



## **AA Cracked: Why You Might Want To Look For Another Way**

Although Alcoholics Anonymous may be one of the most accepted methods for conquering chronic alcoholism, AA has recently been coming under an objective strain of skeptical scrutiny from ex-members, psychologists and addiction professionals. The courts and insurance companies consider AA to an efficacious treatment for those suffering from alcoholism. This assumption, however, is a misleading conclusion based on five myths regarding AA that persist due to a lack of research and a paucity of statistics.

While AA's 12-step program has been lauded by religious individuals and proponents of its agenda-like axioms, its success rate has, in reality, been manipulated by data, anecdotes and tautological rhetoric. All put forth by members who sometimes appear to be more concerned with promoting a fanatical ideology rather than a program that is flexible, non-judgmental and progressive.

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## **These are the five myths that exist today about AA:**

- Myth 1: AA works
- Myth 2: AA is open to all
- Myth 3: AA is not a cult
- Myth 4: AA meetings are without hierarchy
- Myth 5: AA is the only viable alcoholism treatment

### **Why a Myth?**

One definition of a myth states that it is a “fictional or half-true belief constructing all or part of an ideology and is firmly established within a society due to a mantra-like stream of repeated but unfounded comments.”

### **Circular Reasoning**

Consider the assertion that AA makes regarding "alcoholics are people who can't drink in moderation".

When extensive research revealed that alcoholics can and do drink in moderation, the response from AA was to say that "they could not have been true alcoholics because alcoholics cannot drink in moderation".

It is this type of circular reasoning, an insistence on blind faith in a god who does not represent everyone's spiritual preference and a lack of impartiality towards those who do not totally buy into their oppressive system of "rehabilitation" that has led to AA being viewed as nothing more than a cult.

Instead of coercing everyone in their program to forego self-empowerment by making them believe they are powerless, pitiful individuals, shouldn't AA adopt a more human-centered and less indoctrination-like approach towards helping individuals with alcoholism?

### **Not All It's Cracked Up to Be**

As early as 1960, AA's reputation began to tarnish because of its forceful promotion of cultish collectivism and dogmatic proverbs. In a 1963 Harper's Magazine article, psychologist Arthur Cain states that "AA has turned into a religious movement--and a hindrance to research, psychiatry and to many alcoholics who need a different kind of help".

It is now time to debunk the AA propaganda machine and inform individuals of alternative methods to alcohol rehabilitation which do not involve strict adherence to supernatural beliefs, absolute subordination to upper-level members and group indoctrination.

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## Myth 1: AA Works

*Alcoholics Anonymous is flawed in ways that are not readily apparent to the public.*

It is a subterfuge perpetrated by reactionary members who promote a cause-and-effect relationship between the 12-step program and AA's recovery rates without statistically significant evidence.

The image that AA has relentlessly developed since the 1930's is based on false logic and dogma. Just because a stalwart AA member points to two or three sober people and claims that AA (and God) works does not mean that it, in fact, does work. What it does mean is that AA refuses to accept the influence of diverse variables which are constantly at work in an alcoholic who is trying to get sober.

## Variables That Influence Sobriety

The National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has assembled a list of these variables, which include:

- severity and length of the alcohol addiction
- presence of psychiatric disorders
- gender
- motivation to change
- sociopathy
- search for meaning
- levels of social support

## Tunnel Vision

AA promoters have tunnel vision when it comes to viewing the success of their group. They are not able to look at the larger picture of an alcoholic's recovery, nor do they want to research the fallacies regarding their perspectives on alcoholism. Instead, they tell individuals seeking help for alcohol addiction that the only way they can stay sober is to constantly recite and adhere to their 12 steps. They tell them it is the only way, the **ONLY** way.



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## **Low Success Rate**

What AA doesn't tell an alcoholic during indoctrination is that they actually have only a 5% success rate, which equates to the success rate of those who try to quit by themselves or with the help of a spouse or friend. Regardless of AA's vehement denials regarding their extremely low success rate, the facts from research and ex-members' accounts point directly to the failure of AA's guilt and shame-promoting 12-step program.

## **Addiction to Addiction**

It is no wonder that AA has such a high rate of failure. What AA systematically does is replace one addiction with another, i.e., it replaces alcoholism with total dependence on its program. It does not teach someone prone to addiction how to develop self-esteem and a strong sense of self and determination. Instead of treating alcoholism as a biopsychosocial disorder, they treat it like it is the fault of the individual, and the only way to correct this fault is to spend the rest of your life worshiping AA and its program.

It simply does not work.

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**For information about alternative treatments, visit: [www.the-alcoholism-guide.org](http://www.the-alcoholism-guide.org)**

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## **Myth 2: AA Is Open to All**

While society sees AA as a group which opens its arms to anyone who is suffering from alcoholism, this perspective, upon closer examination, does not quite convey the truth.

*Members who faithfully attend meetings are components comprising an extremely self-selecting organization.*

Only those who are true-blue AA believers will be in attendance, blissfully convincing each other that their Christianized 12-step program is the only method that works. Those who fail to cling to these mantras will be ostracized and considered a total failure as a human being.

## **Acknowledgement and Submission of God a Must**

Atheists, agnostics, and any individuals who choose to believe in a different spirituality other than a thinly-disguised Christianity are also not welcome in Alcoholics Anonymous (in addition to its affiliate Narcotics Anonymous). The general gist of the famous (or infamous) 12 steps involves a complete submission and reliance on something unseen, something that relies on faith for its existence. It calls for AA members to "admit we are powerless over our addiction" and to make the decision to "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God". So while an alcoholic may desperately want help, he or she will not be accepted unless they acknowledge the dogmatic 12 steps.

## **AA Based on a Religious Movement**

The fundamental axioms of AA are based on the Oxford Group religious movement which began in the 1920's. It fixated on the idea of individual sinfulness by proclaiming that alcoholism, promiscuity and other human weaknesses could be overcome by confessing and surrendering to God. The Oxford Group demanded nothing less than absolute perfectionism, i.e. blind obedience, from its members. This inflexible form of morality is now an integral part of AA, and unless someone literally assimilates their beliefs, they will find themselves pushed aside by other AA members.

## **AA Especially Harmful to Female Psyche**

The myth that AA is open to all is just that--a myth. This myth especially affects alcoholic women because of AA's insistence on feeling guilty and shameful about being an alcoholic. Psychological research into women's psyche has revealed that many women are inclined to naturally have low self-esteem and guilt. What AA instills in women, then, is not what they need. In fact, AA merely feeds this sense of guilt which causes women to either helplessly surrender to AA's rigid rules or question them in an attempt to salvage what little self-esteem they may still possess.

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Whether this kind of program works for all alcoholics wanting to try AA is irrelevant to AA members; you have to accept these 12 steps and you have to believe in a Christian-like God or else you will fail and will never be fully accepted into the program.



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### **Myth 3: AA Is Not a Cult**

A comprehensive definition of a cult generally includes several premises:

- individuals are deliberately placed in distressing situations
- potential members are usually recipients of effusive and emphasized attention from other members
- vulnerable new members have immediate access to a new identity provided by the group
- new members are isolated from family and friends and the only information they receive is provided by the group
- problems that bring new members to the group are simplified; one solution is offered (the groups' belief system) for these problems and is constantly reiterated

Every one of these statements is easily applicable to Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **AA Resembles a Religious Cult**

As a group which does not tolerate any kind of individuality or freedom of thought, AA exhibits characteristics of religious affiliations which have been called "cults" because of the emotional and cognitive harm they do to their members.

### **No Thinking Allowed**

Individuals attending AA meetings who express skepticism towards the group's principles say they have immediately been charged and lambasted by diehard members who spout such cultish maxims as "utilize, don't analyze" or "fake it until you make it". In other words, they are instructing new members in a subliminal way to accept AA's belief system without questioning it and eventually, they'll "get it". It is chillingly similar to a popular slogan from Reverend Moon's cult group which said "You think too much". Thinking for yourself is not permitted in a cult and it is not permitted in AA, either.

### **Extreme Dogmatism**

Dogmatism is another factor in identifying a cult.

*While AA's 12 steps are supposed to be "suggestions", they are perceived by members as being just as important as the Ten Commandments are to an evangelical Christian.*

Questioning the usefulness of shame, guilt, humility and faith in a higher power in alcohol recovery is strictly prohibited. AA has been accused of extreme dogmatism by those who have wanted to try their program. Those who cannot accept the almost remorseless rigidity of their 12 steps have themselves been blamed for refusing to join

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AA, they are told they have a "character defect" which prevents them from giving themselves totally to the program.

### **No Other Way**

Research has shown time and time again that AA is not an effective treatment program. The group, however, continues to disregard any evidence available and even ignores the results of its own surveys, which simply reveals what is already known-- that recovery rates are dismal. Yet, they continue to preach that their way is the only way to recover from alcoholism. Obviously, possible alternatives deviating from norms do not exist in cults, nor do they exist in AA.



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#### **Myth 4: AA Meetings Are Without Hierarchy**

*Bullying is not only prevalent in schools but it is also frequently used within the AA organization.*

Veterans of AA who have been thoroughly indoctrinated into the AA agenda and its 12 step program have been known to harass, stalk and threateningly approach new members with their interpretation of "The Book". These individuals have been faithfully attending meetings for years and now self-righteously consider themselves higher and much more authoritative than others below them.

#### **Criticism and Disrespect Rampant**

AA's hierarchy consists of these members who consider themselves powerful supervisors possessing the right to badger and disrespect new members with criticism of their selfish, shameful ways. Newcomers who question AA dogma are essentially told they are "in denial" and suffering from moral and spiritual disease.

*Equality among new and older members does not exist in the AA program.*

Sponsors who are assigned to new members will demand that they give up their thoughts and wills to their AA ideology.

#### **Danger of Sexual Predators**

Reports from ex-members have said that many sponsors are nothing more than sexual predators who take advantage of vulnerable women who are physically and mentally ill with alcoholism.

#### **Confess to Manipulators**

Clever manipulation and threats of ostracization by sponsors or elder members coerce new members to relent to a "fearless moral inventory", where they must confess all of their "sins", "character defects" and "moral shortcomings" to them and to God.

#### **Exploitation and Blackmail**

Individuals high up in this hierarchy thus have access to a new member's innermost thoughts, hopes and secrets; they have been known to use this information to exploit and even blackmail. Considering that many long-time alcoholics turned AA sponsors have at one point in their life probably been to jail or prison, or have participated in conning or scamming others, this ability to use such information for their own gain is hardly surprising.

Attending AA meetings and spouting the 12 steps to anyone who will listen does not necessarily convert them into saintly beings and no one should think otherwise.

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At meetings, new members are often subject to tyrannical tirades by members who claim to have been sober for many years because of the 12 steps. New members are immediately made to feel lower than dirt by this self-proclaimed hierarchy within AA.

### **The Key is Isolation**

They are told to stop seeing any counselors, therapists or doctors they may be seeing and only talk to their sponsors or other senior members. Older members systematically isolate new members in this way, which easily allows them to place new members on the bottom rung of the AA ladder, where they can be manipulated, bullied and brainwashed.



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**If AA has left you isolated & still drinking, visit: [www.the-alcoholism-guide.org](http://www.the-alcoholism-guide.org)**

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## **Myth 5: AA Is the Only Viable Alcoholism Treatment**

This is probably the most erroneous myth regarding AA that circulates among those with alcoholism and their family and friends. AA is NOT the only viable alcoholism treatment available and more importantly, AA's treatment success rate actually hovers at only around 5%.

This percentage is severely less than other treatment success rates but is not readily known because of AA's dogmatically melodramatic religious message which effectively drowns out research and statistically significant data.

## **Other Treatment Options**

The amount and quality of other alcoholism treatment options are both high and accessible. These programs do not preach, bully, harass or take advantage of those who are emotionally and physically vulnerable. Some of these treatment options include:

- [Medication](#) which helps make recovery from alcoholism easier.
- So-called [alcoholism cures](#) which, although derided by many associated with AA, seem to show promise.
- [Alternative support groups](#) which do not have a Christian-only agenda; they accept all denominations and faiths and those with none.
- [Holistic/herbal treatment programs](#) which can assist those looking for a different approach, and also for those who want to compliment traditional methods with something a bit different.
- [Gender-oriented support groups](#) and [treatment programs](#) which focus on women and their individual problems

## **Medication**

There are a number of medications used in the treatment of alcoholism. Naltrexone for reducing the cravings associated with early recovery from alcoholism, disulfiram which causes unpleasant symptoms when alcohol is drunk (used as a deterrent), diazepam for controlling the unpleasant side-effects of alcohol withdrawal and acamprosate which, when taken, reduces the likelihood of a recovering alcoholic relapsing.

## **Alcoholism Cures**

There are many in the alcohol treatment 'industry' who scoff at the idea of a cure for alcoholism, they believe it to be far too complex a condition to be treated with just a pill. Yet, there are a large number of former alcoholics who claim to have been cured by one of two medications that are currently on the market. Read [alcoholism cures](#) for more on this.

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## **Alternative Support Groups**

AA has such a dominant position in the business of recovery that other, more effective groups are swallowed up by its shadow. Increasingly, however, they are getting more exposure as AA comes under closer scrutiny. There are support groups for anybody and everybody: atheists, agnostics, women, men, teenagers, homosexuals, heterosexuals, businessmen and so the list goes on.

## **Holistic Alcohol Treatment**

There are countless therapies out there that can help people get off and stay off alcohol. Research suggests that those who embrace as many approaches to quitting alcohol as possible are more likely to succeed than those who don't. That is why it is essential to get educated about the options out there. Acupuncture, cognitive behavioral therapy, aversion therapy, aromatherapy, homeopathy, and hypnotherapy all have a part to play in tackling addiction dependency.

## **Women-Centered Treatment**

As outlined above, AA is not ideal for many women. There is a support group that caters exclusively to women and their specific needs and experiences. There are also rehab centers that treat only women. These centers tend to have higher success rates than those which accept both men and women. AA has women only groups, but such groups still use the 12 steps which tend to alienate many women with their emphasis on powerlessness, guilt and shame.

## **And Finally.....**

Although AA has a pretty dismal success rate, it does work for a small minority so do not discount it out of hand. Any approach to beating alcohol dependence is better than none.

Try AA, by all means, but always be aware of its weaknesses. All alcohol treatment programs have their faults, yet it seems AA and many of its members think that their program is infallible. I hope this document has shown you otherwise, and outlined some of the alternative approaches open to you.

*If you found this report helpful, please consider placing a link in your website or blog to <http://www.the-alcoholism-guide.org>.*

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