

To whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of myself and countless others who were hurt by 12 step religious programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. I was first forced into rehab by the legal system in 2005. I was told my problems were because "I wasn't honest, I didn't have the right God and I was too smart for my own good".

I was told that my "traumas" were my fault and my life in shambles because I was selfish and living in fear. I was told daily about what would happen to me if I left AA. If I disagreed or had my own thoughts about anything said in the rooms I was promised "an alcoholic death".

I was in an incredible amount of emotional pain. More so than before going to rehab. At this I was repeatedly blamed for not "letting go and letting God". I was also told that "pain was the touchstone of all spiritual growth". My problem was I could not be honest and I could not find the right God to turn my will and life over to. Once I was able to leave rehab, I realized I was worse than when I went.

I spent another 5 years in AA because of fear of what would happen to me if I left. Though without alcohol I lived in complete misery inside the rooms of AA. Once out of rehab I was swarmed by groups of people more concerned with who I would grant complete dominion over my life or getting into my pants than my addiction to alcohol. I did choose someone and began working the 12 steps.

I did not understand the program or how simply removing alcohol but leaving all of the misery was any better than my life with alcohol. The therapist I was seeing at the time told me I should put my opinions aside and trust these people.

I did for another amount of time until I was either going to end my life or leave the program.

After I left AA is when I began to feel any kind of happiness. I was much worse but after obtaining a new therapist and a psychiatrist Who prescribed me some much needed medication I began to understand that I was not the cause of every bad thing that happened around me and I wasn't being punished for not turning everything over to an AA approved God.

I was able to not drink without AA and am much better off without the program. I hope that others like me can be spared the misery and wasted years of 12 step programs with a 95% failure rate. There are other options for the treatment of addiction and I am optimistic that these other options can be explored."