias or turn your video off.
- For a list of online NA meetings, check out the links below:
 - <https://virtual-na.org/>
 - <https://naworks.org/dana/video-test/>
 - www.na.org (Click “Find a meeting” and select “Web” under “NA Meeting Search”)

Hosting:

- Although a free version of Zoom and other online meeting platforms exists, it is best to purchase a version that will allow for maximum attendees and extended time limits.

- You may wish to facilitate the meeting with at least two volunteers: a chairperson (leads the meeting) and a moderator (hosts the meeting and controls participation via muting, ordering shares, etc.)
- It is best to have a preamble/format to follow.
- You may wish to organize the readings on your computer before the meeting starts. If you ask volunteers to read, you can pull the reading up on your screen and click “Share Screen”.
- Mute all participants to minimize distractions and background noise. Unmute whoever is sharing.
- Ask participants to use the “Raise Hand” button in order to share or volunteer to do readings.
- If there are many participants, you may wish to have multiple chairpersons and split the meeting into small “breakout rooms”.
- For the 7th Tradition, you may wish to open a PayPal account or accept e-transfers. 7th Tradition money can be used to pay for the online meeting platform and to contribute to other levels of NA service. Mention that non-addicts are asked not to contribute, due to our policy of self-support.
- Make the most of your online meeting! Try out an international speaker meeting! Invite a speaker or two from another part of the world!
- Here are some common platforms for hosting online meetings:
 - Zoom
 - In The Rooms
 - BlueJeans

Best Practices for “Face-to-Face” NA Meetings

Our literature talks about becoming “...*acceptable, responsible, and productive members...*” of society. Many groups feel that the responsible thing to do right now is to temporarily close its in-person meetings. Some groups have faced backlash for choosing to continue to meet in person. There may also be legal implications for continuing to do so. With COVID-19 changing our society daily, it is difficult to say what may be acceptable—or legal—tomorrow.

The following list of suggestions has been compiled based on the collective experience of many NA Groups within the Ontario Region and around the world. It is important for us to clarify that it is currently **against the law** in many places to congregate in public. Please take local laws into consideration before continuing to conduct in-person NA meetings. Also, **this list does not constitute medical advice**. These suggestions are just that—**suggestions**. They are suggestions based on our collective experience for minimizing risk, **not eliminating it**.

- Your Group may wish to consider closing its in-person meeting for now and deliver it online instead. Many groups have already done so and there are members who are willing to help with this. Email pr@orscna.org for assistance.
- Refrain from attending meetings if you are sick.
- Wash and sanitize your hands before and after attending meetings.
- Refrain from hugging or shaking hands.
- Refrain from serving coffee or other refreshments.

- Refrain from handing out readings. Instead, the Chairperson or Secretary can assign readings before the meeting starts, asking people to read from their smartphones. Our main readings are available for free at: www.na.org under “Literature”.
- Refrain from giving out keytags. Instead, you can go through the “recovery milestones” and ask members to raise their hand if they are celebrating cleantime.
- Refrain from passing the basket for the collection. Instead, your Group may want to consider e-transfers or online payments as an alternative to handling money. If your group still insists on taking a collection at the meeting, you may wish to announce that the basket is being kept at a designated spot, and ask members to contribute before leaving, if they can.
- Your Group may wish to announce online meetings during the announcements. Also, be sure to announce local meeting closures.
- Instead of closing the meeting with a group hug, members may want to stay in their seats instead.

These suggestions are offered in the spirit of NA unity and group autonomy. If you have additional suggestions, please email pr@orscna.org.

Even though COVID-19 has affected our Fellowship, we are still finding ways to come together. We are never alone.

Sincerely,

Ontario Regional Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous