

To Whom It May Concern:

I am part of a growing grass-roots movement of people who are exposing the dangers of AA and other 12-Step support groups. In my experience as a Registered Nurse, I have frequently heard, "AA works for alcoholics; AA has helped millions". It wasn't until I needed help for my own drinking problem that I learned the truth about AA and the addictions treatment industry in general.

First of all, there is no data to support the truism that AA works. By their own statistics, perhaps 7-10% of alcoholics achieve long term sobriety. However, the treatment industry pushes AA as the solution in a process known as "12-Step Facilitation" (TSF). Upwards of 92% of rehabs are merely TSF centers. The 28 day rehab I attended required daily attendance of a 12-Step meeting. No other support groups were offered.

I tried to grasp the faith-based AA program. Clearly this program requires a religious conversion. The "Higher Power" is God. An AA member is expected to believe in God and ask Him to remove all "shortcomings" in Step 7. Step 11 requires prayer and meditation to understand God's Will and the power to carry that out. "Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's Will into all our activities" (AA, 4th Ed, page 85).

I found practical, secular help for my 'alcoholism' in SMART Recovery (est. 1994) and Women for Sobriety (est. 1975). These groups offer practical advice on motivation, relapse prevention, improving self-esteem, and self-empowerment. It is my intent to spread the word about these programs in order to help those who cannot relate to the tenets of AA. Why doesn't the treatment industry offer choice? AA has worked for some, but it obviously does not work for everyone. By doing my own research, I have found the support groups that work for me.

Regrettably, I also sought help from my state's Peer Nurse Assistance Program (PNAP). I agreed to be monitored for a minimum of three years. I understand that random drug tests and certain workplace restrictions are efforts to ensure the safety of my practice.

However, I am also ordered to attend 12-Step meetings as a condition of keeping my license. I did not know this when I volunteered for the monitoring program. I've learned that similar programs exist for other professionals in other states. Evidently, states are coercing professionals to attend faith-based 12-Step meetings or risk losing their professional licenses.

I am two years deep into what I call "The PNAP Trap". I must continue to attend AA meetings...or else. I had a brief relapse following deaths in my family. When I self-reported, nine months were added to my contract and I was ordered to attend another 90 meetings in 90 days ("90 in 90"). A missed drug test in PNAP is considered proof of impairment, and inability to pay lab fees is considered non-compliance. This results in additional monitoring, and orders by the state to repeat "90 in 90".

I will continue to advocate for choice in support groups. I am not sure if I can complete the state's "assistance" program. The tragedy of these state programs is that professionals may avoid seeking help once they hear that the program largely consists of coercion into compliance with an outdated faith-based approach. How many healthcare professionals will continue to struggle with addiction on their own? How many are practicing while impaired today?

Sincerely,

Lilly Rose