



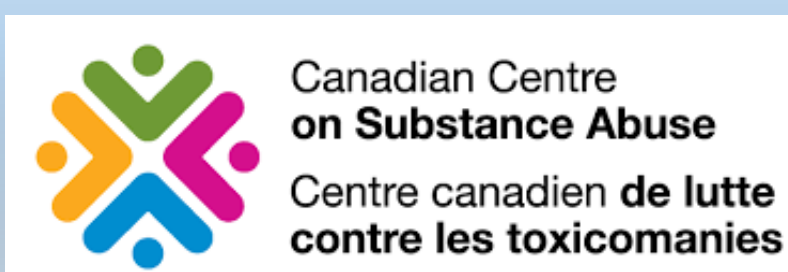
Secular 12-Step Facilitation + Trends in 12-Step Culture

Cultural Humility, Systemic Discrimination, Human Rights

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Issues of Creed: findings from the May 2017 *Life in Recovery From Addiction in Canada*



Barriers identified to starting recovery:
 “Being uncomfortable with 12-step programs (evidently the only programs available in their community) Lack of programs or supports that met your cultural needs...” p. 19

“I got clean in the 12-step ideology-based environment. ... However, the faith-based premises were not sufficient for the mental and emotional needs that I (and a great many people dealing with addiction) have had.” p. 22

“There is significant discrimination in AA ... Spirituality, at least in the way these programs use it, does not solve your addiction.” p. 23
<http://www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/CCSA-Life-in-Recovery-from-Addiction-Report-2017-en.pdf>

The Tale of Two AA's

AA is seen by some as “inclusive” in spirit—yet resistant to change

“...this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of their belief or lack of belief.”

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (1957), p. 167

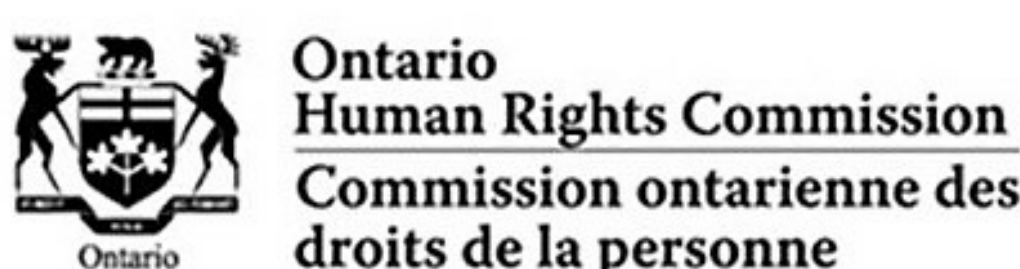
There are pamphlets, for youth, women, visible minorities, LGBTQ members. Despite numerable pleadings from the membership, no atheist/agnostic pamphlet from the General Service Office (GSO).

Year	AA GSO outcomes from nonbeliever pamphlet requests
1975-76	Subcommittee said, “this pamphlet vitally needed” but not sent to Conference Committee (CLC).
1981-82	Ed H wrote GSO explaining a need. Trustees' Literature Committee (TLC) “doesn't recommend at this time.”
1988-89	Area 59 asks GSO to meet the requests of non-believer members. Wouldn't this help our efforts to expand AA in secular Eastern Europe? CLC said, “We see no need for atheist/agnostic literature.”
1995-96	Area 49 voted with substantial unanimity for non-believers pamphlet. The recommendation was passed on to CLC who declined recommendation.
1997	We Agnostics NYC request was passed on to the TLC who declined to make forward out of respect of 1996 decision of CLC.
2000-01	5 member letters “Spiritual Variety” idea passed from TLC to CLC + 2 letters of opposition. CLC: no action
2002, 03 and 06	Lengthy discussion by TLC who made a recommendation to the 2006 CLC. “Already numerous references to unbelievers in literature.” CLC took no action.
2008	Area 17, with substantial unanimity, asked GSO to create a pamphlet about working the program without a spiritual conversion (belief in prayer-answering higher power). TLC agreed to consider but took no action.
2010-14	2011 advisory action directed TLC to solicit stories for a pamphlet on spirituality including successful atheists and agnostics. 200 stories were collected. The conference sent back a draft in 2012, then voted against a revision in 2013. As a “consolation” <i>Many Paths to Spirituality</i> was approved.
2016	Grapevine devotes October 2016 to atheists and agnostics in AA. The British General Service Conference approved and distributed The ‘God’ Word: Atheists & Agnostics in AA for UK groups/members.
2018?	Area 83 (Eastern Ontario), 17 (North Florida), District 404 (Brooklyn NY) and Kanas City We Agnostics Group are requesting that GSO consider adopting, printing and distributing (English, French, Spanish) the UK Pamphlet The ‘God’ Word and seek approval at the 2018 General Service Conference.

12-Steps—Human Rights & “duty to accommodate”

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (2014-18832-1) Lawrence K. vs. GTA Toronto Intergroup, A.A. World Services, General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

Interim Decision October 2, 2015



[28] AA World Services and GSO, provides a service in Ontario. That being said, I find that this Tribunal has jurisdiction over AAWS... [31] ... the services provided by the respondents, which is based on an observance of God, can

give rise to discrimination on the basis creed within the meaning of the Code where they refuse to change that service to accommodate the creed of an individual seeking to use their service.

Organizations will find that inclusive design, barrier removal and individual accommodations often benefit larger numbers of people.

Under the Code, employers, unions, housing providers and service providers have a legal duty to accommodate people's sincerely held creed beliefs and practices to the point of undue hardship, where these have been adversely affected by a requirement, rule or standard.

The goal of accommodation is to help everyone have equal opportunities, access and benefits. Creed accommodations enable people affiliated by a creed to fully and equally take part.

The duty to accommodate stems, in part, from a recognition that the “normal ways of doing things” in organizations and society are often not “neutral” but rather may inadvertently disadvantage, privilege or better meet the needs of some groups relative to others. Instead of giving special privileges or advantages, accommodations help to “level the playing field.”

Atheists, agnostics and persons with no creed, as well as members of newer or lesser known creed communities also face various forms of stigma, prejudice and discrimination. New forms of prejudice against religious people in general have also emerged in recent times, as the numbers of people identifying with no religion continues to grow and increasingly shape public culture and morality.

12-Step Facilitation & “duty to accommodate”

Therapists should recognize that patients can be expected to interpret the AA concepts presented here in light of their own experience. This is consistent with the AA approach, which allows for a great deal of individuality of interpretation. For example, the 12 Steps specifically allow for individuality in conceptualizing a Higher Power (“God as we understand Him”)

Step Two/Three: What kind of Higher Power does the patient believe in? What are the qualities of this Higher Power?

The therapist must be prepared, for the patient to resist these ideas, as the “Big Book” makes amply clear. Patients may criticize or demean AA and the 12 Steps or may attempt to draw the therapist into a discussion (argument or debate) ...

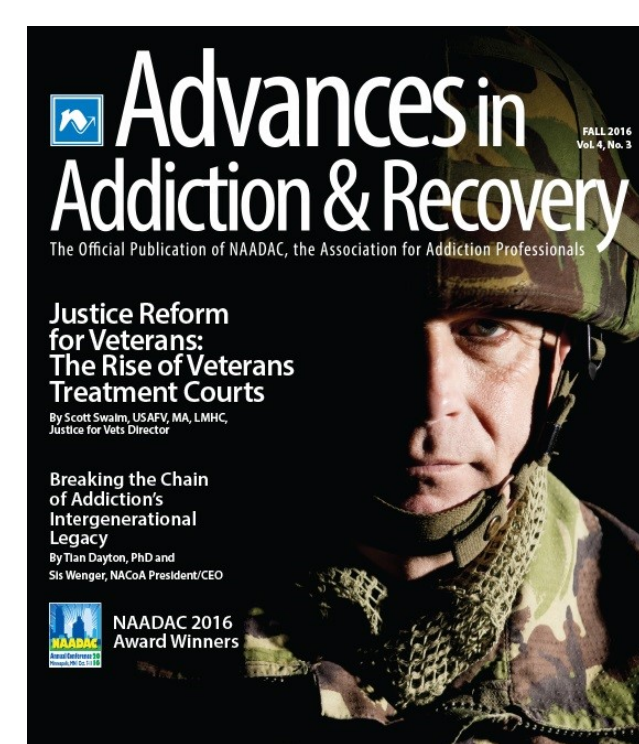
The objective of the program is facilitation of the patient's active involvement with AA.

Believing in the 12 Steps or in a Higher Power may be less important than

simply going to meetings which should be the first goal.

Twelve Step Facilitation Therapy Manual: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) (pp. 13 - 49)

Best Practices: sensitivity training, updating our tools and language



“Addiction Professionals shall develop an understanding of their own personal, professional and cultural values and believes. Providers shall recognize which personal, professional and cultural values may be in alignment with or conflict with the values and needs of the client. Providers shall not use cultural or value differences as a reason to engage in discrimination. Providers shall seek supervision and/or consultation to address areas of differences and to decrease bias, judgement and microaggressions.”

NAADAC's, *Advances in Addiction & Recovery* (Fall 2016) “Professional Ethics: Cultural Humility and Sensitivity”

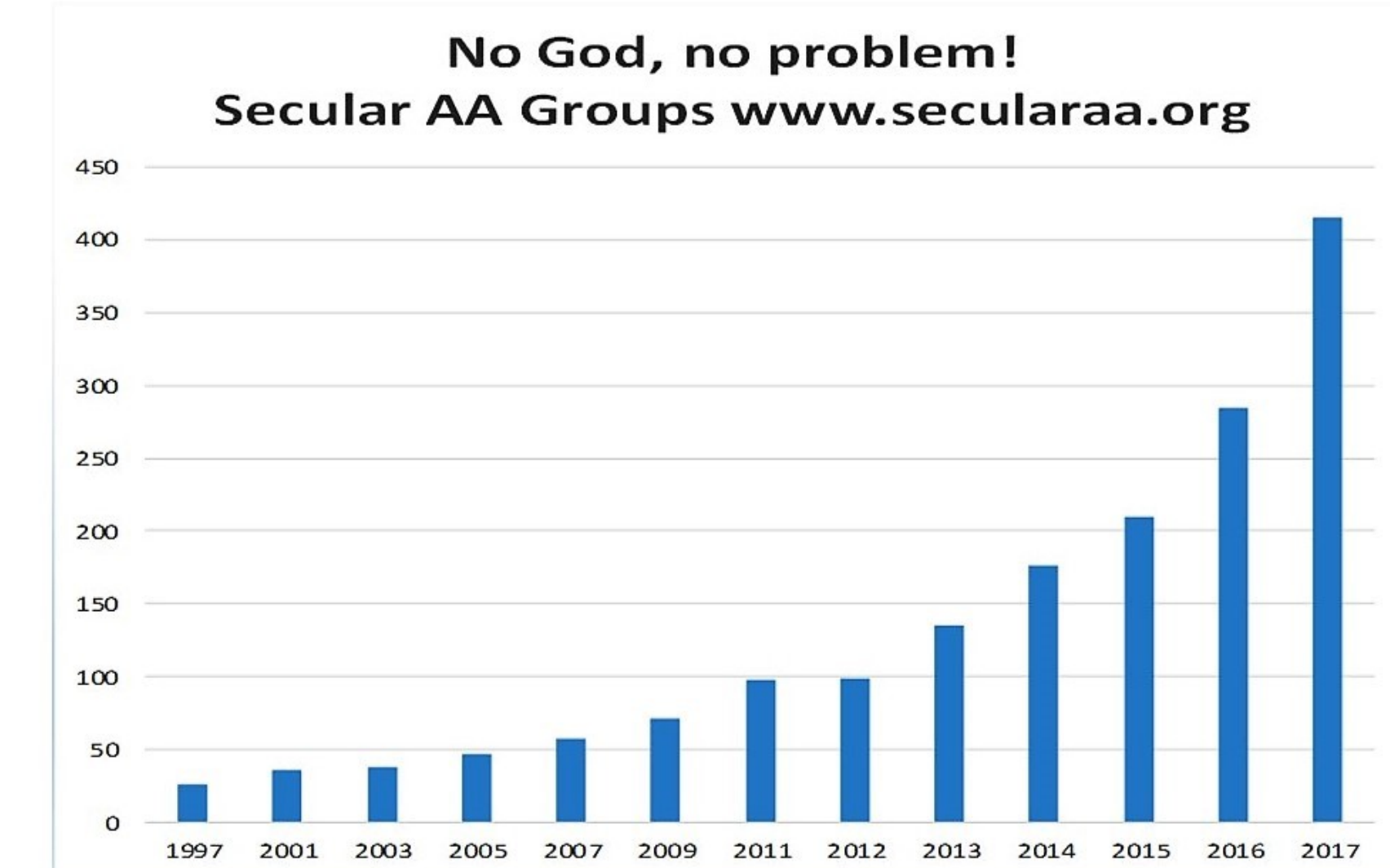
Mita Johnson, NAADAC Ethics Committee Chair

Angus Reid Canadian Survey Comparisons	1975	2015
A higher power cares for you personally?	73%	61%

“80% of human rights complaints originate in the workplace”
 Alberta Human Rights Commission

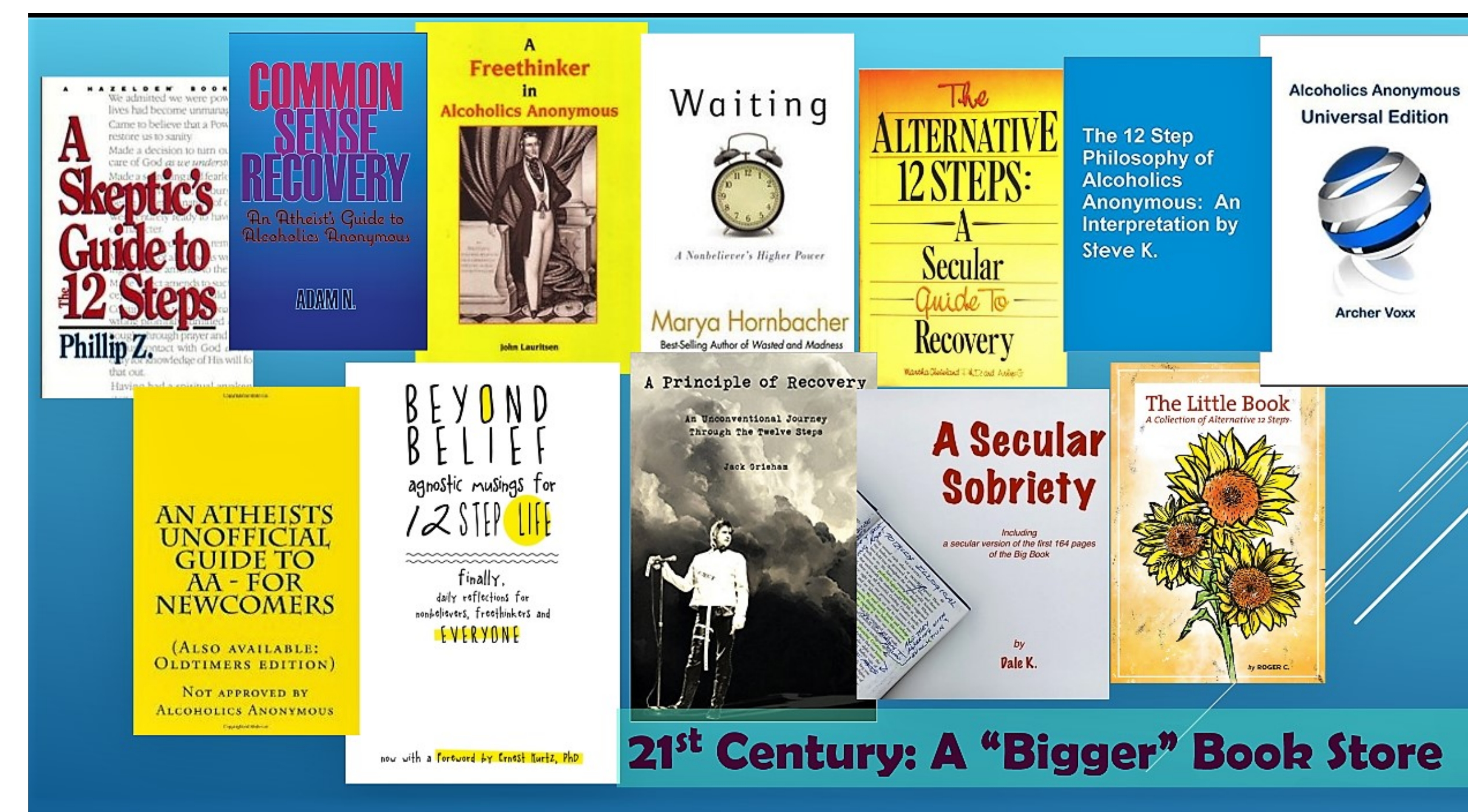
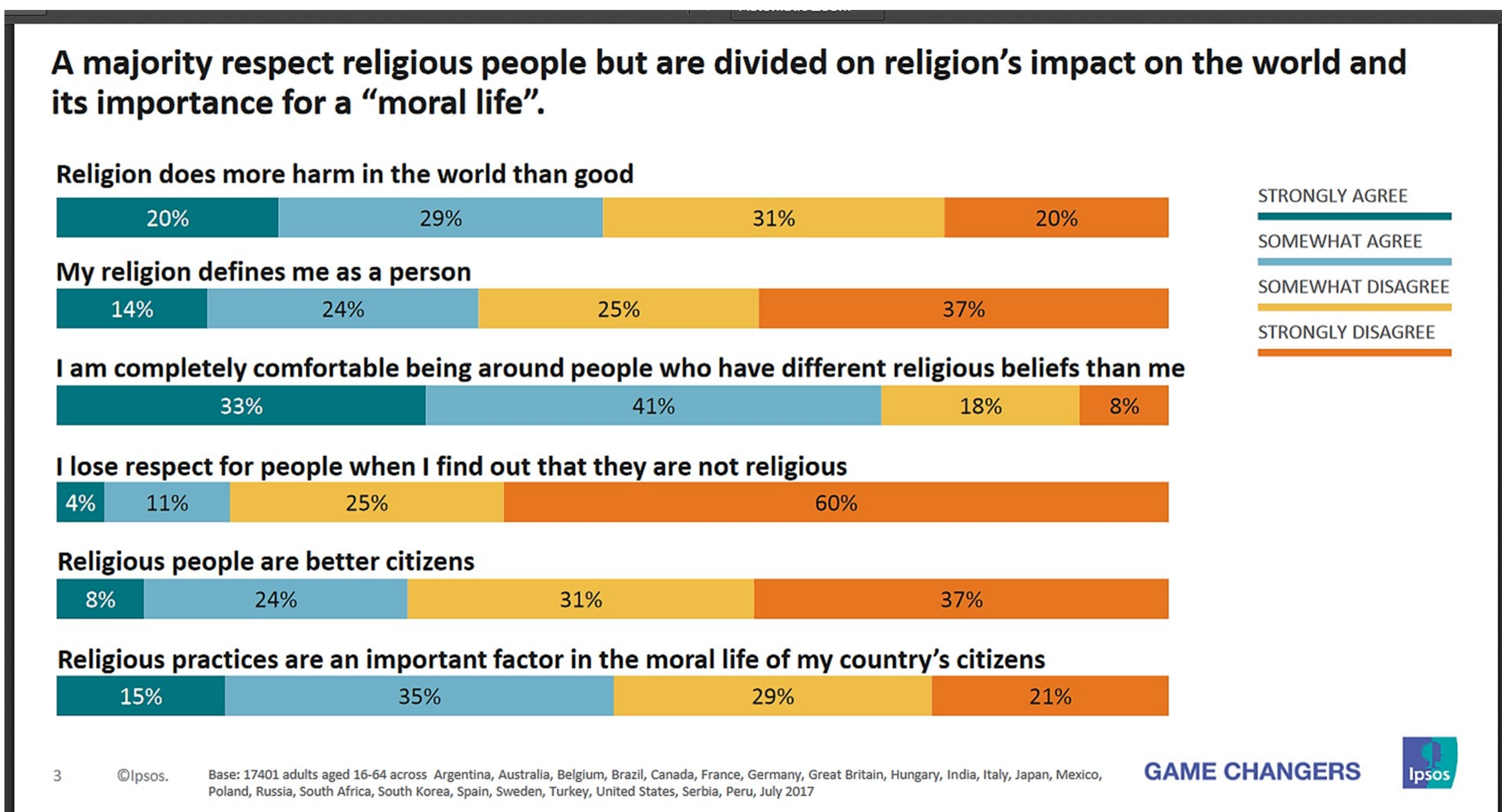
- Utilize sensitivity training from regional Human Rights Commissions.
- Develop/display your anti-harassment/ anti-discrimination policy.
- Forget about how the original “100 men and women recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”
- Focus on how the most recent 100 overcame addiction.
- Keep your recommended list of books, blogs, websites updated.

For alcoholics who seek the company of fellows, without rituals or assumptions that presume a prayer-answering, sobriety-granting higher power, agnostic/ atheist AA meetings have been meeting a growing demand. Since secular AAs have had the internet to connect with each other (2001), AA meetings for nonbelievers has grown ten-fold.



Twelve Suggested (Alternative) Steps

- 1) Admit that you are powerless to overcome your addictions and that your life has become unmanageable. (Internet and Technology Addiction Anonymous).
- 2) Dare to believe that there lies within Us the Power to restore balance to our lives. (Online Gamers Anonymous 2001)
- 3) Made a decision to change our lives by committing to this simple program of recovery. (We Agnostics Group, Kansas City)
- 4) I will make a fearless and honest review of my life, my values, and my goals. (Teen Addiction Anonymous 2007)
- 5) Will talk to another person about our exact nature. (*The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Martha Cleveland, Arlys G, 1991)
- 6) I am entirely ready to allow realistic and rational thinking to reveal my destructive patterns of addictive thinking and behavior. (*Realistic Recovery*, Mike H, 2009)
- 7) With humility and openness, sought to eliminate our shortcomings. (www.aagnostics.org San Francisco Agnostics AA)
- 8) I will consider those that I have harmed and those that have harmed me. I will become willing to explore my feelings regarding those harms. (Secular Organizations for Sobriety—SOS)
- 9) We shall do what we can to make amends, in a way that will not cause further harm. (Humanist Twelve Steps, B. F. Skinner, 1987)
- 10) We continue to think about our strengths and weaknesses, and when we are wrong we say we are wrong. (Young Warriors Network, Umatilla Tribal Alcohol Program)
- 11) Sought through mindful inquiry and meditation to improve our spiritual awareness, seeking only for knowledge of our rightful path in life and the power to carry that out. (Beyond Belief Agnostics & Freethinkers AA Group, Toronto)
- 12) I will continue to develop my own human potential and spirituality and will actively help others who cannot control their use of alcohol. (Le, C. Ingvarson, EP. & Page, R.C. (1995). The Twelve Steps of Self-Confirmation. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 73 (6), 603-609)



21st Century: A “Bigger” Book Store