

How might spirituality help people on a methadone program to deal with their addiction?

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Authentication

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all the sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Abstract

This study uses a phenomenological interpretive approach to explore the place of spirituality in the lives of eight people who are currently on a methadone program. These participants were interviewed to obtain their narratives around addiction and spirituality to see if spirituality might be a potential resource in dealing with addiction. The interviews were then transcribed and presented as individual profiles in Chapter 4, and as group narratives in Chapter 5.

The researcher was initially disappointed not to obtain more specific suggestions from the participants about how spirituality had helped them in addressing their addiction. While an interest in spirituality had prompted them to participate in the research, only a minority was able to say how spirituality helped them in dealing with their heroin addiction. The researcher then saw the value of searching their narratives to explore what the participants were seeking in using heroin and what they might be seeking in spirituality. What emerged were links between substance use, spirituality and recovery that might suggest ways spirituality could be helpful in dealing with addiction in the future.

The key themes in the participants' narratives around what they were seeking in using heroin were peace of mind, which they associated with freedom from emotional pain, and the search for connection.

While findings from the present study are less conclusive than in a number of other studies exploring spirituality as a potential resource in addressing addiction, the study contributes to an understanding of the multidimensionality of addiction, and that spirituality is only one of the resources helpful in recovery. Although most of the participants were unable to say how spirituality had helped them, they seemed to be

hoping to find out how it might do so. This led the researcher to reflect on what is missing in the participants' experience and to suggest some implications for clinical practice as well as ideas for future research. In doing so she hopes to build a bridge between their hope that spirituality (**related to a religion or distinct from it**) might be a resource, and their realization of that hope and experience.