

Can the steps work without GOD?

I recently listened to a secular 12-step podcast where the speaker said that if you go through the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book and take out all the references to god, you're left with a program of specific actions. I agree with the opinion that OA is a program of actions; however, so are all the other pay-and-weigh programs. I used to be very successful in a pay-and-weigh program whenever my self-will kicked in. I went to the meetings, I had buddies, I had a food plan, I had tips and tools for how to be successful – the same as I have now with OA. For me, what makes OA different is precisely the 'god part.'

Let me be clear – I'm an atheist. I often bristle in traditional meetings with traditional literature and fellows who attribute all kinds of things to an imaginary being with human qualities. What is the 'god part' for me? That's the beauty of having secular meetings, workshops, literature, and podcasts available today. I listen to others articulately describe their definition of "a power greater than themselves." Someone said it was when they 'felt awe, a sense of being in the presence of something vast and mysterious that transcends their current understanding of the world.' Someone else described it as 'letting go and tapping into the natural choreography of life.' These descriptions ring true for me. I have learned that I can rewrite the twelve steps in my own personal way... imagine that! I can let go and trust that there will be a solution to all of my struggles that will be more creative and interesting than anything my brain could come up with. I can let go of my self-will and trust that a solution will arise without attribution to any concrete concept. This is my experience.

It is not my self-will that keeps me abstinent. I have to maintain that felt sense of "something greater" than my brain in order to let go of the food and other distractions and have the courage to change. It takes a lot of courage to be honest and to change. As an atheist, paradoxically, the OA 'god part' does for me what the pay-and-weigh programs could never do.

- Deb