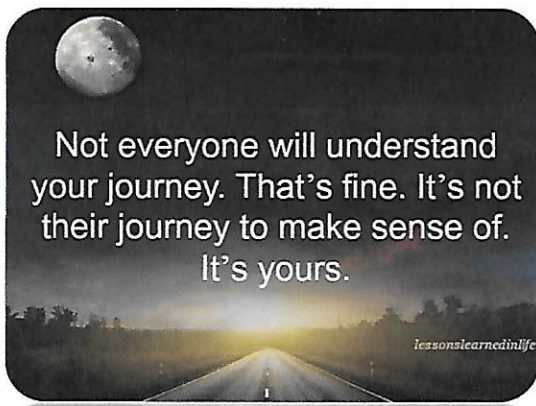


# Atheists and Agnostics in OA



## I Am An Agnostic 12-Step Practitioner, recovered and living in The Solution, One Day At A Time without any belief in a deity, higher power or outside interventionist.

Four years ago, I took action and walked through all 12 Steps, following the clear-cut directions outlined in the original text, Alcoholics Anonymous, aka The Big Book. As a result of going through all 12 Steps, in order and quickly under the guidance of someone in who the problem had been solved, my ideas, emotions and attitudes towards life were drastically rearranged. I experienced a complete shift in thinking sufficient to bring about recovery from a variety of “isms” that had plagued me for decades.

Since I began to practice implementing the underlying principles of The Steps in all aspects of my life with fresh honesty, I’ve been able to live in the solution experiencing the healing powers of the 12 Steps and happily practicing living others-centered. I have learned the universal, generic pattern of life’s dance by practicing the 12 Steps. It’s my journey and no else needs to understand it or dictate how I experience practicing The Steps in all my affairs.

I attended a We Agnostics in OA speaker panel and heard a message from 3 women, whom I would later call my 3 Ebbys, that had depth and weight. For me, Ebby is my recovery hero because he strayed from the Oxford Group conversion tactics and went rogue by telling Bill W to choose his own conception of God. My experience with being able to choose “no conception” as my conception enabled me to recover without prayer or any religious dogma and then implement the program. I didn’t have to write job descriptions for God, or make up prayers for Step 3. In fact, in the Big Book it was made clear that I don’t even have to say the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step Prayer. “The wording was, of course, **quite optional** so long as we **expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.**” (*AABB, p63, 4th Ed*) So, I didn’t need to spend any time on Step 3 debating whether there was a god or not; or, praying before meals when I don’t believe in god. I simply had to make a decision to turn to the rest of the process and complete the work. That’s it. Keep it moving. Same was true for Step 7. My experience was that I didn’t have to even say the prayer. The Big Book was clear again that “When read we said **something like this...**” (*AABB, p76, 4th Ed*) I had to ask myself what the underlying principle of the 7<sup>th</sup> Step meant to me and then move forward to Steps 8 and 9. That was all it took. No hand wringing or being forced to get on my knees, make up any prayers. I just kept moving forward having faith that the process would work for me too, as it had for the Big Book guide taking me through the steps.

A larger lesson I continue to experience is that it really doesn’t matter what I say on my knees, but what **I DO ON MY FEET** that results in growing in effectiveness and understanding of how live in neutral while being others centered. I’m grateful that I had a Big Book guide that simply served as a lantern to light the path she’d walked so that I might experience the healing power of the steps FOR MY SELF and recover as she had done. I would learn that I had to fully concede to my inner most self that I was powerless and my life was a mess. That’s all that was required to move forward. And, so I walked should-to-shoulder with my guide, following the directions of the first 164 pages and the result was freedom from the bondage of self and a new faith in the process...it works!

I have thought a great deal about sharing my experience, strength and hope because my message of recovery excludes god and religion and I’m happy, joyous, and free to be my authentic self. That’s not always a welcomed truth in many of the rooms. The spiritual arrogance, as Bill W called it in his AA Grapevine 1941 article, is often so overwhelming that my mind snaps shut and it’s difficult to participate in traditional OA.

Thankfully, the universal flow of my life led me to take action to experience the healing powers of the steps by following the clear-cut directions of the program of recovery outline in the Big Book. As a result, I have had a shift in my thinking sufficient to bring about recovery. What that means in my life today is that I’m no longer trying to run the world or control outcomes. I’m accepting that each moment I experience is an opportunity to live in that space and practice behaviors that enlarge my ability to be useful to others. Instead of turning to endless conversations with the Colonel and Sara Lee or swallowing down a fifth to get some ease and comfort whenever any moment in my life gets uncomfortable, I turn to an inner power resource that I can tap into which repositions my energy to a place of neutrality. Once I am aligned with resources greater than my conscious self, then I can engage in behaviors that activate the healing powers of the steps. Practicing turning inward and living outward, implementing principles that will enable me to be comfortable being uncomfortable, I am more able to be of maximum service to others. Accepting that my actions or stillness in the moment will teach me how to live and let live.

I’m at peace with the universe today and am grateful my mess has evolved into a message that I have a responsibility to carry to other Atheists/Agnostics/Freethinkers so that they might find a way out too. It’s my journey and no one else has to understand it or dictate how I travel the road of happy destiny. Every day is a day that I practice living with integrity and constant self-examination and realignment with the universal power within...that “inner resource” that is tapped as the result of not just studying the 12 Steps but living the underlying principles in all my affairs, One Day At A Time. I’m truly am a grateful, 12-Step Practitioner, living in the Solution, One Day At A Time. PEACE & WISDOM my Fellow Travelers. —*Chelsea H*