



LifeRing Secular Recovery

A network of positive support groups for living free of alcohol and other drugs

New Year's 2014

Newsletter

The Path to LifeRing

by Jeff Koch

People find their way to LifeRing in many ways. My own path went through a medical treatment program that supported LifeRing as an approved outside meeting, others find us on their own through internet searches or recommendations from friends, and others are pointed our way by individual drug and alcohol treatment counselors. But in most places in the world, we are not widely known, and if we are to reach and hopefully help more and more people, we need recognition particularly among drug and alcohol treatment counselors inside and outside medical treatment programs. These people are often the first stop on recovery road.

Most drug and alcohol treatment counselors are recovered addicts themselves, and most of them recovered with help from other programs, particularly 12-step programs. It's natural to assume that what worked for you will work for other people too, and so there is a tendency for these counselors to push patients into 12-step programs. This is perfectly fine if that's what works, but as we in LifeRing understand, recovery is an individual journey that can follow many different paths, and there is no single path that works for everyone. Many counselors understand this too, but cannot recommend LifeRing as an option for support if they don't know about us or are not familiar with what we offer.

One way we can reach out to professionals is by talking to them directly, and I recently had the pleasure of doing just that while helping to man the LifeRing booth at the last CAADAC annual meeting in Sacramento. This is a large conference that attracts many people in the drug and alcohol treatment profession, and the exhibitor hall provides us with a venue for passing out information and talking with counselors about LifeRing and about their needs.

A few observations. First, by and large, many counselors have heard about LifeRing, but are not familiar with us and don't know what we are about. This suggests we could be crisper about what and who we are and what we offer,

captured in simple messages that people can remember. Second, many counselors do recognize that one size does not fit all, but won't point people our way if we don't have local face-to-face meetings; there is a tendency to view online venues as a great adjunct, but not as a primary means of support. This is particularly evident in Southern California, where a large number of CAADAC counselors live and practice but where LifeRing has a weak presence; we could see significant growth by doing all we can to support face-to-face meeting growth in this region. Third, whether we like it or not we are viewed as a second-choice support group, for people who cannot fit in to 12-step. If we are to grow in importance among counselors who, by and large, got clean and sober with 12-step, we need to make an effort not to alienate those who do find or have found support from 12-step groups. If we are viewed as AA-haters.org, we will remain marginalized, and while our philosophy parts from 12-step in many ways, it does not help us to focus on what we are not, versus what we are.

And fourth, having helped man the LifeRing booth at the same conference two years ago, I can say that we are making progress! Our booth saw far more activity this time, with a much higher percentage of counselors stopping by and talking with us, and a much higher percentage of counselors knowing who we are. The more outreach we can do, the more we will grow.

Sobriety vs. Abstinence

by Njon Weinroth

To most these two terms are interchangeable. Over my relatively short time in recovery, my concept of the two has changed drastically.

I experienced a semi-long-term (and failed) attempt at sobriety in my late teens. The recovery program I participated in typically ran meetings thusly:

- 15 minutes of disclaimers and Kool-Aide drinking
- 29 minutes of horror stories meant to one-up, self-flagellate and set an example all at once (really)

- 1 minute of “and then I got sober and now everything is WONDERFUL”
- 10 minutes of random and mostly unrelated comments
- 5 minutes of closing credits and prayer.

The message could not have been clearer. If you want to be happy, like that lucky lady or fellow, you need SOBRIETY, son! Sobriety is when we stop forgetting little Timmy’s soccer games, stop crashing cars, dating prostitutes, stealing from work, spying on the neighbors, making another scene at Thanksgiving, getting kicked out of clubs, waking up with unexplained people and/or injuries, in short STOP DRINKING, dummy!!

OK, I can do this, I thought! And I did! Fast forward 2.5 years and I’m still going to 6-8 meetings a week and limiting my social activity to hanging out with people from this program. I am still however the same lying, cheating, soccer game forgetting, holiday ruining a-hole that I always was. Maybe even a little worse, as I did not have any way to numb the pain. So after a long stint as Abstemious Njon, I got a terminal case of the f%#kits and soothed the inner beast as I used to.

This self-medicating progressed over the years and the painful stuff that could no longer be handled (really anything causing confusion or even minor discomfort) either got ignored and therefore compounded or it became fodder for my laundry list of how I am the victim in all of this (sound familiar, anyone?).

It got worse. I started to feel actual emotional and physical pain that was only being exacerbated by my drinking and drugging. I am fortunate that I have not ever (knock wood) had suicidal thoughts. I was starting to realize that I had painted myself into a corner. I realized that once again, that I needed help and that I’d rather be the “sober” jackass that I was in high school than the miserable and sloppy junkie/drunk that I had become. I figured I would go back to my 90 in 90 / rinse and repeat lifestyle and eat better. I’d still be miserable but I’d get to be miserable into my old age, Yay!

I stumbled into LifeRing due to the great insight of my treatment counselors who understood what I had experienced in the other program, and decided to stop beating that horse. I was again abstemious but it felt different this time. I found that the *How Was Your Week* meeting was a great format for me as it encouraged me to share about what I was going through in the moment and to not rely on my skanky past to make connections with people. I caused heads to nod and I drew some really constructive feedback by simply talking about what was going on with me and how I felt about it.

A-HA-LIGHTBULB!!!

So it’s not just putting down the chemical crap that I used to hide from the world? You mean I can work towards feeling better about myself, forming honest relationships, becoming little Timmy’s soccer coach because I really like soccer (this is fiction), taking great care of my car, working with my community to improve outreach to other addicts,

getting a great review at work, organizing Thanksgiving at my place and inviting the neighbors and having fun in clubs on \$10 (cranberry & soda yo!)? I can turn into that guy I used to laugh at? The one who pays his taxes on time and stuff?

Yep, I can do all of these things today because I want to. I have chosen Sobriety. To me this means the constant bettering of myself in conjunction to my reintegration into life. Abstinence is an important part of this as it allows me to show up and be present to effect these changes and advances. Relapse to me is not the act of picking up a drink or drug. If I ever did so, I feel that I would have already fallen well into a relapse from sobriety, which to me is my place of self-support and positive motivation as opposed to being limited to any singular behavior.

So I guess I could explain my stance by saying that I no longer use the word Sobriety to mean Abstinence or vice versa. My Sobriety is reliant on abstinence and I have chosen abstinence as a simple tool to help me maintain that consistent forward motion that I seek. I say simple tool because sobriety has given me the ability to stop struggling with abstinence like I used to. They are both directly supportive to my well-being.

A New Year’s thought – quit now, while you’re younger

by Steve Snyder

If you’re a new visitor to LifeRing, and either you or a friend has made a New Year’s resolution to quit drinking, I have one good reason to stand by that resolution. Likewise, if you or a friend is considering that resolution, but not yet sure about it, I have one good reason to follow through: It does get worse as you get older.

Scientific evidence is starting to come in that hangovers get worse as people get older.

So, why wait? Save yourself some pain, or encourage a friend to do the same.

LifeRing Survey 2013 Results

The results of the 2013 LifeRing Survey are now available on the LifeRing website. We received more than 400 responses, and many good suggestions about what programs and services we need to continue to build; many new ideas about improvements to programs and services; and helpful information about how our members see LifeRing as an integral part of their recovery journey.

The survey was anonymous, but we did ask some questions related to your areas of expertise and how you might share those areas of expertise with LifeRing. So we’ll be following up with additional communications about volunteer opportunities and how you can get involved. If you don’t want to wait ... please contact the Service Center by email or phone to let us know you’re ready to jump in sooner rather than later! We would love to hear from you.

Change on LSR's Board of Directors

Dru Boyd announced that he is stepping down from the LifeRing Board of Directors. The press of normal life has meant he has less and less time to give, so he thought it best to step aside. The board wishes to express our great appreciation for all of Dru's many contributions to LifeRing over the years, as convener, board member and volunteer. He'll be missed.

Following the LifeRing bylaws, the board of directors met in a special meeting on December 15, 2013 to elect a replacement for Dru. Byron Kerr was elected unanimously to replace him. The decision will be up for ratification at the Annual Meeting in the spring 2014.

Editor's note: The [LifeRing Bylaws](#) require a minimum of two years clean and sober to serve on the Board of Directors. Directors must be people in recovery from a substance addiction. The board meets face-to-face at the Annual Meeting and monthly in an online chat room or via telephone conference call. Except during discussion of personnel matters, the board meetings are open to all LifeRing members. Notices of upcoming board meetings are posted on the [liferingconvenors](#) mailing list.

Mark your calendar:

LifeRing Annual Meeting May 30 – June 1, 2014 in Santa Rosa, California

Lifering board member Byron Kerr has taken on the task of preparing our Annual Meeting in 2014. The dates for the annual meeting are May 30, 31, & June 1. That is the weekend after Memorial Day weekend, and it will be held in Santa Rosa, CA which is the county seat, economic hub, and cultural center of Sonoma County.

Speakers may include Lee Hamilton, Director Mountain Vista Farm; John Heller, Esq. lead attorney in the *Hazle v. Crofoot* case; Dee Dee Stout, recovery educator and advocate, and Dr. Candice Shelby, who is well known to Liferingers as a speaker at previous annual meetings. Possible additional speakers include Mike Kennedy, Sonoma County Director of Behavioral Health, speaking on the ACA's (Obamacare) impact on recovery funding, and Lee Ann Katsukas, of the Alcohol Research Group.

There will be brief presentations from both SMART and WFS. Byron also intends to possibly invite a representative from AA or NA to present.

An additional activity may be an amateur video festival. We all have amazing amateur video capabilities these days with all of our hand held devices. We could potentially have lots of fun with a video festival and a theme along the lines of, "This Is My LifeRing." Videos will be reviewed prior to showing.

Venues have not been finalized but have been narrowed to three possible locations: The DeTurk Round Barn, a City of Santa Rosa facility; the Arlene Francis Center; and the Glaser Center of the U/U Community.

What prize constitutional rights?

by *Martin Nicolaus*

Barry Hazle served a year in prison for possession of methamphetamine. He was released on parole on condition that he attend and complete a 90-day residential drug treatment program. Hazle repeatedly told authorities that he is an atheist, and requested treatment in a non-religious program. He was assigned, instead, to the Empire treatment program which used the religion-based 12-step program developed by Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. He objected and asked for a transfer, but was denied. Inside the program, he was described as "disruptive, though in a congenial way, to the staff as well as other students." For this, he was ruled in violation of his parole and was sent back to prison, where he served more than 100 days. *Read on:*

<http://nicolaus.com/mn/2013/08/what-price-constitutional-rights/>

LSR recognized in Professional Journal

Martin Nicolaus, LifeRing's founding leader and author of our three LifeRing books, passes along this mention of LifeRing in a recent article co-authored by the widely-respected writer on addiction William L. White.

John Kelly was the other author and the passage appeared in the Journal of Groups in Addiction and Recovery under the title "Broadening the Base of Addiction Mutual-Help Organizations." Here's what they said about us:

<http://lifering.org/2013/11/lifering-recognized-in-professional-journal/>

"Clear and equal choice of support"

The following article was published November 13th in the Bohemian, an alternative newsweekly serving Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties in Northern California:

<http://www.bohemian.com/northbay/step-down/Content?oid=2518753>.

News from LifeRing in Colorado

by *Dick Sprague*

Yesterday, I attended my first meeting as a member of the Colorado Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council (BHPAC or Council). My journey to becoming a member began in August and September as I planned and started a new LifeRing meeting in Tabernash, Colorado. Kathleen Gargan introduced me to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Agency's (SAMHSA) website featuring September as National Recovery Month. I used this website as part of my publicity in an interview with the local newspaper, Sky-Hi Daily News/Middle Park Times. SAMHSA, an agency within the US Department of Health and Human Services, is charged with assisting states in implementing substance abuse and mental health programs

as required by court rulings and federal legislation. In 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that mental health and substance abuse qualified as disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act; that individuals with these disabilities qualified for protection under this Act; and that states must implement programs to allow disabled individuals to receive treatment in the least restrictive setting commensurate with their treatment requirements. (Note: I am not an attorney and am interpreting this ruling, *Olmstead v LC*, as a lay person.) This ruling stated that the two mental health patients had proven that they qualified for in-community treatment, rather than in-institution treatment. As a result of this ruling, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued orders requiring Georgia (the focus of the Supreme Court ruling) and two other states to institute *Olmstead*-required in-community treatment support.

Later, Kathleen and I met with Charles Smith, Ph.D. and Regional Administrator for SAMHSA in the several state region headquartered in Denver. Dr. Smith introduced us to a number of opportunities which could assist LifeRing increase our public exposure in Colorado. Among these opportunities, Dr. Smith mentioned that the Colorado BHPAC would be holding its next meeting on November 7th, and that he (Dr. Smith) would be leading the Council in a discussion of *Olmstead*'s requirements. I volunteered to attend this meeting as a visitor, and was greeted enthusiastically by Dr. Smith. In the weeks following the meeting, I applied for and was accepted as a member of the Council.

The BHPAC is charged with planning for and implementing programs for mental health and substance abuse programs for communities, treatment centers and other providers throughout the State of Colorado. It is directly charged with planning, programming and reporting results related to a \$34 million multi-year block grant issued to the State by SAMHSA.

As a direct result of my attendance at the November 7th Council meeting, I have had the following opportunities:

In mid-November, I met with another attendee to explore opportunities to work together; she directs private mental health and substance abuse clinics (Mind Springs Health) in two counties, including Grand County where my Tabernash meeting is located. I took ideas and literature (both LifeRing and published information) that she had never seen. In turn, she provided me with contacts (and suggested that I use her name) in Grand County.

One of these contacts was with the Grand County Jail. The former Jail Lieutenant, now Undersheriff, showed a strong interest in having a LifeRing Secular Recovery meeting in the Jail; as he said, "recidivistic behavior declines if an individual finds a support group that works for them." I am meeting later today with the current Jail Lieutenant to finalize the date for the first meeting in the Jail; I expect this meeting to begin in the next week or two.

The second contact provided by Mind Springs was with their lead substance abuse practitioner in Grand County.

Next week, I will be with another attendee at the November Council meeting; she is Executive Director of Advocates for Recovery, a Colorado organization; she is also on the Board of Directors with Voices and Faces of Recovery, a national organization. We plan to discuss ways in which we can work together.

Based on this short history, each of you convenors in new areas could consider:

Determine whether your state also has a SAMHSA grant, whether there is an implementing council (I understand that federal legislation requires a council), and when it meets.

Attend a council meeting and state that your interest is in recovery. My statement that LifeRing was a secular self-help group elicited interest from several people, including the two contacts described above.

Using the contacts, establish a dialogue with the local sheriff's office or jail. This may provide an introduction to potential members.

LifeRing meeting in Miami, Florida

by Kathleen Gargan

On my way from Denver to Martinique, in late October, I had the opportunity to stop in Miami Florida to attend the LifeRing meeting there and to meet Miami's LifeRing convenor, Roy M. The Miami meeting is held every Tuesday evening from 7:00 to 8:00 pm very near Miami's famous Miracle Mile. LifeRing has been in Miami for just about two years, and is still going strong. There are usually between 6 and 10 people in attendance, most of them residents of the treatment facility where Roy also works. This center follows a non-12 step philosophy without being an anti 12 step philosophy. All paths to recovery are respected, but no path is privileged.

The meeting itself was a very good one for me in the sense that the focus stayed close to our personal experiences of addiction and recovery from addiction. The discussion had depth and weight while at the same time including plenty of laughter. The best part was that they were all nice to me even though I was a stranger from the Wild West! After only an hour, I discovered that I had plenty in common with several of the group members, even though I was old enough to be called Mom by everyone there, and Grandmother to a few! I definitely walked away from the meeting feeling better than I had all day.

I had known Roy by phone and email since he opened his meeting in the fall of 2011, so it was a pleasure to meet him in f2f mode. He's a real asset to LifeRing who I hope will be convening meetings in Miami for many years to come!

LifeRing in Canada

by John Banks

Greetings everyone, from Canada!

We don't just send you cold weather and hockey. We also have 18 LifeRing Canada weekly meetings in Victoria, Vancouver Island and Vancouver. 13 are open meetings and the other 5 are closed meetings at Victoria Detox, (2), William Head Institution and Pacifica Treatment Centre and Burnaby Centre for Mental Health & Addictions in the Vancouver area. You can check out our meeting schedule on our website www.liferingcanada.org.

We have also partnered with the University of Victoria to develop a 2-day face-to-face convenor training program for new convenors. We require that new convenors be sober for at least 6 months, be stable, and attend at least 6 LifeRing meetings. They then co-convene 6 local LifeRing meetings with many different convenors. We have 2 daytime meetings. As part of the training, we developed a convenor training manual.

We also developed the Train-The-Trainer program to train our own people to do the training of new convenors. This will give us money savings and also flexibility in the training of convenors.

The result of these steps will allow us to maintain consistency in performance among our convenors as well as a recognizable product when people attend meetings.

We have established a membership program that allows attendees to further support LifeRing. Membership costs \$20 annually. For that, the member gets savings on book purchases and, of course, gets a vote at the AGM. You don't have to be a member to attend meetings. So far, we have 42 members. All of our board members are also members of LifeRing Canada.

Michael Walsh has left LifeRing Canada to seek other challenges. He was the person who built LifeRing Canada and we appreciate all of his contributions. We are now operating without staff without a hitch and on a much smaller budget.

While my wife Margot and I were on holiday in California this fall, we had the pleasure of having lunch with Craig and Robert in Berkeley to discuss how our parts of LifeRing could work smoothly together. They made us very welcome and answered many of our questions.

<http://LifeRingCanada.org>

<http://facebook.com/LifeRingCanada>

<http://twitter.com/LifeRingCanada>

LifeRing in Denmark

Convenor Pernille F. in Copenhagen has taken on the task to formally establish LifeRing Denmark. Here is their website - published and a work in progress...

<http://www.lifering.dk/>

In memoriam Liz Gibson

It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Liz Gibson in October 2013. Liz was a kind and generous woman who gave endless time and energy to bring LifeRing Secular Recovery to many, many others in the Sacramento area, where she lived and worked so hard to strengthen our organization and offer the marvel of recovery.

Just two weeks earlier, she wrote to another LifeRing convenor saying, "At 3 and ½ years, I am feeling good, but I do need models like you, Marty, and others here, who can show me how far we really can go on this journey, ride, sail – or whatever you want to call our life of continued and positive recovery." Liz was modest to the end and never seemed to realize what a model she herself was to me and to so many others.

The LifeRing Board of Directors joins me in expressing our enormous gratitude for what Liz gave us. She will be greatly missed.

Craig Whalley, Chairman of the Board

Another sober friend passing

Following is a post made on our LSR email list last November. Ray S. was, some years ago, on this list and we found out via Facebook that he has terminal cancer. We would like to express our deep gratitude to Ray for sharing his profound experience with us. We will keep him in our thoughts.

"OK, it's been coming out in bits and pieces for a while now, I have terminal cancer, I'm two months into my six month window. That explains why I haven't been around much.

I've accepted it, my wife has accepted it, and we're dealing with it rather well. We are both on Social Security which has allowed my wife to cut back her work to one day a week. And some friends and family have been unexpectedly generous. We have been spending large amounts of quality time. Lots of movies, often 2 - 4 a day. Local supermarket recently dropped their fees to \$1.20 a day, local theater has second-run movies for \$1 all day Sunday. About as far as I get out these days and it wipes me out for the next day.

I was having trouble with my legs and feet for some time, the cancer has exaggerated the symptoms. Joy has been rubbing on them while we watch TV, usually putting me to sleep. There was a "Monk" marathon, I caught about 15 minutes each of three of them.

There are good days and bad days. Been sleeping a lot, a lot doesn't really cover it.

I know you all mean well, but responding to 12-20 personal posts takes up a lot of time. And folks like Nancy from Nebraska who wants to know what she can do: I don't know, I can't very well ask you to pick up a milk shake and drop it off. Be realistic, it really is enough to know that you care, now go do something good for someone in your neck of the woods.

We have connected with hospice. The nurse comes out once a week, the doctor once every 2 - 4 weeks as necessary, and the social worker whenever we need her. I will stay at home until I become too much a burden for my wife, then I have a bed in a wonderful facility. Private room, my wife can come and go as she pleases including spending the night.

My appetite is sketchy at best. My taste buds vary wildly, filtered water has tasted poisoned. Forget restaurants, was sick for two days after a fast food fish sandwich. Can't eat several of my favorite foods. One of my favorite frozen dinners tastes fine one day, the next time the meal seems rancid. Oh, I'll eat it, may take an hour or two, but I don't want to waste it. Cereal; soups; oatmeal; P,B,&J; yogurt; plain hamburger; breakfast bars; some frozen dinners. Things I gave up when watching my weight, pastries, ice cream. Lots of hard candy to help with the cotton mouth. Found I can't eat peanut m&ms. I can accept the thought of never eating another steak, but not m&ms, that brought tears to my eyes.

The people who know me know that I'm an atheist, some might say a militant atheist. If you decide you want to pray for me, I accept the sentiment in which it was offered, but I don't expect it will help. Being an atheist meant I was able to skip the pleading and begging having no God or Higher Power that could change the situation.

Some days I feel like I'm getting over a case of the flu and I'll be fine tomorrow. Other days I don't feel I'll last the night.

I've made peace with all my friends and family, nothing is left unresolved. I'm proud of the man I grew up to be. I look around at my friends and wonder how I ended up with such wonderful people in my life and slowly realize I deserve them.

The last 10 years of my life have been magical. I found medications that work, I tracked down an old flame that I had lost to depression and alcoholism and married her in 2005. I found rewarding work, first with people who had coexisting mental health and substance abuse disorders who had failed in traditional 12step treatment and/or programs, then with people with moderate to severe mental illnesses (many with coexisting substance abuse issues) while trying to help these people stay in their own homes.

Most importantly, I've experienced unconditional love for the first time. That is what it is all about."

-Ray S.

Thank you!

Dear Friends,

Thank you for being part of my extended LifeRing family. Every day, you take me through the range of human emotions. You challenge me to think. You challenge me to feel. You challenge me to live my life to the fullest.

Perhaps you feel this about your LifeRing experience, too. People in recovery from addiction, where ever we happen to

be on our individual journeys, share a collective gratitude for the parts of our lives that we are discovering and building every day. Whether we're in the mode of rebuilding or starting something totally new, we have the benefit of hindsight and experience, and, in our LifeRing circles, the willingness to approach recovery not as a life sentence, but as an opportunity for personal growth and renewal: being passionate about life and all the stuff it throws at us.

Thank you for sharing glimpses of your world with me, and allowing me to share bits of my world, too. My hopes, my fears, my most secret wishes for my life seem to tumble out when I'm in conversation with you.

And it's LifeRing that brought us, and keeps us, together.

So maybe I'm weird in this way of thinking about my extended LifeRing family, but somehow, I suspect not. I know I'm not alone in thinking I wish I could have found LifeRing years before I did. Now, I support LifeRing as an active participant in email lists. I've started meetings in my community. You may do these things, too. Perhaps you gravitate toward on-line meetings or chat. Perhaps you're lurking ... you know who you are! But whatever the style of your participation, please consider the importance your financial support makes to LifeRing.

For years, we've prided ourselves on our shoestring budget and grassroots efforts. And that's okay. But supporting new meetings, mentoring new convenors, and improving our website and internet presence – growing LifeRing – requires budgeting on a bigger shoestring.

You can help. Please consider including LifeRing in your end-of-calendar year giving plans. I made my gift online a couple of weeks ago, choosing to make a monthly gift by credit card. It's easier for our household budget, and also helps LifeRing anticipate monthly income streams. You can explore the range of giving options on the LifeRing website. I'm not just encouraging my extended LifeRing family members to make a gift to LifeRing this year – I'm encouraging my "real" family to do the same.

Thank you, again, dear friends, for all you do to make LifeRing ... LifeRing!

Mahala Kephart,

convenor, email list participant, board member, donor

Meet a LifeRinger

Who are these people in LifeRing? Here's another story - excerpt from *Empowering Your Sober Self - The LifeRing Approach to Addiction Recovery* by Martin Nicolaus.

Why LifeRing works better for me

I resonate with LifeRing's positive, empowering philosophy. Positive thinking, its discussion of enjoyable sober activities, pleasures, one's productive pre-alcoholic life, etc. Positive, too, is in the basic LifeRing philosophy

that says there is a good sober person in each of us needing reinforcement, not just a reprobate addict needing reformation. But most importantly, LifeRing translates those positive expectations into a statement of personal responsibility. I was empowered to construct a recovery plan crafted for my situation and my personality. I am responsible to make it work.

I also found AA's religious imagery a barrier. I believe my grounding in a love of nature - one that includes joy,

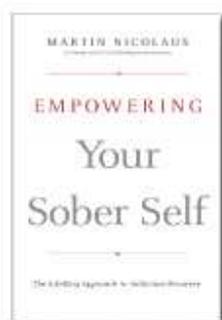
wonder, and even a bit of mysticism - provides me internal support. But why deify that self-transcendence into "God, as we understood Him," invoked at every meeting via ritual, prayer, and testimonial? There is nothing supernatural there.

If no alternative existed, I could have worked my way around those barriers. But an alternative did exist, LifeRing worked well, and it didn't preclude my looking over the fence - any fence - for thoughts.

-Jim R., Oakland, California

Empowering Your Sober Self

by Martin Nicolaus



This life-changing work is now also available as an

* audiobook, read by the author

* e-book, Kindle edition



"The best feeling I've felt in a long time." - a reader in recovery

"Sophisticated, insightful, well-documented" - Carlo DiClemente

Wishing you a Happy New Year and all the best for 2014!



LifeRing Secular Recovery

1440 Broadway, Suite 312,

Oakland, CA 94612-2023

www.lifering.org

Questions? Call us toll-free at 800.811.4142

We are a non-profit corporation 501(c)(3)

Executive Director: Robert Stump

Board Members:

Craig Whalley, Chairman

Mahala Kephart, Byron Kerr, Jeff Koch,

Joseph Mott, Tim Reith, Steve Snyder,

Njon Weinroth, Carola Ziermann

To make a monetary gift to LifeRing using a credit card, please visit our website www.lifering.org and click on the LifeRing Store. To make a gift by personal check, please mail it to LifeRing Service Center, 1440 Broadway, Suite 312, Oakland, CA 94612-2023