

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sarah Michelle

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Welcome to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*, a show for new NPs, and students that want to pass their board exam the first time and make that transition from RN to NP as seamless as possible. I'm your host, Sarah Michelle. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Sarah Michelle: Oh my gosh, y'all, we have just gotten back from the AANP Conference. Literally, we went last Wednesday. We came back on Saturday. Today is Monday, and we are recording this podcast. Me and Anna cannot wait to share all about it.

There was so much we did, in our very tight timeframe in New Orleans. Because AANP was in Orlando last year. It was in New Orleans this year. It's actually going to be in Nashville next year, which me and Anna are both stoked about.

We just can't wait to share all about our experience. So, Anna, where do you want to start? I don't even know where I want to start.

Anna: Oh my gosh, I had so much fun seeing all of you all there. This is probably not where you want to start, but if y'all didn't know this, when we go to these conferences, Sarah is like a little mini-celebrity.

Sarah: Oh, don't even get started.

Anna: It is so fun to see past students come by. And they're like, "Oh, are you Sarah?" We've had them cry, just like tears of joy. Like, "You are the reason I passed." I think that is just always my highlight every single year, is just seeing the students in awe and so thankful. And seeing them now...

They've been practicing. I mean, we've had students who passed their exam after doing the Sarah Michelle courses three years ago. Now, they have three years under their belt, they're practicing, and they're so much more confident. You just see this amazing transformation in them. I don't know, that was probably the highlight of my whole trip.

Sarah: Yeah, it's really cool to see the evolution. But I do want to highlight that you're getting recognized now, too. So, you've kind of like always been

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

behind the scenes with me, but now that you're actually in the courses too, teaching some of the videos. I don't know if anyone here knows this, but the original like OG one-on-one 101 sessions we did, Anna did all of those. You're getting recognized, too.

Anna: Every single one. Yes. Last year, I had one student recognize me. I did her one-on-one sessions, and we were working so closely together, getting her to pass her exam. But yeah, it was a few more students this year. And I was like, "Aww." All that hard work, it just all comes to fruition. And by far, seeing the impact on our learners, I think, is such a big deal to both of us. Really, it's why we do what we do. It's all for our students and our learners. And so, just seeing that all in person, it just makes me so happy.

Sarah: Yeah, it's my favorite part. It gives me chills. Because like 99.9% of all the things we do are remote. And so, yes, we see the Facebook posts. And yes, we get the Instagram messages. And yes, we see the emails, like all those things. But is totally different to connect face to face with someone and they're like, "I'm the real deal." And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, you're the real deal. Take a bag." It was so much fun.

Anna: Yeah, so much fun. Right alongside that, it was so much fun seeing our team together as well.

Sarah: Yeah, we rarely get to do that.

Anna: Yeah, it's so fun. It's so fun, the few times a year we can actually get together and bond and do team building. Really, overall, I mean, even just past our team and our students, there were such a good mix of people there.

Sarah: Yeah, there was a wild mix. So, usually what you anticipate from the AANP Conference is it's all active nurse practitioners. But there were some nurse practitioner students. And of course, there were some real deal nurse practitioners, and there was a good chunk of faculty there. There's just so many different opportunities to connect with different people, too. Which, there's something different about talking face to face with a person, even if

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

they didn't know who we were. We were kind of telling them about us and what we do; totally different to do that in person versus online.

Anna: It is so different. Communicating, in general, is so much easier in person. You can really see that tone of voice and the body language and everything.

Sarah: Yeah, the inflection. All that stuff is super important. We lose so much of that on Zoom. I mean, you get bits and pieces, but it's never the same.

Anna: No. We spent the most of our conference in the exhibit hall, right? So, we didn't get to go to all the really cool seminars and continuing education that's out there. But even just in the exhibit hall, it was so cool to see all the different opportunities that were available for NPs.

Sarah: Oh, my goodness, they're everywhere. There are these traveling nurse practitioner companies. that were right next to our booth. Like, Locum Tenens and Aya health care. But then, you have educators like us. There were a lot of diabetes educators at this conference, too. Because we kept hearing the question "Do you have anything for that certification exam?" And I was like, "Well, not yet. But I can add it to our list."

Trying to think what else. Pain management was there. There were a lot of past students that we talked to, that were like, "Oh, three years ago, I became a family nurse practitioner. But now I feel pulled to do Psych." I think this is definitely just the trend of nurse practitioners, and nursing in general.

There's always looking for that next step in your career and what makes the most sense for you. And some people when they hit, being a nurse practitioner of any kind, like that's kind of the culmination of their career. But that 'always learning' attitude, I feel like it's always even following me, too.

Anna: It is. We are absolutely lifelong learners. I think that's something about a lot of nurses, but especially nurse practitioners, is we just kind of love school.

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Sarah: I love school.

Anna: I do, too. But yeah, lots of people going for their Psych. A lot of going for the E-NP, or Emergency NP. I saw a lot of those come by, as well. And so, it just was a tiny, little glimpse into all the different possibilities out there for NPs. Then, even talking to our past students, just asking them, “Hey, what kind of setting are you working in now?” It was anywhere from primary care to house calls.

Sarah: Internal medicine. There were several internal medicine.

Anna: So, just seeing all those different things that you can do with a primary care NP was just awesome.

Sarah: Yeah. A little plug, too, if you are thinking about ENP... Because I know there's a lot of FNPs that transition to ENP. We are sistered with Ross Review. Ross Review has a really, really, really great Q-bank for preparing you for ENP.

I'm assuming most of you out there in the ENP world have heard of it, because it's so heavily saturated there. But just in case you haven't, that can be a really great resource as you continue on in school, if that's something you choose to do.

Anna: Yeah, and a lot of people did stop by. We had some Ross Review within our booth, as well. Came by because of that EMP question. It's just an excellent, excellent resource for those preparing for that.

Sarah: Yeah. Before I forget, because it was so cool, there was someone that came up to us at the booth, and they're like, “I love the podcast. I listen to the podcast.” So, if you are that person, we are saying “hey” to you, right now.

Anna: That was absolutely another one of the highlights of it. Because last year, we were still getting the word out about the podcast. This year, just have someone come up to us, and be like, “I love your podcast,” was just...

Sarah: Thank you, I needed to hear that, right now, in this moment.

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Anna: It's fueling us today. I want you to know that. it was

Sarah: It was really fun, just for me, to kind of see the glow-up between last year's booth and this year's booth. So, last year, I was very pregnant at the time. We kind of decided at the last minute we were going to go, so we showed up to AANP and we had one banner and some pins, and we were like, "Okay, we're ready to go."

Totally different vibe this year. We had the time block strategical plan for what we wanted to do. And so, of course, we had the backdrops and the banners and the tablecloths and all those pieces. But we had some really cool... If you were at the conference, you definitely saw them, Real Deal NP bags.

I don't think I could ever go to a conference again without them. It was so much fun for me to hand out. Everyone that came up, it was like, "Oh, you're about to be the real deal? Here's a bag. Oh, you're already the real deal? Here's a bag." I was definitely the bag lady of the conference.

Anna: Yes, 12 out of 10, you were the bag lady. Even especially for our past students, or our current students, who understand the "real deal NP" phrase, for them just getting to carry that around... I mean, I saw somebody in line, so many food and treats and goodies there.

So, I'm in line for some bignes at one of these exhibit booths, and the person in front of me just has their Real Deal NP bag on their shoulder full of their goodies, and I was like, "This is so exciting."

Sarah: Oh, I definitely wore mine at the airport. I was like, "I have to sponsor us everywhere I go until I get on the plane."

Anna: I like to do that with my Real Deal NP shirt that we have now.

Sarah: Yeah, I like that shirt too. It's on the website now. We have Real Deal NP shirts and tumblers. I literally just got a message from Sarah E. this morning, Anna, and she's like, "Look at my tumbler." And I was like, "Oh my god, I have to buy one for myself now."

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Anna: I know, I need to buy more of our swag too, because it is just so fun. And so, if you are getting ready to become the real deal NP, you are the real deal NP, and you want some merch that says that, definitely look at our shop. But also, we will be at Nashville next year.

Sarah: Something I want to kind of add in too, when you're going to these conferences, most people think of, "I'm going to a conference for three days," and you kind of forget about doing anything else. Enjoy the environment that you're in.

Bignes are huge in New Orleans. So, of course, we went to the original bigne place, even though it was super hot and sweaty at the end of the night. I was like, "I don't know if I can eat fried food at this level of heat right now, thank you. But we did it. Yes, we did it.

And we took one little cruise down Bourbon Street. I'm trying to think of the other different New Orleans items we did. Just because it was fun to see the city. I had never been to New Orleans before. And so, I encourage you, if you're coming next year to Nashville, which you definitely should if you're listening, we will be there. Enjoy the city. Nashville is the Music City, there's so much fun stuff to do there.

Anna: There's so much fun stuff. And even though I don't know how often I will be going back to New Orleans; it was so fun. It was my first time there. I did all the rites of passage. I think we ate bignes every single day. I think I eat shrimp every single day. And so yeah, just enjoy the city.

I mean, yes, go and get that continuing education. Remember, a lot of times you can actually get reimbursed for your travel and your continuing education through your job. So, definitely be looking into that. Start thinking of these things ahead of next year.

Especially, because once they start announcing hotel room blocks for the conference, it does fill up. So, snatch those up while you can, and then look into reimbursement. But you all, it is so much fun to just get together with different NPs.

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

And even if you're not working remotely, even if you're in a clinic setting, just seeing all the different opportunities, being able to network is another huge thing that I see at these conferences. Like even us, we love to network with just different companies. And so, do you want to talk about the happy hour we went to because that was another good, fun opportunity?

Sarah: Oh, my goodness, it was so fun. So, NPHub offered a happy hour. What NPHub does, if you haven't heard of them, is they help you find clinical placements if you're in school. So, if you're like me, in Kentucky, and it feels like every clinical spot out there is saturated, and you don't know how you're ever going to find a preceptor.

I'm pretty sure they said, and correct me if I'm wrong, Anna. I'm pretty sure they said they find you a preceptor in a half hour or less. So, I was like, wait, what? This was not my experience. It took me six months to find a preceptor. But we went to a happy hour connected with their CEO, connected with their preceptors there.

And it's just another great avenue to have conversations with people that you otherwise wouldn't. Maybe you find a job there. Maybe you kind of link in as a preceptor there. There's all these conversations that can come alongside taking opportunities like that.

Anna: Yeah, you never know what opportunities are going to present themselves at these types of conferences, and getting together with people. And so, if you are in attendance, or you attend next year, just be open. I really, highly encourage you to be open to every opportunity that comes your way. Because you don't know what's going to come from it unless you just go for it. And that happy hour, and just meeting and networking with more NPS, and other NP companies. It was just so fun. And it's so good to have these connections now.

Sarah: Yeah, we even talked about, on the way back, next year, should we do a happy hour. Should we do a little dinner or something to meet up with past students? Just because it's going to be in Nashville, and it's going to

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

be so close to home, I feel like there's going to be a lot of personal connections for me next year, too.

Anna: Yeah, I agree. Both of us are just a short drive away from Nashville. So, I'm so looking forward to that. And I think that's such a good accessible place too, for people. Major airport right there, and everything. So, I'm hoping, next year's conference, we get to see so many of you there.

Sarah: Looking back over the last couple days, do you feel like there's anything you would do different about your conference experience? Or anything you would do next year?

Anna: I think the biggest takeaways for me, of what we would do differently next year, are just having a few more sources available for people as they are stopping by our booth. So, one thing I brought up was maybe we have our study guides there, so students can actually take a look and tangibly look through things. Because I think things like that are so helpful. And I just I do wish we had had a little more time there.

Sarah: I had that same thought. That was definitely what I was thinking on the way home. I wish I had an extra day at the beginning and the end just to enjoy the city, and kind of rest up. Because the conference, in its own way, is draining. So many people and it's moving so fast. And adrenaline is pumping through your body. So, then, you get to five o'clock and you're deflated.

Anna: So yes, and I am a very introverted person. I mean, I do I get energized and I get jazzed talking to all these people. And then the end of the day comes, and I'm like, why am I so tired? That's why. I flew in Thursday, I left Saturday, I got home at 2am on Sunday, and so I do wish I'd had just a little bit more time. I hope to plan that into my schedule a little better next year.

Not that I haven't been to Nashville before, but just to be able to spend a little bit more time there and not feel so rushed would be awesome.

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Sarah: Yeah, well this year, I originally planned this trip without my husband and Meadow coming, so I made it as tight as possible. My flights are the last second I can come in, the first second I can go out. But then they ended up coming and I'm like, I really regret this. I wish I had an extra day on the beginning and the end. Maybe even extra a couple of days.

Because that's usually how me and my husband Ben have done work trips in the past. We just add on a couple of fluff days to enjoy the city.

Anna: Yeah, you make it like a little mini vacation.

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. Like, if we're going to go all the way there, we might as well stay, right?

Anna: Yeah. Well, and then especially for you all, if you are getting reimbursed through your company for some of the traveling and some of the continuing education, do take advantage of having that partial reimbursement. And take a few extra days, just spend time in the city and meet people.

I mean, I remember someone we were with, was even talking about just sitting in the hot tub with their hotel and the connections they were making with other NPs who were there. You just never know. So, you just want to have the time to really, really have the full experience. So, I think that would be my other biggest takeaway.

Sarah: Also, don't get stressed about attire. I saw so many varied outfits, like literally everything from jean shorts to full business suit. I think business casual is a good way to go. I did see some scrubs. You're right. I did see some scrubs.

But yeah, I think business casual is definitely the way to go. For the love of God, do not do what I did. And please, please, please wear tennis shoes. It doesn't matter how nice your outfit looks, wear tennis shoes, because your feet will hurt so badly.

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Anna: Yes, standing at the booth or just walking around New Orleans. I had my nice Keds on, so they were like half tennis shoes, but it didn't look too tennis shoe. I was like, okay, this was an excellent choice.

Sarah: This is no joke. My Fitbit said I walked eight miles the first day. I remember laying down in bed. Number one, I have blisters that are bleeding. My legs hurt so bad. I was like, I don't even know if I'm going to be able to sleep because they just hurt so bad. Yeah, it was so dumb to wear the Birkenstocks. I will never do it again.

Anna: I will say, I feel like my last little bit of travel advice here, also look up the weather. Louisiana was in a heat advisory. And it is below sea level, if y'all didn't know that. It was so hot and humid, that we are walking around, and it is like 9pm and I'm expecting it to be colder out, and I have jeans on...Worst decision.

Sarah: No, y'all, if you can see the picture of us on Bourbon Street, my hair is up. And literally, I bet no one in that group has ever seen my hair up because I don't wear my hair up. But it was that humid and that nasty. I was like, I'm over it. I want to go back to the Airbnb now. I'm done.

Anna: And literally, all we did was walk from one end to the to the other.

Sarah: When you open the doors....humidity. Yeah.

Anna: So, I would plan ahead for that in the future. I was like I should have just worn the shorts, should have worn the shorts. But...

Sarah: I think, overall, it was a really, really good time. I would definitely do it again 100 times over. Just even to meet with the past students. Even if there was no opportunity to sell somebody on a future course or anything like that, I would do it all over again, just to hang out with you guys. Because that part was like the best of the best.

Anna: I was going to say, seeing past students. It just feeds my soul.

Sarah: Would you set me back up in the best? I'm like, "Ah, I can do this for 1000 years." When you're running low on energy, you just...

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

Anna: You just needed that little bit of pick me up. Every day, we'd be at the booth all day, and we'd feel a little bit low. And then one of you would come by and just be so excited, or like this is it. This is why we do this.

Sarah: Like, ooh, picture hug? I'm like, I'm here for it. Because last year I was pregnant and like don't touch me. But this year was like, please hug me.

Anna: Please, I want to see all of you. I just want to congratulate all of you.

Sarah: So, that was one of my favorite parts. I wish I was kind of joking when I said it, but I was like, we should just become the "Whoo-Hoo" booth. Because when somebody would come by, and it would just be one or two people, and be like I just passed, like literally our whole booth would just go "Whoo-Hoo".

Anna: Yeah, that was fun, too. There was somebody across from us and down a little bit, they might have been one of the traveling NP companies. And they were getting a kick out of us. We were dancing. We were yelling out "Whoo-Hoo". We were filming TikToks. I mean, we were having fun.

And so, that's another thing. Have fun with it. We love to have fun with you all. We love to see you all. We love celebrating you all. And so, even if that is literally all we did this entire conference, it was worth it 10,000 times over.

Sarah: Do you remember which booth we have next year? We've already booked our booth for next year. We're legit coming next year. We're not just saying that.

Anna: It is in the 600 section. I can't remember the exact number. I want to say it's like 624. But I could definitely be wrong.

Sarah: I'm seeing 614.

Anna: Six and a four, somewhere. But we are going to be there. It's only a couple aisles off from the center aisle. We're going to have the same size

Ep #91: 2023 AANP National Conference Highlights

booth that we had this year. Y'all we literally already have this booked. We are so excited for Nashville next year.

Sarah: Yes. And it's June 25 through the 30. So, go ahead, mark your calendars. Go ahead and start looking at: Will your employer pay for it? Booking travel. All that good stuff. And hopefully, a year from now, we'll be seeing you guys in person.

Anna: Yep, I have it in my calendar already.

Sarah: I think that is it for this episode, this week. So, if you came to AANP definitely connect with us. We would love to chat further. And we'll be seeing you guys next year, and talking to you soon on this podcast in just a couple of weeks, with our next episode.

As an extra bonus, friends, if you're looking for support, no matter what phase of your nurse practitioner journey that you're currently in, I have communities available for both students and new nurse practitioners. In these communities, we work to uplift one another and grow this profession together, every single day. Links to join will be included for you in the show notes.

Thanks for listening to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*. If you want more information about the different types of support we offer to students and new NPs, visit stressfreenp.com. See you next week.