

Alternative Step Program

Please note: This is not SSA/MAA Program literature. It was submitted by individual members as a resource that might be helpful to our membership.

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Personal Note from Alena:

It was suggested that this Alternative Step Program might be helpful for someone who is unable to work a 12 Step Program, especially if they struggle with “family-of-origin experiences with religion”.

When I first read these Steps I got very excited. Language like “We come to believe that God / the Goddess/ Universe / Great Spirit / Higher Power awakens the healing wisdom within us when we open ourselves to that power” and “We make a decision to become our authentic Selves and trust in the healing power of the truth” really resonate with me as they speak directly to my personal experience.

When I shared my enthusiasm with a dear friend she reminded me that it took years for me to come to the Truth as I now understand it and that perhaps the process of fighting my way through the male oriented language of the AA Big Book was part of the process and necessary, like the butterfly fighting its way out of the cocoon so it will be able to fly.

Please see this lovely article and video for more information:

<http://www.joyfuldays.com/the-struggle-is-necessary/>

My personal experience is that with time and many passes through the 12 Steps, I have been healed from the negative family-of-origin experiences with religion and now have a successful Recovery living the 12 Steps and enjoying the literature as written to the best of my ability in partnership with my HP. The word(s) that is used for HP no longer a cause concern for me - I am Open and at Peace. I find myself using many different terms including GGA (God/Goddess/All-That-Is) and when I am in the mood to keep it simple, word Love.

I remain eternally grateful for the one member of the original founding AA group who fought for the words “as we understood Him” - though I personally would have preferred “as we understood Them” because “Them” is more open and inclusive. Terms like God/Goddess/All-That-Is, the OneMind, the Tao, The Spirit of the Universe, Creator and other genderless visions of HP all fit into the “Them”.

Sharing these in case they might be of value to someone in our fellowship....

<https://candaceplattor.com/free-articles/the-16-steps/>

The 16 Steps - Candace Plattor

Many therapists and counsellors who work in the addictions field have, at one point or another, found themselves stymied when challenged by a client who stated, "I will not attend 12-Step programs. They do not work for me." This has been a dilemma because, until recently, there have not been many alternatives for us to offer these clients. Indeed, 12-Step programs have been the mainstay of the addictions recovery field for many years. In fact, reflected in 12-Step philosophy is a belief that those people who do not wish to remain abstinent using those Steps are not displaying "the willingness to go to any lengths." Clients who prefer to find another way often feel that they have been labelled "resistant" or "ungrateful."

As a therapist in private practice, as well as an Addictions Counsellor working in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, BC for the past 12 years, I have worked with many clients who have not found the 12-Step model helpful. As a recovering addict myself with over 15 years clean and sober, the 12 Steps saved my life when I began my journey of recovery. There are many wonderful aspects of 12-Step programs, such as the support of the fellowship and sponsors, daily meetings in almost every country in the world, and no requirements for membership other than the desire to stop using mind-altering substances. Programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous help millions of people achieve and maintain sobriety all over the world. I do not question that.

What I do question, however, is whether these programs are appropriate for all people. Can every addict/alcoholic wanting recovery, either through abstinence or harm reduction, be helped only by working the 12 Steps? Is there another viable choice for those who would prefer an alternative?

There are many reasons that the 12 Steps are not a good fit for some clients. Often, people have difficulty with what they refer to as the “God-thing,” sometimes stemming back from childhood family-of-origin experiences with religion that felt shameful for them. For others, it is the patriarchal/hierarchical wording of such phrases as “His will for us” and “God as we understood Him.” Still others do not appreciate being encouraged to explore their “shortcomings” and “defects of character,” nor are they in alignment with the concept of being “powerless” over anything in their lives, including their addiction. Although for a great many people, these concepts and wordings cause no real problems, for others it can often signal the inherent difference between “working a program of recovery” and staying true to themselves. I believe that this is a choice that no addict/alcoholic who wants help should ever feel compelled to have to make. Most clients with substance misuse problems have already experienced an inordinate amount of shame and guilt. These clients need to be encouraged to find what works for them. They need to be validated for speaking their truth, and be encouraged to be in alignment with the tools they choose to use for their growth. I believe that it is counter-productive and non-therapeutic for counsellors, therapists, treatment centres and recovery programs to insist that there is only one road or model for overcoming addictive behaviours.

Thankfully, there is an alternative that sometimes works better for the “marginalized” populations of our society such as women, people of colour, people living in poverty, gays and lesbians, as well as those who do not subscribe to a Christian-based spirituality. The 16 Steps for Discovery and Empowerment, based on the work of Charlotte Kasl, Ph.D., are providing a great many “recovering” people with another way of looking at themselves and the society of which they are a part. These steps are better able to encourage self-awareness and positive change without having to ascribe to any particular model of living, especially for those clients who find the 12 Steps to be problematic. The 16 Steps are experienced by many people as inclusive and empowering. They are perceived as supporting us in developing an internal locus of control, as opposed to reliance solely on a patriarchal or external version of a higher power. They are interpreted by many clients as “spiritual” as opposed to “religious.”

The 16 Steps: An Alternative to 12-Step Programs. Many therapists and counsellors

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The 16 Steps are as follows:

1. We affirm we have the power to take charge of our lives and stop being dependent on substances or other people for our self-esteem and security.
2. We come to believe that God / the Goddess/ Universe / Great Spirit / Higher Power awakens the healing wisdom within us when we open ourselves to that power.
3. We make a decision to become our authentic Selves and trust in the healing power of the truth.
4. We examine our beliefs, addictions and dependent behaviour in the context of living in a hierarchal, patriarchal culture.
5. We share with another person and the Universe all those things inside of us for which we feel shame and guilt.
6. We affirm and enjoy our strengths, talents and creativity, striving not to hide these qualities to protect others' egos.
7. We become willing to let go of shame, guilt, and any behaviour that keeps us from loving ourSelves and others.
8. We make a list of people we have harmed and people who have harmed us, and take steps to clear out negative energy by making amends and sharing our grievances in a respectful way.
9. We express love and gratitude to others, and increasingly appreciate the wonder of life and the blessings we do have.
10. We continue to trust our reality and daily affirm that we see what we see, we know what we know, and we feel what we feel.
11. We promptly acknowledge our mistakes and make amends when appropriate, but we do not cover up, analyze, or take responsibility for the shortcomings of others.
12. We seek out situations, jobs and people that affirm our intelligence, perceptions and self-worth, and avoid situations or people who are hurtful, harmful or demeaning to us.
13. We take steps to heal our physical bodies, organize our lives, reduce stress and have fun.
14. We seek to find our inward calling, and develop the will and wisdom to follow it.
15. We accept the ups and downs of life as natural events that can be used as lessons for our growth.
16. We grow in awareness that we are interrelated with all living things, and we contribute to restoring peace and balance on the planet.