

Is 12 Steps a Cult?

When I first attended 12-Step meetings regularly, I was extremely concerned I was joining a cult. Some people might see this document and think, "red flag! If it's not a cult, why should anyone even have to defend against the idea?"

To that, I can only say that more transparency and more reflections to examine these things, gives the newcomer an opportunity to make an informed decision for their recovery.

I became more concerned over time, because the shame of sex addiction is greater than that of alcoholism or drug addiction for me. Even in recovery, I find myself telling very few people outside the fellowship of this addiction, in order to preserve my safety and social status. However, I am aware that isolation and secret community are necessary ingredients to a cult.

What are the necessary ingredients for a cult that are *not* present though?

These points came out of a conversation between me and a fellow, reflecting on my personal thoughts when I first attended SAA.

7 Reasons Why 12-Steps is Not a Cult:

1. No one is in charge. There is no "leader" or "guru" of any kind.
2. No one is required or pressured to donate financially. All personal financial contributions are confidential. Full financial reports of SAA are published in the newsletter.
3. No one is required or pressured to do service work of any kind.
4. Fellows maintain full membership, without flak, on the basis of their desire to stop compulsive behaviors, regardless of their service or financial contributions.
5. While some confidentiality at meetings is requested, fellows can share their experiences with therapists, pastors, counselors, etc.
6. Non-addicts, including trained professionals and betrayed partners, are welcome to attend and observe regular open meetings.
7. All spiritual practices are personalized; there is no requirement to believe in any particular definition of a Higher Power, religion, or deity. There are secular meetings for atheists and agnostics.

Credit: Stan In Recovery (<https://staninrecovery.neocities.org>)