

Addiction: Multiple Pathways to Recovery

In June of 1935, New York stock broker Bill Wilson and Ohio physician Dr. Bob Smith founded the first 12 step program when they began Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Since that time the 12 step philosophy has been adopted by more than 250 other groups to help address: drug addiction, gambling, nicotine, eating disorders, debt, sexual compulsivity, emotional problems, relationships, depression, mental illness, and many others issues.

First printed in 1953, the AA book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions summarizes the expected outcome of living life via the 12 step guidelines; ***“AA’s 12 steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole”***

There are >100 empirical studies published showing that AA can help. Other studies indicate that AA also helps reduce depression symptoms (Kelly et. al 2010). Another key benefit of joining a 12 step group is the development of a new social network, focused on helping one another, while learning new behaviors and building honest, supportive relationships. While there are more than 2 million AA members worldwide, AA and twelve step programs are not for everyone. Statistically the overall success rates are not very good despite the fact that for some 12 step programs work very well.

National research suggests there are >20 million individuals in recovery with an estimated 3 million using 12 step programs leaving 85% or 17 million others that have found a path to freedom with other methods. In addiction circles it is widely recognized that there are many pathways to recovery including a faith based path, formal treatment, medication, drug court, recovery coaching, fitness, spontaneous cessation and others. The need for alternative paths to recovery has never been more pronounced as many folks balk at the prospects of religious sounding programs or conventional treatment. As such alternative pathways to recovery have expanded.

Recovery Community Organizations (RCO’s) consisting of individuals in recovery their family members and others impacted by addiction are sprouting up uniting and mobilizing advocates in a call to action to address the addiction public health crisis, nationwide. These RCO’s started taking root back in the late 1990’s and exist in most states and other countries as well.

Recovery Centers continue to emerge, serving as gathering places for like-minded social networks, peer to peer recovery support services with connections to relevant resources. Recovery coaches are an evidenced based adjunct to recovery efforts as well. Coaches provide non clinical mentorship and help those newly recovered to navigate and remove obstacles to recovery and connect individuals to available community services.

For more information or if you need assistance with any addiction related issue contact:

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