**Do I have To Believe in God To Go To AA?**

“Do I have to believe in God to go to 12 step meetings?” is one of the most common questions I hear about AA/NA/other 12 step meetings.

The easy answer is no, but it can feel a little bit more complicated than that to some people. There is the notion that AA is a religious group, and if you don’t believe in God, you can’t go to the meetings, or you won’t be able to stay sober. Presumably, this notion comes from the steps that mention God and a higher power quite a bit.

I can certainly understand where this thought process comes from, but I think it’s a really dangerous thought process to have. In the beginning of my recovery, [12 step meetings were too important](http://www.addicted-to-sobriety.com/12-step/) for any of that to matter. I didn’t care if they used the word God, higher power, or anything else. AA is what kept me sober in those early days. If I was having trouble with school or family or my marriage, I called a friend from AA and/or went to a meeting.

Eventually, I was able to find other ways to cope that worked better for me than going to meetings, but some people find that meetings work for them, and they spend the rest of their lives going.

Many people that do**not believe in a traditional God** still find alcoholics anonymous meetings very beneficial. I don’t know that I necessarily believe in conventional God, but does it really matter? I don’t think it does. Step 3 sums it up the best: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God **as we understood him**. “As we understood Him” is the statement that fits my beliefs most.

I absolutely believe that there is something out there that is greater than me, but that doesn’t mean it has to be God or a God-like symbol. The word ‘God’ in AA signifies a higher power of any kind, no matter what that power feels like for each person. And quite honestly, if you don’t believe in any kind of higher power right now, that’s okay too. Just keep going. That’s really as simple as it is, especially early on in recovery or when you are struggling in your recovery.

**So Can I Go To 12 Step Meetings If I Don’t Believe in God?**

Yes! The goal is to walk into a meeting with an open mind and be willing to accept help and get something positive out of the meeting. I don’t go to NA, AA, or 12 step meetings anymore, but when I did go, I could always find something positive to take from the meeting. You will find people in AA that you don’t like, don’t get along with, or just can’t stand what they have to say because it’s so different from what you believe, like in all other parts of your life.

But that doesn’t matter. You take what you can, and you leave the rest. That doesn’t mean you have to go to meetings you don’t like. There are millions of meetings all over the world. Find one that works for you! Keep trying new ones until you find a place that feels comfortable and helpful for you. There’s no reason to force yourself to go to a meeting that you don’t like. Don’t be discouraged – just keep going. That’s it.

Sometimes I would find 12 step meetings incredibly inspiring, and sometimes I left the meeting wishing I had just stayed home and watched TV. Regardless of the meeting, though, I was always glad I went because it was such an important part of my recovery in the beginning, and I believe it’s part of why I’m able to just do what works for me these days instead of feeling pressured to go to meetings.

Just don’t give up. Don’t get discouraged by meetings or what seems like the religious component of AA. If you really can’t get past that, there are other types of meetings that aren’t based on the 12 steps. There are secular organizations and agnostic groups, which I’ll discuss in more detail in a later post.