

My experience in the Clubhouse International World Seminar

Oslo, September 29 to October 4

I'm Teresa, from Casaclub Baires in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I am not grateful to be living with depression and borderline personality disorder, but I am proud to say that they are amazing teachers who make me improve myself day by day and search for value on what really matters.

Since I started living with these mental illnesses, my life has been a roller coaster. I have been living in a cloud of emptiness, far away from reality, immersed in the vertigo of nothingness. Inactive outside, but inside my mind keeps spinning and it doesn't stop. I feel I deserve to suffer for letting down those who love me most. I want others to stop telling me to get up and make an effort.

I no longer remember the person I used to be before mental illness, before this dense cloud, so dark and suffocating that I can't cross alone without drowning in silence.

One year has passed since my hospitalization, and I am recovering. At a slow but steady pace, I'm getting back what this experience took from me: dignity and hope.

Before I came to this Seminar, the feeling of being on my own in this fight was absolute. I wasn't able to believe that the Clubhouse International Community was this big, or actually real. As members and staff of Casaclub Baires, our doubts on how to make this work were many, and really scary.

Here, I discovered that every moment is a powerful experience. The excellent speakers of each plenary, the great workshop presenters, the brave and breath-taking testimonies. The chatting at the lunch waiting line. I would not say breakfast, because all I could think about was keeping my eyes open. Even the smoking breaks, where I was lucky to hear fellow members talking about how their clubhouses worked, and opening up, telling their personal stories, one on one, without microphones, audience and nerves in between.

In this beautiful place I have learnt, I told my story, I shared my fears and my joy, I cried tears of happiness, I met wonderful people and I smiled, a lot. I am

now convinced that we are not alone: not even in the end of the world, in my beloved Argentina.

I'm taking home the support of all those who I shared our brand new Clubhouse story with. I'm returning whit names of people interested in keeping up with our Clubhouse's hard but beautiful process. I am filled with member's best wishes, support and loving words of encouragement and advice.

Most important, I'm taking the great and beautiful Clubhouse Community to Argentina, and I promise not to stop working and reaching out until every country in South America has its own clubhouse, to help everyone who struggle with mental illness and feel they lost hope.

Because if there's something that I learnt and keep in my heart in this Seminar is that, with the support and help of the Clubhouse Community, added up to the member's own commitment, recovery, wellness, happiness and a life worth living is possible.

Thankyou Clubhouse International, my new family.