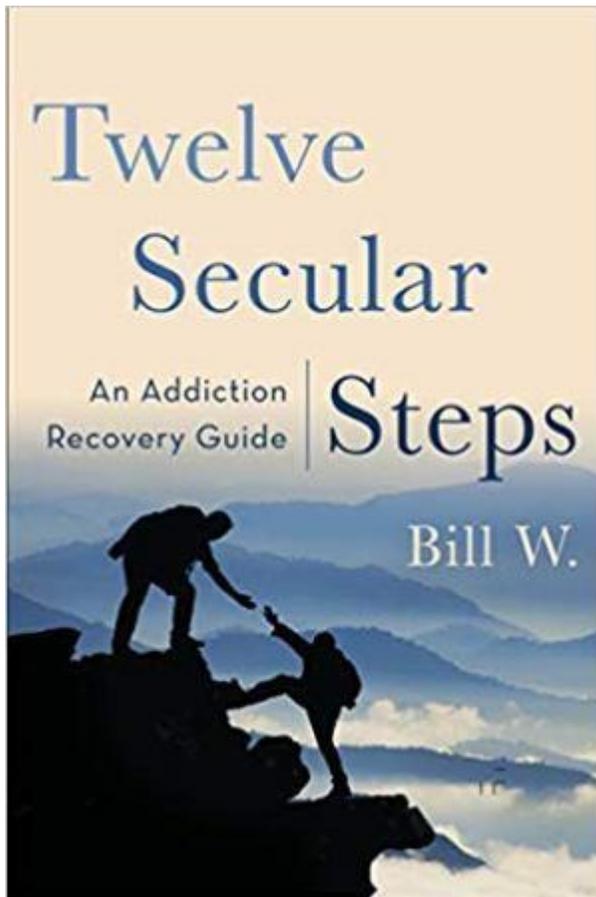


Twelve Secular Steps: An Addiction Recovery Guide



By Chris G.

This short book (117 pages) by Bill W., no relation to **THE** Bill W., is a very timely addition to secular addiction literature for several reasons.

First of all, it recognises all addictions as biochemical brain problems, and therefore makes no distinction between alcohol and other addictive drugs. Having been brainwashed in early recovery about alcoholics being somehow different and (strongly implied) “better” than other addicts, I find this very refreshing. How many today, “in the rooms” and below geriatric age, are really, truly, pure alcoholics? Probably not a majority.

Second, the author exercises his biological expertise – “a PhD in a biologically related field” – to explain, in accessible language, our current understanding of the brain, its reward-centred behaviour, and how some substances work to create the disease we call addiction. Here he does differentiate between various drugs, since they have slightly different effects at that level, and that is appropriate and useful information.

And third, he gives a nice, clear set of non-Christian 12 Steps with ample explanation and historical relations to the originals, and uses them in a walk-through of a well-planned recovery program.

Chapter 1, ***The Separation of Religion and Recovery***, does exactly what the title says: it makes clear that recovery is not bound to any religion; it is a thing on its own. He agrees that if an individual has a religious proclivity, it may help that one individual, but it is not at all necessary. There is a very nice historical précis of the origin of AA and the original 12 Steps, which would be valuable to a newcomer surrounded by a group of old-time Big Book thumpers who have Got It All Wrong Anyway.

In Chapter 2, ***The Biology of Addiction***, we have an excellent summary of current knowledge of brain function and how it responds to the chemicals it may crave so much. This is necessarily a bit technical, but the language is clear and simple, and it is knowledge any addict really, really should try and understand. Knowing what is going on in your brain should be a part of every recovery. If you have a sore leg, and don’t know whether it’s a bruise or cancer, how do you decide how to treat it?

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the ***Characteristics of Addiction, and Addicts***. This goes through the stages of addiction in a tried and true fashion: normal psychological development, risks of addiction, symptoms, and “bottoming out”. This is good reading for anyone who is still wondering if she is an addict.

Chapter 4, *Overview of Secular Recovery*, gets into the nuts and bolts of getting better. It is a very nice preview of what to expect as one starts on the recovery path. Largely centred on Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, it is pretty standard stuff. What makes this chapter different from many similar tracts is the focus on recovery as a secular activity; not in any way putting down any religious expectations or experiences, but simply not requiring them. This should make it quite accessible for secular readers.

The last three chapters are devoted to a step-by-step plan of recovery, using the secular steps introduced at the beginning of the book.

He divides the steps into three phases:

- Chapter 5, Steps 1-2-3 are *Early Abstinence*;
- Chapter 6, Steps 4-9 are *Personal Reconstruction*, and;
- Chapter 7, Steps 10-12 are *Long Term Sobriety*.

These chapters provide a very detailed treatment, with some mild bias obviously from personal experience, and its real value is not so much in the detail, as in it being an example of a *plan*. One of the author's strong arguments is that without a plan, an addict will have a much rougher time of it; he'll be less focused and subject to many changes in direction. Getting a sponsor who knows what she's doing, and getting close to like-minded and successful group members, are important in developing a plan and sticking with it. From my own experience, I heartily agree.

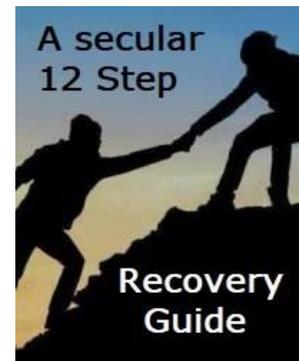
In summary, I find this book brief, concise, easy to read and understand, and likely to be valuable to anyone thinking about recovery, or in the early stages. If you think of AA or NA as some sort of cult or religious organization, definitely read this book. I seriously think that had I had access to this on my first abortive try at AA, it might have saved me many years of harm, since the God Squad did chase me away back then, and even on my second and successful experience, the fake-it-till-you-make-it factor was pretty bad, and very unnecessary.

Definitely read this book if you want recovery but are a secular person!

For more information about the book, visit Bill's website: [Secular Addiction Recovery – When You Haven't Got A Prayer, Get A Plan](#).

The book – which is very modestly priced – can be purchased at [Amazon.com](#) as a paperback or Kindle. (It is also available at Amazon in Canada and the United Kingdom.)

And you can get it at [Barnes and Noble](#).



For a summary of the guidelines in Bill W's book, click on the above image.

