



## What This Brochure Is About

Many people ask us what "secular" means. Some confuse it with "sectarian" or "social" or "sexual" or "circular" or other things. Some confuse it with "atheist" or "agnostic." For many people "secular" is a new word entirely.

In this brochure, we try to explain what "secular" means in the context of recovery from problems with alcohol and other drugs. We talk about the nonreligious flavor of our meeting environment and about our reliance on human self-help concepts such as group support and taking responsibility for one's own recovery.

When you have read this material, we hope you'll understand why secular is our middle name.

### Webster's Unabridged:

*sec' ūlār, a.* [ME. *secular, seculer, seculere*; OFr. *seculier*, secular, temporal; LL. *saecularis*, secular, worldly, L., belonging to an age, from *saeculum*, a generation, age.]

[...]

**4.** pertaining to the world or to things not spiritual or sacred; relating to or connected with worldly things; dissociated from religious teaching or principles; not devoted to sacred or religious use; temporal; nonecclesiastical; as, *secular* education, *secular* music.

### To find out more about LifeRing:

Browse to [www.lifering.org](http://www.lifering.org), the Internet voice of LifeRing Secular Recovery. Join LifeRing **email lists** and **chats**.

Read ***Recovery By Choice: Living and Enjoying Life Free of Alcohol and Drugs, A Workbook***. A 300-p. self-help workbook that helps you build your personal recovery program.

Read ***How Was Your Week? Bringing People Together in Recovery the LifeRing Way***. An in-depth look at the hows and whys of LifeRing.

Read ***Presenting LifeRing Secular Recovery: A Primer for Professionals (3rd Edition)***. Why LifeRing works and why more counselors are referring clients to LifeRing meetings.

Read ***Keepers: Voices of Secular Recovery***, a paperback with motivational anecdotes, stories and poems.

Read ***The LifeRing Bylaws***. How LifeRing is organized and self-governed.

**Buy these books at LifeRing meetings or online from [www.lifering.com](http://www.lifering.com).**

**LifeRing will be happy to send a speaker to address your audience. Call 1-800-811-4142 or email [service@lifering.org](mailto:service@lifering.org)**

#### Contact LifeRing:

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#### Other LifeRing brochures

**LifeRing in a Nutshell** — Short introduction to LifeRing philosophy and practice

**If This Is Day One** — What to expect at LifeRing meetings

**Sobriety Is Our Priority** — When having just one no longer works, step up to having zero.

**LifeRing Online** — A guide to LifeRing email lists, chat rooms, and other online resources.

Complete list: [www.lifering.com](http://www.lifering.com)

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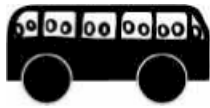
# Secular Is Our Middle Name

**What does "secular" mean, and what does it have to do with recovery?**

**LifeRing Service Center**  
Oakland CA  
1-800-811-4142  
[www.lifering.org](http://www.lifering.org)

## Secular Is Our Middle Name

**P**icture yourself on a bus in a city. The people who share the ride with you may be Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, agnostics, pagans, pantheists, New Age spiritualists, or other things. Everybody keeps their religious and spiritual beliefs to themselves. Nobody tries to convert or preach. Everybody gets along and everybody gets where they're going. Such a bus is a *secular* place.



Workplaces, movie theatres, supermarkets, libraries, parks, and sports fields are other examples of secular areas. They're places where your spiritual/religious beliefs usually never come up. Religion isn't a significant part of what people go there to do.

You go to LifeRing Secular Recovery meetings to get sober, not to get religion. In our meetings:

- There's no praying, preaching, proselytizing, converting, Bible-quoting, or "God-talk,"
- You won't be asked to surrender to a "Higher Power,"
- You won't be asked to do "Steps" other than to stay clean and sober,
- You won't be told that you must believe in a god before you can get sober,
- You will be welcomed as a first-class member regardless of your faith or lack of it.

In other words, when we call ourselves secular, the first thing we mean by it is that we are tolerant and open to all beliefs or none. Your religion, spirituality, or absence thereof, simply aren't a significant part of what we come here to do.

**N**ow picture a modern hospital. People come with all kinds of ailments and problems. Doctors and nurses dispense advice, issue prescriptions, and fit casts and crutches. For example, if you come in with diabetes, you'll get advice on foods to avoid and a prescription for medication. Nutritional advice, prescriptions, casts and crutches are examples of secular methods of healing.

What would you say if your doctor told you to treat your diabetes by praying and confessing your character defects? Prayer and confession are *religious* methods. The theory that illnesses can be treated by religious methods is called *faith healing*. If you believe in faith healing as a treatment for your substance abuse problem, you would be more comfortable in other groups.

In our experience, religious or spiritual treatment methods are about as relevant to alcoholism or drug addiction as they are to diabetes, allergies, or a broken leg. Not very. For that reason, we rely on secular methods, and we recommend secular treatment approaches. We support each other in taking responsibility for our own recovery and learning the skills necessary to live a long-term sober life.

Self-help support groups are effective in helping people recover from an enormous variety of problems. Self-help support groups are a secular method of healing. The active ingredient in them is human warmth. When we huddle with others who suffer from the same problem as ourselves, and see them overcoming it, we catch hope. We



pick up our courage. We learn what we have to do and we develop the strength to do it. With group support, over time, we heal ourselves.



The power to get clean and sober lies within you. It arises from the survival instinct found in all life forms. In LifeRing Secular Recovery groups, we recognize and cultivate that power in ourselves and each other. We share experiences and problems, defeats and victories. We encourage one another to take charge of our own recovery and to construct our personal recovery plan. We respect intelligence in the service of recovery. We feel enriched as a group by the fact that our members become self-reliant and have mastered a diversity of recovery tools.

Because we are secular, we are modest. Our inspiration is merely human and we know that humans are fallible. We aim for recovery without relapse. If you do slip, we encourage you to come right back in and to share how it happened, so that we can all learn from your experience. LifeRing Secular Recovery is a network of groups of ordinary human beings helping each other along the recovery road. Our approach is not guaranteed to work for everyone. All we can claim is that it works for us.

**T**olerance, openness, warmth, respect, intelligence, self-reliance, diversity, modesty -- those are the qualities that we believe make for the most effective recovery environment. Those are the qualities that define the word "secular" as we understand it. That's why secular is our middle name.