

Interview Peg O'Connor, "The Sober Philosopher,"
and Author of:

HIGHER AND FRIENDLY POWERS: Transforming Addiction and Suffering

Peg O'Connor, PhD

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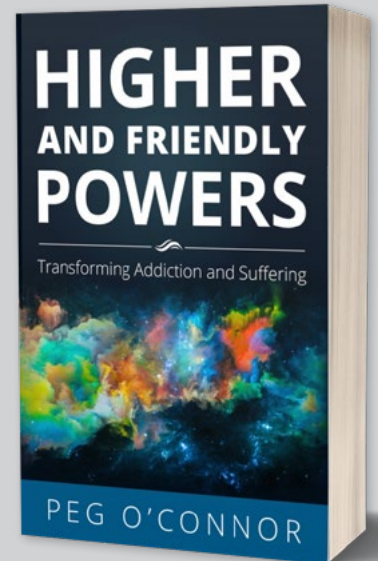
Higher and Friendly Powers (Wildhouse Publications / September 1, 2022) offers an expansive alternative for those who have struggled with the "higher power" of AA's 12-step program. Speaking to both comfortably spiritual and avowedly secular readers, the book illuminates the possibility inherent in an unconventional understanding of "higher powers," a category which includes such ideals as human decency, moral conviction, and even a better version of oneself.

In *Higher and Friendly Powers*, Peg O'Connor, PhD, addresses an audience much like herself: those in recovery who have struggled with the Christian-centric God at the heart of Alcoholics Anonymous. She brings our attention to a little-known fact: the term "higher power," a touchstone in the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, was coined by William James, philosopher, psychologist, and intellectual giant of the early 20th century.

By acting as our personal field guide through the world of William James, Peg shows that "higher power" as James conceived it is far more expansive than we might imagine, and conveys spiritual truths accessible to even the most secular of readers. The book, which combines Peg's deep personal wisdom with James's adventurous intellect, has the power to transform the way we live.

Drawing from her expertise in addiction studies and key themes from her book, Dr. O'Connor can discuss:

- Understanding the Concept of "Higher Power" at the Heart of the 12-Step Program
- Good Without God: Recognizing the Difference Between Spirituality and Religion
- How to Live a More Meaningful Life Everyday
- Challenging the Concept of the Christian-centric God at the Heart of AA
- How William James's Concept Of "Higher Power" Can Help Us Make Significant Spiritual and Practical Changes in Our Lives Why There Must Be Multiple Paths out of Addiction and No One is the Best or Right



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- Strategies for Non-Drinkers to Navigate Trigger Days Why Needs in Recovery Change over Time
- Are Some People More Susceptible to Addiction? Undertaking Spiritual Recovery in AA without a Religious Denomination
- The Barriers People Face When Seeking Treatment for Addiction
- How to Talk to People About Their Alcohol or Drug Use Understanding and Recognizing James's Five Stages of World Sickness (Joy Chilled, Joy Destroyed, Anhedonia, Active Anguish, Panic Fear) as Forms of Suffering
- Changing Your Relationships with Addictive Substances and Behaviors
- Your "Higher Power" is What You Make It: Alternative Ways to Conceive the Spiritual Pillar of Recovery

About the Author

Peg O'Connor, Ph.D., is a Professor of Philosophy at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Her training is in moral philosophy, feminist philosophy, addiction studies, and the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. She believes that philosophy helped her to get and remain sober. She understands addiction as a meaning of life problem and no discipline is as well suited as philosophy to address meaning of life questions.

Avoiding Alcoholics Anonymous for the first 20 years of her sobriety because of the concept of a "higher power," she uses some of the great canonical thinkers in western philosophy to illuminate dimensions of addiction. She shares this in her new book, *Higher and Friendly Powers: Transforming Addiction and Suffering* (Wildhouse Publications, 2022).

Dr. O'Connor is also the author of *Life on the Rocks: Finding Meaning in Addiction and Recovery* (Central Recovery Press, 2016), *Morality and Our Complicated Form of Life: Feminist Wittgensteinian Metaethics* (Penn State, 2008), and *Oppression and Responsibility: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Social Practices and Moral Theory* (Penn State, 2002). She writes a column, Philosophy Stirred, Not Shaken, for *Psychology Today*, which has nearly 2.3 million total views online and select columns have appeared in the print publication.

Dr. O'Connor's expertise has been featured on BBC's Free Thinking and Canadian Public Radio's On Drugs podcast, as well as in print and online publications ranging from The New York Times, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Cosmo and Marie Claire to Vice and Kinfolk. She has been invited to present on addiction and recovery at some of the country's most prestige universities, in addition to workshops and talks in church basements, classrooms, community centers, and treatment centers.



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