

19 October 2015

To whom it may concern,

I am very concerned about 12-step coercion in general. My friend Lilly Rose has shown me a document that states she must attend 90 AA meetings in 90 days to maintain her license. There are many problems with this.

There are so many problems with the Alcoholics Anonymous program that I cannot explain them all here, but I can say that most states have recognized AA as a religious program. When people are mandated to AA for crimes such as DWI, they can sue and they win. That means coercion into AA is legally recognized as problematic.

Coercion into 12-Step programs happens on many levels, and I have found that it is not just in the court system.

Within the program itself, there is *psychological coercion*. It is said in AA that the only alternative is “jails, institutions, and death”. This prevents many people from seeking any other kind of help, even if they have voluntarily gone to AA. In the program, they are never told that they don't have to believe in God to solve an addiction problem. They are told the opposite. People are even told that AA must survive or most 'alcoholics' will die, which convinces a lot of people that they should never criticize the program or else they are somehow involved with killing people.

There is also *social coercion*, which takes on many forms. There is social shunning, meaning people just refuse to speak to others who are not 'working the steps', having come to believe that doing so would endanger their 'sobriety'. It is common in AA for people to mention that some people who did not believe in the Program ended up committing suicide. It is expected that you will create a personal story in which you say you were powerless and without AA you would not have survived.

In my own case, I found that state licensed social workers not in AA were being told they were incompetent to speak to an 'alcoholic', and forced to recommend AA by an 'addictions specialist' who has built a career on the idea that coercion into inpatient 12-step rehabs is the only effective treatment. My desire to speak about it to a non AA member was used as proof that I had a vague 'Axis 2' personality disorder and therefore should not be indulged with any discussion about it. I wrote a website about this at notpowerless.com

There is also professional coercion, or *extortion*. When I realized there was no way to complain about this without being dismissed as manipulative or dishonest, I didn't know what to do. I tried filing a complaint with the counseling center and they said it's their right to a 'preferred mode of treatment'. I tried filing a complaint to the New York State Department of Education, and the investigator saw nothing wrong with it. I tried writing Yelp reviews, and those were removed by 'community request', for various reasons ranging from 'not enough detail', 'privacy concerns', to 'lacks a substantive consumer experience, please describe your actual experience'.

So I started Tweeting, and soon found a site called disruptedphysician.com which informed me that this was happening to other people who found it impossible to complain about the situation without 'consequences'.

It is especially disturbing to see that professional licenses are being held over people's heads by this religious program.

Sincerely,

Tom Gleason