Addiction, Recovery, and The Meaning of Life – An Atheist’s Perspective

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Goals for the hour

♦ Consider your client’s beliefs and help meet them where they are in their understanding of “higher power” – This is just another form of cultural diversity.

♦ Use virtues and alternatives to the 12 steps as a way to process into recovery

♦ Make available resources in your community for clients that are not Higher power based
What is in a Word?

♦ What comes to mind?
  ♦ Atheist – satanic worship, going to hell, evil, wrong...
    ♦ **Atheist**: one who believes that there is no deity
    ♦ **Agnostic**: a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable

♦ Reactions: But you seem so nice, what happened to you, how dare you decide there is no god, anger, fear, worry...
American Culture is Christian:

♦ Sneeze – god bless you
♦ War on Christmas if you say Happy Holidays
♦ In God We Trust on money
♦ Swear with one hand on the bible
♦ Our weekly calendar and holidays
New Clients Often Enter Treatment:

- Void of spirituality
- Angry at God
- Recovering from Religions' role in their sickness: (sexual abuse, gender identity, shame, ...)
- Non-Believer
- Questioning their beliefs
- Struggle with the 12 Step Model/higher power/God
- Non-Christian: Baha’i, Judaism, Native American Spirituality, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Wiccan, Pagan...
Design your own Deity ~
The task of the Counselor

Rebuilding the life of the compulsive gambler:

• Reconnecting to community
• Correct past errors
• Find purpose in life
Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.

- Viktor E. Frankl
Man’s Search for Meaning
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological Needs**: Air, food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep
- **Safety and Security Needs**: Health, employment, property, family, stability
- **Love and Belongingness Needs**: Friendship, family, intimacy, connections
- **Self-Esteem Needs**: Confidence, achievements, respect of others, connections, need for individuality
- **Self-Actualisation**: Morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance. Experience purpose, meaning and inner potential
Wellbeing Meta-Analysis: A Worldwide Study of the Relationship Between the Five Elements of Wellbeing and Life Evaluation, Daily Experiences, Health, and Giving – “Wellbeing is all the things that are important to how we think about and experience our lives.”

- **Career** – I like what I do each day.

- **Social** – I have a lot of love in my life.

- **Financial** – I have more than enough money to do what I want to do.

- **Physical** – My physical health is near perfect.

- **Community** – I can’t imagine living in a better community than the one I live in today.

Virtues – “Virtues are the very meaning and purpose of our lives – the content of our character and the truest expression of our souls. For people of all cultures, ethnicities and beliefs, they are the essence of authentic success.”

- **Early Recovery:**
  - Honesty
  - Acceptance
  - Accountability
  - Self Discipline
  - Humility

- **Later Recovery:**
  - Appreciation
  - Purposefulness
  - Unity
  - Charity
  - Contentment
  - Hope

http://www.virtuesproject.com/
# VIRTUES: The Gifts of Character

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[www.virtuesproject.com](http://www.virtuesproject.com)
Life Meaning
- Self Transcendence

- Treatment goals:
  - What gives them meaning?
    - Shared experiences
    - Connections with others – friends, family, loving relationship
    - Creativity and/or passions
    - Work
    - An understanding of who we are and why we are here
  - Career (volunteer)
  - Social
  - Financial
  - Physical
  - Community
“Work spares us from three evils: boredom, vice, and need” - Voltaire
Alternatives to the 12 steps

- The Humanist Alternative – B.F. Skinner
  - http://www.sossobriety.org/12steps.htm

- The Native American Wellbriety Foundations of Recovery

- Twelve Steps to Emotional Health
  - http://www.brianlynchmd.com/TWELVE/12stepsemotionhealth.htm

- 12 Alternative Steps
  - http://wud1.com/steps/Steps.htm

- 12 Steps of AA for Persons of Humanistic, Agnostic, or Atheistic Beliefs
  - http://newroadstreatment.com/12-steps-of-aa-for-persons-of-humanistic-agnostic-or-atheistic-beliefs/
The Basis of the 12 steps

1. Admit there is a problem
2. We need others to help us
3. We trust in their wisdom and experience
4. Examine the damage done to self and others
5. Bring the shame and guilt into the light for healing
6. Willing to look at errors in thinking
7. Be open to strengthening virtues within ourselves
8. Examine those we have harmed
9. Make amends
10. Have integrity in our words and actions
11. Appreciate life as it comes to us and have hope for the future
12. Give back by helping those that are still struggling

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Pantheoretical Steps
by Nicolas A. Roes, PhD
http://www.sustainablerecovery.net/an-alternative-perspective-on-the-steps.html

1. I refuse to let my relationship with alcohol or drugs (or gambling) define who I am.

2. I am capable of taking charge of my life, and creating something better than I have now.

3. I am making a commitment to use all the resources at my disposal to achieve a better life.

4. I am increasing my self-awareness by taking a close look at myself, my environment, and my goals for the future.

5. I have identified the personal and external resources I have at my disposal to achieve these goals.

6. I forgive myself for all the poor choices I have made in the past.
Pantheoretical Steps cont.

by Nicolas A. Roes, PhD

7. I am ready to accept the help of others when I need it.

8. I have made a list of big mistakes I’m never going to repeat.

9. I am ready to celebrate life without the use of alcohol or other drugs (or gambling).

10. I pledge to continue my journey of growth and self-discovery.

11. I know I’ll make mistakes, but I won’t stop trying.

12. I understand that helping others is a way to find meaning and happiness in my own life.
What are the resources in your community?
(Please don’t just require/suggest Gamblers Anonymous)

♦ SMART Recovery
♦ CORE Process
♦ Harm Reduction
♦ Rational Recovery
♦ Motivation Enhancement
♦ HAMS
♦ Moderation Management

♦ Women for Sobriety
♦ Secular Organization for Sobriety
♦ LifeRing
♦ Others in your community?

♦ Meetup.com
The Secular Therapist Project

WWW.seculartherapy.org

- 127 Secular Therapists available to help
- 1775 Clients already signed up

Dr. Darrel W. Ray, founder of Recovering from Religion and author of *The God Virus: How Religion Affects Our Lives and Culture*
Online Coaching

Facing the Problem. Finding a Solution.

Isn't it time for your life to come first?

- Are you struggling with your grown children who have returned home and don't seem to have a plan to move out?
- Is your grown child living at home and playing video games all day?
- Do you struggle to limit the screen time of your teenagers?
- Are you living with an addict and they refuse to get help?
Thank You!

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