

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. What's a "Freethinker"?

A. "Freethinker" encompasses the variety of beliefs and non-beliefs held by individual members. Recovering alcoholics who attend secular and freethinker A.A. meetings come together knowing that sobriety can be attained by anyone with the help of A.A. fellowship and principles, without necessarily relying on a god or even a "Higher Power." Some identify as agnostic, some atheist, some spiritual but not religious—and some choose to use no labels at all.

### Q. What are your meetings like?

A. Meetings are quite similar to "traditional/religious" A.A. meetings. We always read the A.A. Preamble and a secular version of the 12 Steps; a group member leads the meeting and introduces a topic, sharing personal "experience, strength and hope;" and this is followed by open discussion and sharing. Meetings also include readings from both A.A. and non-A.A. literature, including *Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life.*

### Q. Do you conclude meetings with prayer?

A. No we don't, since prayer is a distinctly religious practice. However, at the beginning of the meeting, those who wish recite the "Serenity Goal" (much like the Serenity Prayer but with no invocation of a god). We close meetings with the Declaration of Responsibility: "Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that I am responsible."

### Q. Do you folks work the steps?

A. Some do, some don't, and some work alternate versions of the steps. Others rely solely on the Fellowship for their recovery and find that works well for them. Some find it useful to substitute the idea "group of drunks," "good orderly direction," "gift of desperation" or add another "O" to "God" for the word "GOOD" in the steps.

### Q. Do those that attend Freethinkers in A.A. also attend "traditional/religious" groups?

A. Some of us do, and some do not. There are those among us who simply can't tolerate the "religiosity" that often takes place in traditional A.A. meetings. Others can attend other meetings and simply "take what they like and leave the rest." Especially if you are early in recovery and NEED to attend the other meetings, we can provide you with tools and tips to face the challenges.

### Q. Am I welcome to one of your meetings if I'm religious, or if I think of God as my higher power?

A. Certainly. Our goal is to provide a home for recovering alcoholics of various beliefs. Our members simply appreciate an atmosphere where belief is not made a prerequisite for sobriety, where we can be "true to ourselves."

### Q. Is Freethinkers in A.A. "legitimate" A.A.?

A. Yes. As the Third Tradition says, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." Freethinkers in A.A. is a registered group with Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and included in international listings of Alcoholics Anonymous Groups.

# Freethinkers<sup>in</sup>AA

**Mondays at 6:30 p.m.**

THE SECULAR HUB  
3100 Downing St.  
Denver, CO 80205

[www.FreethinkersInAA.org](http://www.FreethinkersInAA.org)

NAME	CONTACT (phone/email)

**"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking."**

— Tradition Three

## Freethinkers in AA: Purpose

Agnostic and freethinkers Alcoholics Anonymous groups endeavor to maintain a tradition of free expression, and conduct meetings where alcoholics may feel free to express any doubts or disbeliefs they may have, and to share their own personal forms of spiritual experience, their search for it, or their rejection of it. In keeping with A.A. tradition, we do not endorse or oppose any form of religion or theism. Our only wish is to assure suffering alcoholics that they can find sobriety in A.A. without having to accept anyone else's beliefs, or having to deny their own.

## Who We Are

### • *New to the Freethinkers Group?*

Some of us have been in A.A. for a long time, with many years of solid recovery, but could no longer deal with the "god-talk" at traditional meetings and/or were no longer willing to publically "fake it till you make it" or "act as if" with regards to religion.

### • *New to A.A. and new to Freethinkers?*

Some of us are new to A.A., have a secular belief system (or are questioning our "faith"), and were lucky enough to initially find a home at Freethinkers in AA. Or for far too many, some have walked in the doors of "traditional/religious" A.A. meetings, heard the "god-talk" and walked right back out the door (perhaps doing so numerous times).

Freethinkers in A.A. is an open meeting for those seeking help with their own problems with alcohol, as well as our supporters, individuals dealing with other addictions and others interested in how our program works. Our members share a common desire to embrace A.A. without the religious ideas and practices found at more "traditional" A.A. meetings.

## A Secular Version of the 12 Steps

On page 164 of the Big Book, Bill Wilson (one of the founders of A.A.) wrote: "*Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know but a little,*" and in the Forward to *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, he wrote: "*A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.*"

With that in mind, here is a secular version of the 12 Steps, suggested as a program of recovery.

1. We concede to our innermost selves that we are alcoholic, that on our own we are powerless to confront and resolve our addictions.
2. We learn to trust and hope that a new course of action, practice of these Twelve Steps in a supportive fellowship can and will restore us to sanity.
3. We make a daily decision to turn our will and life over to this 12 step process and development of inner resources they help us find and follow.
4. We learn how to take a searching, fearless, and honest inventory of ourselves, our thoughts, beliefs, emotions and actions.
5. We admit to ourselves and to another person what we learn about ourselves, sharing our life stories—withholding nothing.
6. We become willing to let go of anything and everything holding us back.
7. We use whatever personal power and resources we find to help us confront self-limiting liabilities and defenses when they crop up.

8. We list all persons we have harmed and become willing to make things right.
9. We make things right with all we have harmed, wherever possible, except when to do so may injure them or others.
10. We continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it.

11. We seek through meditation and self-examination to increase the awareness of our deepest thoughts and feelings, seeking only for the knowledge of what is right, and the power to carry that out.

12. Awakening through the practice of these Steps to the spiritual and non-material in our lives, we try to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

Bill W. also wrote: "*There are few absolutes inherent in the Twelve Steps. Most Steps are open to interpretation, based on the experience and outlook of the individual. Consequently, the individual is free to start the steps at whatever point he can, or will.*" [As Bill Sees It, page 191]

## Additional Resources

Many of the "standard" A.A. tools and resources (attending meetings for fellowship, slogans, getting a sponsor, connecting individually with others in the program, etc.) are time-tested and effective. We also recognize that much conference approved A.A. literature & practices present barriers to those who don't believe in a god (or for some, even a higher power). We encourage you to visit our website for additional information and resources (links to other websites, secular articles & stories, book suggestions, etc.):

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