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## SPIRITUALITY AND RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION: EXPERIENCES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS

Elizabeth Romberger

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SPIRITUALITY AND RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION:  
EXPERIENCES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Elizabeth Romberger

May 2024

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most common treatment recommendations for addiction is to attend 12-step programs. In such, spirituality is considered a critical component to long-term recovery. This research project sought to better understand the relationship between experiencing a spiritual awakening and recovery from addiction within the Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) 12-step program. Using a post-positivist paradigm and the Cognitive-behaviorism theory, data gathered from interviews with 15 participants was transcribed and then coded. Online platforms that host 12 step recovery forums were used to reach interested participants with approved engagement material. Then snowball sampling was used - participants used their social network to recommend other N.A. members who were interested in participating in the research.

The interview transcriptions were analyzed using open and axial coding. The interview transcriptions were first open coded, and categories were identified. Then axial codes were synthesized using the categories from open coding. From the axial codes, a relationship between spirituality and recovery from addiction was developed. Findings of this study showed that, having a space for participants to express their beliefs without religious dogma or judgement was a critical factor in developing spirituality. The Narcotics Anonymous program provides a social support network and coping resources which were identified as prerequisite to feelings of self-efficacy, connectedness,

and hope. Participants shared that the Narcotics Anonymous program helped them to feel connected with self, others, and a higher power. Participants shared that spirituality, behaving in alignment with their spiritual principles, and feeling connected are protective factors against relapse. All the axial codes (connection, coping resources, and spiritual routine) had certain open coding categories in common: Meeting attendance, Literature, Positive Action, Protective Factors, and Sharing at meetings. These shared categories simultaneously function as sources of connection, coping resources, and as part of a spiritual routine (the axial codes). The three components of spirituality (the axial codes) are multifunctional which could explain why the 12-step program is so impactful.

In conclusion, a relationship between spirituality and recovery from addiction was uncovered in this research. Participants experienced some form of isolation or trauma and were in the throes of addiction prior to becoming members of N.A. Once they reach N.A., they began their spiritual awakening through one of the axial codes – connection, coping resources, or spiritual routine. Utilizing all three components could potentially lead to increased feelings of spirituality and long-lasting abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a huge thank you and appreciation to the people who participated in this research.

I would also like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Teresa Morris, for all her support and guidance as well as my cohort for their emotional support throughout graduate school.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner for his unconditional support.

## DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to anyone who has ever struggled with addiction and those who have found recovery.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER ONE: ASSESSMENT .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Research Focus.....	1
Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm.....	3
Literature Review.....	3
Relevance Of This Research .....	8
Theoretical Orientation.....	9
Contribution Of Study To Micro And Macro Social Work Practice .....	10
Summary .....	11
CHAPTER TWO: ENGAGEMENT.....	12
Introduction .....	12
Research Site .....	12
Engagement Strategies For Gatekeepers At Research Site.....	13
Self-Preparation.....	14
Diversity Issues.....	14
Ethical Issues.....	15
Political Issues .....	16
The Role of Technology In Engagement.....	16
Summary .....	17
CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION .....	18

Introduction .....	18
Study Participants .....	18
Selection of Participants .....	19
Data Gathering .....	20
Phases of Data Collection.....	20
Data Recording.....	21
Data Analysis Procedures.....	22
Summary .....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION.....	23
Introduction .....	23
Data Analysis.....	23
Open Coding.....	23
Axial Coding.....	54
Data Interpretation .....	61
Discussion .....	62
Implication of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice .....	64
Summary .....	65
CHAPTER FIVE: TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP .....	66
Introduction .....	66
Termination of Study.....	66
Communication of Findings to Study Site and Study Participants .....	67
Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants .....	67
Dissemination Plan .....	67
APPENDIX A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	69

APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT .....	71
APPENDIX C IRB APPROVAL LETTER .....	74
REFERENCES .....	76

## CHAPTER ONE:

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

Chapter 1 outlines the research focus and selected paradigm. It includes a literature review on Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) and spirituality. This is followed by a discussion of the study's theoretical orientations and potential contributions to micro and macro levels of social work practice.

#### Research Focus

This project studied the association between spirituality and recovery from addiction within the 12-step program, Narcotics Anonymous. A 12-step program such as Narcotics Anonymous, is a mutual aid program guided by literature that is written, edited, and voted on by Narcotics Anonymous individuals and groups, including the 12-steps and 12 traditions. A sponsor acts as a guide through the 12-steps and helps their sponsee implement the Narcotics Anonymous suggestions in all areas of their life. A sponsor is someone who has finished all 12 steps or is further in the steps than their sponsee. The sponsor – sponsee relationship is a voluntary one. One of the suggestions of the Narcotics

Anonymous program is that all members have a sponsor and that all members participate in sponsorship.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not religious program. Step 3 states, “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him” (NAWS, 2018). Narcotics Anonymous members have the freedom to choose what their higher power is and how they utilize spirituality in their life and recovery. This can range from addicts who are devoutly religious to atheists. Spirituality and spiritual principles including honesty, open-mindedness and willingness are essential to the program.

Spirituality is defined in this study as “relating to the person’s search for a sense of meaning and morally fulfilling relationships between oneself, other people, the encompassing universe, and the ontological ground of existence, whether a person understands this in terms that are theistic, atheistic, nontheistic, or any combination of these” (Canda, 1990).

Understanding the association between spirituality and recovery from addiction is relevant to the health of communities, families, and individuals. Monod et al., (2011) states that spirituality is a critical resource for many patients in coping with illness, and is an important component of quality of life, especially for those suffering chronic or terminal diseases. Addiction is considered a chronic disease by some and therefore examining the relationship between addiction and spirituality is relevant.

## Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This study adopted the post positivist paradigm. Post positivism assumes that reality is objective. Therefore, post-positivism suggests that reality can only be found in naturalistic settings. The post positivist researcher should be neutral and aware of their influence on the study (Morris, 2013). Post positivism notes that data collection is passive, (gather, analyze, and report on it). The researcher is outside looking in. The methodology of post positivism is qualitative analysis of data gathered in naturalistic settings. The post-positivist researcher gathers data using a structured set of questions so that all interviewees experience a similar interview but, they are comfortable with changing this set of questions as the study progresses. Incremental changes are anticipated during the data gathering phase. Strategies are aimed at identifying patterns and regularities in the data (Morris, 2013). Post-positivism was selected as the research orientation since it will allow the researcher to collect the rich, personal experiences of Narcotics Anonymous members.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

Kelly et al (2020) reviewed 27 studies representing 10,565 participants. Their review demonstrated that Alcoholics Anonymous/Twelve-Step Facilitation is superior to other well-established treatments, such as cognitive behavioral

therapy and motivational enhancement therapy, when it comes to “increasing abstinence”. An indispensable and therefore central focus of 12-step programs is spirituality. Seven out of the twelve steps refer to spiritual awakening, “God”, “Him”, or a “Higher Power”. Spirituality has been defined as relating to the person’s search for a sense of meaning and morally fulfilling relationships between oneself, other people, the encompassing universe, and the ontological ground of existence, whether a person understands this in terms that are theistic, atheistic, nontheistic, or any combination of these (Canda, 1990). Little qualitative information has been collected documenting Narcotics Anonymous members experiences of spiritual awakenings or how spirituality (or the loss of it) affects clean time/ sobriety and relapse.

#### Narcotics Anonymous Background

Narcotics Anonymous was inspired by Alcoholics Anonymous. The first Narcotics Anonymous meeting was held in the early 1950’s. There are about 70,000 weekly meetings in 144 countries and Narcotics Anonymous books and pamphlets are currently available in 55 languages (NAWS, 2018). Narcotics Anonymous does not employ professionals and is not affiliated with any outside organizations. The only requirement for membership in Narcotics Anonymous is the desire to stop using. Narcotics Anonymous promotes the belief that complete and continuous abstinence provides the best foundation for recovery and personal growth. Although there is a world service body, Narcotics Anonymous is

a community-based organization. The primary services, one addict helping another through sponsorship and attending meetings, occurs at the group and individual level. Most Narcotics Anonymous groups rent space for their meetings from public, religious, or other community organizations. Narcotics Anonymous is self-supporting, meaning it does not accept donations from non-members or outside agencies/organizations (NAWS, 2018). During the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings transitioned to virtual platforms.

The 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous from the Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text (2008) are:

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction; that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.



8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

It is recommended that members work the steps with the help of a sponsor. A sponsor is another member of Narcotics Anonymous who is living a program of recovery and willing to build a special, supportive, one on one relationship. The main function of a sponsor is to help a sponsee through the 12-steps by sharing their experience, strength, and hope (NAWS, 2004).

### Spirituality

Spirituality is a central part of recovery in 12-step fellowships like Narcotics Anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous calls itself a spiritual, not religious, program that teaches basic spiritual principles like honesty, open-mindedness,

and willingness. “God”, “Higher Power”, “Him”, and spiritual awakening are referenced seven times in the steps above. The twelfth step is, “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” Although spiritual awakening is not mentioned until the twelfth step, certainly there is no timeline put on when a member will experience a spiritual awakening, in fact, members are said to have had several of these awakenings throughout their recovery journey. Spirituality is the gestalt of the total process of human life and development, encompassing biological, mental, social, and spiritual aspects. It is not reducible to any of these components: rather, it is the wholeness of what it is to be human (Okundaye et al, 2001). The immediate results of the spiritual awakening are a peaceful mind and an emotional serenity, both of which are essential to maintain sobriety (Sandoz, 2014). The Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text (2008) states, “a spiritual awakening is an ongoing process. We experience a wider view of reality as we grow spiritually...As we grow spiritually, we become attuned to our feelings and purpose in life...By loving ourselves, we become able to truly love others. This is a spiritual awakening that comes as a result of living this program.”

A lapse in spiritual maintenance is hazardous for recovering addicts. The Basic Text (2008) describes it as “we find ourselves in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we have been given only a daily reprieve.” It can be deduced from the Narcotics Anonymous literature that a spiritual awakening

requires regular spiritual maintenance. Spiritual maintenance is personal to each member, but could be a form of meditation, prayer, attending meetings, or however they stay in contact with their Higher Power.

### Relevance Of This Research

Understanding the spiritual awakening recovering addicts experience in Narcotics Anonymous is valuable information. Overdose deaths have risen 28.5% in 2021 from the year prior, now exceeding 100,000 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2021). According to the National Institute of Health (2015) 23 million adults in the United States have struggled with problematic drug use at some point.

The cause of addiction is multifaceted. Schalkoff et al. (2021) found that stakeholders identified addiction stemmed from three types of traumas: environmental/community trauma (including economic and historical distress), physical/sexual trauma, and emotional trauma. The Mayo Clinic (04 Dec 2022) identified two causes of addiction: environmental influences and genetic traits that delay or speed up progression of addiction.

The role of spirituality has been linked with positive outcomes, decreased cravings, and increased abstinence among 12-step members (Galanter et al, 2020). Maintaining abstinence for years or decades requires regular spiritual maintenance. The function of the belief in God in terms of mechanisms

underlying long-term members' sobriety requires further study (Galanter et al, 2020).

In summary, overdose deaths are rising in the U.S. and Alcoholics Anonymous/Twelve-Step Facilitation has been proven to be superior to other well-established treatments of addiction. The role of spirituality has been linked with positive outcomes, decreased cravings, and increased abstinence among 12-step members (Galanter et al, 2020). Little qualitative information has been collected documenting Narcotics Anonymous members experiences of spiritual awakenings or how spirituality (or the loss of it) affects clean time/ sobriety and relapse.

### Theoretical Orientation

Cognitive-behaviorism theory has been used to study spirituality in other research so with that precedence established, it has guided this research. Brown, Peterson, and Cunningham (1988) stated the cognitive-behavioral orientation believes human behavior is predicated on a cognitive interpretation and evaluation of a stimulus. Meaning spirituality is both behavior and cognitive because the individual applies a set of beliefs to guide their actions in response to stimulus. This framework explains spirituality as a function of beliefs, values, behaviors, and experiences (Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham, 1988). This

interpretation leaves space for spirituality to evolve over time based on cognitive or behavioral changes or other outside influences.

### Contribution Of Study To Micro And Macro Social Work Practice

A potential contribution to micro social work is that social workers gain an understanding of the function of spirituality in addiction recovery. Social workers may incorporate a focus on spirituality within treatment plans for their clients with substance use disorders.

On a macro level, there is an ongoing nationwide opioid epidemic occurring in the United States. Exploring the association between spirituality and addiction recovery may inform grant goals and objectives, as well as increase the effectiveness of intervention and prevention strategies. In 2023, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reported that the federal government allocated \$10.8 billion to SAMHSA. Of that, SAMHSA proposed that \$4.7 billion dollars for substance use disorder and prevention efforts for the year 2024. \$2 billion will fund the State Opioid Response grant and the other \$2.7 billion will fund the Substance Use Prevention Treatment and Recovery Support Block Grant.

## Summary

This chapter has outlined the correlation of a spiritual awakening to long term recovery from addiction within the context of 12-step programs, specifically Narcotics Anonymous. Using the post positivism paradigm this study will explore the correlation between spiritual awakenings / spirituality to long term abstinence (recovery) from drugs and alcohol. This study will be guided by the Cognitive-behaviorism theory. This study is relevant. In 2021 there was a record-breaking number of overdose deaths and what has been labelled a national opioid epidemic. 12 step fellowships are among the most successful treatments for addiction recovery. The contributions to social work, health care providers, and researchers may be increased clarity and knowledge about the function of spirituality in 12 step programs and its correlation to long term abstinence.

## CHAPTER TWO: ENGAGEMENT

### Introduction

Chapter two examines the research site, the expected challenges, and feasibility of conducting research there. Additionally, this chapter explores the ethical, political and diversity issues that could affect the project. This chapter also outlines the preparation phase, and the role technology will play in the research project.

### Research Site

The study site was Narcotics Anonymous within the United States. Narcotics Anonymous is open to people of all ages, race, identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion. The only requirement for Narcotics Anonymous membership is the desire to stop using (NA Basic Text, 2008).

Narcotics Anonymous offers daily meetings with an atmosphere of recovery, literature about recovery, and a support network of people in recovery. The Narcotics Anonymous literature suggests that all members “work the steps.” Narcotics Anonymous members receive the “services” of sponsorship and regular meetings that are free to attend. There are no people in charge, only trusted servants. The people running the meeting have been voted in by other “home group members” to serve in their positions for a specified length of time.

Common service positions include secretary, treasurer, coffee maker, greeter, and group service representative. Narcotics Anonymous members who are of service follow the group policy which may outline the duties their commitment entails, and the clean time requirement.

Groups have autonomy to create their own atmosphere of recovery, but they do need to follow the traditions, including tradition five, "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the addict who still suffers (It works how and why, 1993)." Keeping this in mind, there is some variance in how meetings are conducted but there are meeting norms including a.) no cross talk b.) respecting people's anonymity c.) do not bring drugs or alcohol to a meeting d.) come to meetings clean e.) do not be disruptive.

### Engagement Strategies For Gatekeepers At Research Site

Interested participants were identified on 12 step recovery internet platforms. Then the snowball technique was used to gather more participants. As private citizens, Narcotics Anonymous members can choose to participate in anonymous surveys. Using this strategy, the researcher, did not interact with research site gatekeepers and did not break Narcotics Anonymous traditions.



## Self-Preparation

Comprehensive interview questions were developed, and mock interviews were conducted to ensure a successful interview process. Interview questions were developed to gather a snapshot of the individual's application of spirituality, the level of spirituality, and abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

## Diversity Issues

The language of the Narcotics Anonymous 12 steps and traditions are influenced by Christianity, including referring to a higher power as God, "He", and "Him". Some researchers have noted that this Christian influence can create issues. Okundaye et al. (2001) addressed the religiosity of Narcotics Anonymous within the language used, they point out that "AA/NA is not only religious but is grounded on Christian religious principles and tradition". Okundaye et al. (2001) also addressed that Narcotics Anonymous utilize words such as "powerless" and "anonymous". This research states that language like this can be culturally insensitive to people who have experienced marginalization and oppression. This project combats this issue by adding an interview question about the effect of Narcotics Anonymous literature on spirituality.

Demographics collected at the 2015 NA World Convention from 22,803 responses showed: 74% identified as Caucasian, 11% African American, 6% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 3% Asian, and 1% Indigenous (NAWS, 2018). Every attempt was made to gather a diverse perspective on the topic. Including a

question at the end of the interview for the participant to suggest other Narcotics Anonymous members who may have a different perspective on spirituality than themselves.

## Ethical Issues

Narcotics Anonymous is founded on the principle of anonymity as stated in the 12<sup>th</sup> tradition (NAWS, 2008). This principle of anonymity may have led to some members being hesitant to participate. This research respected Narcotics Anonymous traditions by collecting data while participants are private citizens, that is not before/during/after meetings and not at a meeting site.

This research project protected confidentiality by not collecting identifiable information such as name, address, or social security number. Participants were given a number instead of using their real name on the interview recording. The interviews were administered through Zoom, which is a secure website. The audio/video files were transcribed, and the responses were coded. Data collected will be kept confidential and kept on a password protected computer which will be always kept in a secure place. Per IRB Protocols, documents, including the informed consent, will be kept on a password protected computer for three years before destroying.

## Political Issues

The interviews and the data collected was anonymous so that the research does not break Narcotics Anonymous tradition 11, “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.”

The interviews were not conducted before/during/after Narcotics Anonymous meetings which alleviated any chance of breaking the other Narcotics Anonymous traditions. The traditions apply to Narcotics Anonymous groups and not individuals outside meetings (other than tradition 11).

## The Role of Technology In Engagement

First, online platforms hosting 12 step recovery forums were accessed to reach interested participants with approved engagement material. Then through e-mail, Adobe PDF was used to gather participant signatures on the informed consent. E-mail was also used to send the Zoom link and debriefing information to participants.

The Zoom platform was utilized to conduct and record the interviews with participants. The Zoom platform was also used to produce a transcription of the interviews.

## Summary

Chapter two has addressed potential sampling issues within the population who attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Also addressed were the potential political and ethical issues such as respecting anonymity and not breaking the 11<sup>th</sup> tradition of Narcotics Anonymous while gathering data. This chapter addressed the preparation period, the role of technology and details about the study site. This chapter examined the target population of the research, where research was conducted, and sensitive issues considered for ethical research methods.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

From this chapter the reader will learn who the study participants are, how they were selected, how integrity of the data was maintained during collection, and the analysis procedure.

#### Study Participants

The participants in this study included people who consider themselves members of Narcotics Anonymous and were abstinent from drugs and alcohol. The study participants were committed to recovery at the time of interview. The research project did not include individuals with serious mental illness or who were actively using drugs or alcohol. Narcotics Anonymous is a program where people are a member when they say they are and the only requirement for membership is the desire to get clean. There are no fees or dues. These freedoms are meant to be inclusive, therefore the participants are not limited by statuses like money or ability.

There were 15 participants interviewed for this research project. The gender of participants was 40% female, 60% male, and none identified as non-binary. The race/ethnicity of participants was 67% White, 13% mixed race, 13%

Black, and 7% Hispanic. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 64 years old. Time clean from alcohol and other drugs ranged between 9 months to 29 years. The average self-rating of spirituality was 7.2 on a scale of 1-10. Participants attended on average 14.6 Narcotics Anonymous meetings per month. The range of meeting attendance was 3 to 30 meetings per month.

### Selection of Participants

Snowball sampling was used in this study because many of the Narcotics Anonymous members are familiar and well connected with each other. Snowball sampling uses word of mouth for participants to identify others who they think might be interested in participating in the study (Morris, 2013). Every attempt was made to gather diverse experiences of spirituality.

In this research, participants were reached by posting approved outreach material to online platforms that host 12 step forums. Once a participant completed the interview they were asked if they knew anyone else in the Narcotics Anonymous program who would be interested in participating and/or if they knew anyone who may have a different perspective on the subject. Participants then facilitated the introduction of their friends to the researcher through email/phone. This is how snowball sampling was used for this research.

A limitation of this research project was the small sample size. The small sample size has the potential to result in selection bias. Very small samples

undermine the internal and external validity of a study (Faber and Fonseca, 2014).

### Data Gathering

This research collected qualitative data from interviews with participants. Careful consideration was given to the wording of the interview questions. The questions were designed to avoid being leading or biased. The goal of asking these questions was to elicit authentic responses that provide perspective on the relationship between spirituality and recovery from addiction within the 12-step program of Narcotics Anonymous. The original interview questions are listed in Appendix A. The questions cover topics such as the participant's personal definition of spirituality, how they developed spirituality, their spiritual condition prior to relapse, and the effect that attending meetings/ sharing at meetings/ N.A. literature/ being of service had on their feelings of spirituality.

### Phases of Data Collection

First, a prospective participant was identified and briefed on the purpose of the study. Then a voluntary informed consent form was sent for signature to the participant if they decided to agree on participating. At the interview appointment, the researcher again reviewed with participants the informed

consent form and the voluntary nature of the interview. Data was collected by recording the interviewee's responses to the interview questions. Lastly, the interaction was ended with an expression of gratitude and the debriefing letter emailed to the participant. Participants were informed how they can access the results of the research. The interview was structured into three parts: engagement questions, topic questions, termination questions. The duration of the interviews was between 15 to 45 minutes.

### Data Recording

Zoom was used to record and transcribe the interviews with participants. That transcription was then uploaded into the coding software, Quirkos. Quirkos was utilized for the open coding portion of data analysis. To use Quirkos, an interview transcription is uploaded to the software and titled appropriately (this is referred to as a "source"). Many sources can be uploaded into one project on Quirkos. The researcher can then go through each source line by line and create categories ("quirks") as they are noticed. Interview data can be highlighted and "dropped" into the quirks already existing or create a new category. As more data is added, the popular quirks grow in size to represent their relevance. Quirks can be clicked on to show each piece of data that was put into that quirk so that trends can be observed. Overall, utilizing this computer software to search,



analyze, and code data improved the effectiveness and efficiency of coding and analyzing qualitative data.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Bottom-up analyses was used to analyze data in this research. To analyze the data using the bottom-up approach, two stages of coding were utilized: open coding and axial coding (Morris, 2013). The first step was open coding in which the data was analyzed from a perspective that is open to all potential interpretations. The data was then coded into segments that identify who, what, where, when, and why. Initial codes were developed, applied, and revised throughout the analyzation of narratives.

Axial coding was the next step in data analysis. The open codes that were similar were linked together, making connections into broader ideas and sub-categories. Using codes developed from the raw data, connections and explanations were developed and applied to social context.

### Summary

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the participants, participant selection, data collection method, and data analysis procedure. This chapter concludes the outline of an ethically designed study and quality research project that will be of value to social workers working in the field of addiction recovery.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter explains the qualitative analysis of the study, data. It describes the initial categories developed during open coding. Then further categorization of related codes was developed in axial coding. Then a theory of the relationship between spirituality and abstinence from alcohol and other drugs was proposed.

#### Data Analysis

#### Open Coding

The categories that emerged from the open coding portion of the data analysis are the following: Perspective on life, Sharing at meetings, Protective factors, Autonomy, Developing Self-efficacy, Developing spirituality, Positive Action, Connection and Identification, Personal History, Literature, Service, Step work, Alcohol and other Drug use (AOD use), Sponsorship, Function of Meeting Attendance.

Function of Meeting Attendance. Function of Meeting attendance refers to the average number of meetings a participant attends per month as well as the

effect meeting attendance has on the participant's spirituality. Meeting attendance is a core component of the Narcotics Anonymous program. Participants shared that attending meetings was a part of their spiritual routine, a source of connection, and it is a place where participants learned from other recovering people.

Several participants stated Narcotics Anonymous meeting attendance helps them feel selfless. Participant 3 said of meetings, "they are part of my spiritual practice. Getting out of myself and centering my focus on things that are outside of myself."

The theme of being giving, empathetic, and selfless emerged throughout the research. Participant 5 stated:

I think the more empathy I feel as a human, the more connected I am in general, because it takes me away from judgment. It takes me away from feeling separate. It's also inclusivity, like when you relate and empathize with someone else. So, it has a huge effect on my spirituality.

Self-exploration, reflection, and mindfulness emerged as themes in several interviews. Participant 7 stated, "It's something I do regularly where spirituality is a topic. So, my participation in Narcotics Anonymous, is probably the main driver for my own understanding of my own spirituality." Participant 8 stated, "You know, it's a way to kind of dig deep into how I got where I got."

Participant 10 stated, "It helps remind me that I'm not alone. It's it keeps me connected." Connection / Identification is a separate code that appeared to be related to meeting attendance. The researcher will elaborate on this connection during axial coding. Participant 9 stated, " My primary purpose obviously, is to stay well, stay clean. But I think equally important is probably my desire to help other people get clean as well." Participant 9 also stated, "I think that my higher power speaks to me in the rooms."

About attending meetings, participant 12 stated, "It just helps me believe, in like a better life, it helps me have a better mindset, positive mindset... it helps me believe that I could live a good life." Self-efficacy or spiritual efficacy was a theme that emerged throughout several interviews with participants.

Participant 13 stated, "meetings kind of center me, and whenever I show up to a meeting I almost I feel obligated to be spiritual." Participant 14 stated, "meetings are one way that I tap into my spirituality and participate in spirituality." Participant 14 described meeting format, "we have these readings, and the readings can be kind of like a ritual, like a formal component to kind of center. I oftentimes will meditate in the middle of a meeting." Spiritual Routine is a separate code that appeared to be related to meeting attendance. The researcher will elaborate on spiritual routine during axial coding.

Participant 15 shared about meeting attendance, "it's evidence that the program works." Being able to witness the Narcotics Anonymous program work for others helps people believe that it can work for them too.

Meetings were a place that participants felt connection to their higher power, other members, and to themselves. Often, feelings of empathy and selflessness were elicited at meetings. Meeting attendance also functioned as a part of spiritual routine/ritual. Attending meetings and being surrounded by a community of recovering people was an important for participants to remain abstinent. Spirituality on its own was not enough.

Sponsorship. Sponsorship refers to the description of the relationship between a participant and their own sponsor as well as their sponsees. It also refers to the effects the sponsee-sponsor relationship has on the participant's spirituality and experience in the Narcotics Anonymous program. Participants shared that they trusted their sponsor more than anyone else. The sponsor relationship provided perspective, humility, and guidance.

A sponsor being someone trustworthy arose as a theme. Participant 1 stated the trust built within sponsorship has helped them grow spiritually because, "You may have never spoken to anyone about these sorts of things, but now you've got someone who you can totally trust."

Participant 10 stated sponsorship helped them overcome an aspect of toxic masculinity, "To kind of get around that old thinking of you're a man deal with it by yourself." Participant 2 stated "my sponsorship relationship is the reason that I have spirituality." A sponsor is a guide that helped participants discover their personal definition of spirituality.

Participant 3 stated, “it keeps me centered, and remembering that I don't know anything, I don't know everything, if anything at all. A very important component of spiritual practices remaining open minded.”

Sponsorship appears to be a therapeutic relationship built on honesty, love, acceptance, and guidance. Participant 5 stated, “that woman knows me back and forth and she's still the most loving and kindest person in my life, and I've told her the truth and the truth hasn't always been pretty.” Participant 6 stated, “I just never was able to, or had someone in my life that like was able to listen to me so deeply and understand me.”

Participant 6 stated the relationship is spiritual in nature, “that relationship is rooted in us both practicing spiritual principles.” The theme of spiritual relationships emerged several interviews. Participant 5 stated sponsorship, “is an opportunity to actually get some feedback and increase the feedback loop and also to offer a different perspective.” Humility, feedback, and perspective emerged as themes that contribute to spiritual growth. Participant 13 shared, “My sponsor has really been a big impact on my spirituality, because we get to have those conversations about spirituality. And we get to practice together like meditation.” Participant 14 echoed sponsorship being a humbling relationship as well as a using their sponsor as a spiritual guide.

Participant 9 shared, “I actually believe that I recovered from being a sexual assault survivor because of sponsorship.” Connection, identification, and the therapeutic value of sponsorship appeared as themes.

Participants shared that their sponsorship relationship was a healing one built on spirituality and the Narcotics Anonymous program. Sponsors were able to help participants build trust, provide invaluable feedback, and overcome trauma. Most importantly, a sponsor functions as a guide through the 12 steps and help sponsees “work the NA program” successfully. Both of which led to spiritual awakening.

Alcohol and other Drug use. Alcohol and other drug use (AOD use) refers to any mention of urges to use alcohol and other drugs, AOD use, spiritual condition prior to relapse, life conditions prior to relapse, or any reference the participant made to relapsing after some time abstinent. Participants were asked about their spiritual condition prior to relapse (if they had relapsed). “Relapse” came to represent other manifestations of addiction – not just AOD relapse but acting out in other ways. This code is important because it addresses spirituality pre-relapse. Isolation and loss of spirituality emerged as themes in this code. Participant 1 stated before their relapse during Covid-19 lockdown, “My spiritual condition was absolutely terrible. I stopped reaching out to people...my spirituality was absolutely nonexistent... Just the connections weren't there.”

Psychological vulnerability was a theme in this code. Participant 2 stated, “you know beforehand, I was kind of uncertain and experiencing a lot of like mood swings and depression... it just seems like a good idea at that moment.” Later participant 2 stated relapsing, “just reified that using hurts somewhere deep

down in me that's not like my conscious mind. It just felt really wrong..."

Participant 3 described their feelings prior to relapsing:

So disconnected from yourself that you're not really aware of what you're feeling, or you know where these obsessions and compulsions are arising from or why they happen... I would say it felt a lot more like being subject to my thoughts, and urges, rather than being the experiencer of them, or someone that can just sit with it.

Wanting relief from emotional pain emerged. Participant 5 stated, "It was rough, I can remember really wanting to hurt myself. I just wanted to be outside of what was happening."

Participant 12 stated, "I hated everything. And I really, just wanted to die. But really, I just I didn't want to go to jail again." Participant 14 stated, "I'm all selfed up, and I'm not very spiritual.... I think sometimes it's actually like I'm seeking the thing as a way to soothe myself and I have other ways to soothe myself. So, I guess it is emotional." Participant 14 also stated prior to a relapse, "I was completely closed off. I was spiritually closed off. I had self-doubt. I was in a lot of pain. I was in a lot of emotional and physical and mental pain and all I could think about was just getting some relief... it was like being haunted by a dark force. So, it would come to visit, and I would be scared to death." Disconnection from self, self-centeredness, and wanting relief emerged several times in interviews.



Participant 7 shared about the importance of spiritual relationships and connection with spirituality, “When I feel like that relationship is severed or broken, or when self-centeredness and self-interest become louder or more in the forefront.” Participant 3 stated:

I find that when I tell another person how I'm feeling or like that I want to use. I experience relief. So, it seems clear to me that there is you know, that spiritual component, something greater than myself that's at work when I allow myself to be vulnerable and be connected to another person.

Participants shared that prior to relapse they felt isolated from others and disconnected from their spirituality. Self-centeredness is an important factor in relapse possibly because it is antithetical to spirituality and being of service to others which are main components in the N.A. program. Some participants shared about experiencing depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation prior to relapse. Sharing with others about their urges to use AOD, feelings of disconnection, and psychological distress provided relief from the symptoms and fostered the connection that participants stated was missing.

Step work. Step work refers to the participant's experience writing on the 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous and the effect step work had on developing their spirituality. Participants shared that step work helped them to feel connected with themselves. Step work helped participants gain self-acceptance and identify

in ways they would like to better themselves. It also functioned as a part of spiritual routine.

Participants talked about self-exploration, self-discovery and self-acceptance. Participant 3 stated, “reading the literature and writing on the steps is really important because it gives me a concrete outlet for when I want to do something to better my spirit... something simple and clear that I can work towards.” Participant 5 stated about their sponsees doing step work, “they fell in love with themselves. They care about themselves because they work the steps...” and, “steps have become like an integration into my life on how I do checks with myself on what's going on and what I need. I have found my worth over and over again in the step work.” Participant 12 stated, “step work has gotten me to see who I am and not be like, afraid of that.”

Steps enhanced participants relationship with themselves and others. Participant 6 stated, “It's helped me create a relationship with other people. It's helped me create a relationship with myself” Participant 7 stated, “Working the steps has caused me to go deeper into my own perceptions about myself and to my own awareness and my behavior than was possible previously.”

Steps helped participants come to an understanding of their own spirituality and religion was not a requirement to be spiritual. Participant 7 stated:

I started to realize that all this stuff that I had all these preconceived notions that I had about that experience weren't as important, right? And

so, it actually helped me to reach a point where I could call myself a spiritual person.

Participant 5 stated steps give them a wider perspective and, “helped my mental health and my focus and my ability to be attentive in the present moment.” and “I have found a deeper relationship with my understanding of a higher power.” Participant 8 stated, “It has helped me grow to have higher power, and to really believe it.” Participant 13 stated, “I really wasn't very spiritual at all until I started writing and kind of figuring out what my motives were for getting clean and how I was gonna maintain staying clean. So, the steps kind of helped me figure out what a higher power was, what God was, you know. Just identifying that concept for myself.”

Step work was a medium for participants to explore their beliefs about themselves, their relationships, and the world. It also helped them to examine how they relate to the world. Step work aided in the development of participants' definition of spirituality and higher power.

Service. Service refers to the participant's experience with “being of service” or giving back to the program, other Narcotics Anonymous members, or the community. Participants were asked about service work's effect on their spirituality. Being of service could be holding a position at an N.A. meeting such as “greeter”, “coffee maker”, or “secretary”. It could also be helping a newcomer

or being on an N.A. activities committee. Being of service is an important part of the N.A. program.

Humility appeared to be important. Participant 1 stated, “service helps keep me stay grounded because anytime I write out those white pamphlets it makes me remember when I got mine.” Participant 3 stated the following:

It helps me to increase my compassion and to remain like a nonjudgmental person and remind myself that, like, we're really all the same, and I'm not better or worse than any other person. I am capable. And I do have things to offer. And yeah, it helps with feelings of self-worth and like usefulness.

Feelings of self-efficacy and increased self-esteem became patterns in interviews. Participant 5 stated, “there's a level of accountability in service I learned the hard way how to show up.” Participant 6 stated, “let me not think of myself right now, and let me just do for others just to be a good person.”

Patterns of selflessness, connection, accountability, self-esteem emerged.

Participant 7 stated services, “Helps me be feel a part of” and shared their having, “this skewed perspective of what's going on, and my own importance, and so being of service helps to get past that barrier.” Participant 5 stated:

Service allows me the opportunity to learn so many things about myself. It increases my ability to have success in my life, in my career and it's a bi-directional, reciprocal relationship. I think it teaches me patience and

tolerance and acceptance and broadens my point of view and my perspective.

Participant 14 stated, “service is a spiritual endeavor and so service enhances and feeds my spirituality.”

Being of service fostered feelings of purpose, self-efficacy, selflessness, humility, and connection. Participants reap psychological and social benefits from feeling “a part of” their N.A. community. It is an opportunity for them to give back to this community that has helped them stay clean. Being of service is an important for a mutual aid program such as 12-step fellowships because the meetings are operated by regular members who take service positions. The meetings would not happen otherwise.

Literature. Literature refers to the participant’s experience of reading the Narcotics Anonymous literature and the effect of it on their spirituality.

Participants shared that the N.A. literature helped them to discover their own spirituality. Participant 10 stated, “That's where my spirituality really developed was.” Participant 2 stated, " there's some bits of literature that made me feel much less alone in being like an atheist and recovery. It gave me faith that NA could work for me.” Participant 3 stated, “I would say it helps a lot with the practical aspect of spirituality” Participant 5 stated, " I was defining spirituality for myself right when I was in that process, and as I continued to be in that process, it helps add perspective to that inquiry for me.”

Self-efficacy and the feeling of hope were mentioned. Participant 6 stated: It's just gonna guide you to that feeling of like I can get better. I can do this. I can finish this. I can get over this defect. I can maybe make amends to these people. Reinforces my hope that, regardless of what my issue is today or problem that I can find the solution.

Participants shared the literature was a positive tool and guide that they can access any time. Through literature the participants shared they felt identification and connection. Participant 5 stated “the literature has impacted me spiritually because I feel included. And I feel like some of my own thinking is in the literature” Participant 9 stated:

I think more intimately than being with another person, because when I first got clean, I didn't have good social skills. I didn't know how to interact. I felt awkward and just uncomfortable, but with a book you're by yourself.

Participant 12 stated “I can read this book right now. And this is what I'm focusing on. I'm not focusing on my thoughts” Participant 15 stated “it's like a roadmap to teach us how to be better people, to look at what has happened in our lives.”

The N.A. literature was a multi-functional resource for participants. They developed faith that the N.A. program could work for them, receive an introduction to spirituality, find identification in the thoughts/feelings/behavior

written about, and receive guidance on how to combat symptoms of addiction. Regularly reading the literature is a part of spiritual routine. So, the literature is part educational, spiritual, and affirms their recovering person's experience.

Personal History. Personal History refers to the participant's description of adversity they faced in their childhood, their past, or present. This code was created because participants inevitably talked about challenges in their lives; past and present. These challenges are important as they demonstrate the effect of biological, psychological, and social variables on people who identify as addicts.

Participant 1 stated, "I had agoraphobia, I collapsed on the sidewalk with panic attacks." Participant 2 stated "religion made it really hard for me to be who I was without feeling guilt and shame."

Participant 5 shared about their self-esteem, "I can feel disconnected from a higher power when I'm in that self-centered idea that I'm not lovable, that I'm not worthy." Participant 5 stated, "I grew up in a dysfunctional family, and there was lots of traumas and all of the adults in my life were addicts."

Other challenges mentioned during the interviews included dropping out of school, using at a young age, anxiety, isolation, suicidal ideation, trauma, physical abuse, grief, hoarding, overspending, over eating, over exercising, guilt, shame, depression, sexual assault, parents with mental illness, rape, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, intimate partner violence, jail, and learning disorders.

All participants shared about stressors, traumatic events, or mental illness in their interviews. Before coming to the N.A. program participants spoke about feeling isolated and unhappy. They were deeply affected by their life experiences, and the biopsychosocial effects and consequences of addiction.

Connection and Identification. Connection and Identification refers to the participants' experience of developing personal identification or comradery within the Narcotics Anonymous program, meetings, or fellowship. Participants described feeling safety, belonging, and supported by the fellowship.

Participant 2 stated "being in those rooms that provided me the resources, which are basically other people within the rooms to solidify my ethical and spiritual principles in a way that I wouldn't have been able to do previously." Support network and connection to other people was mentioned. Participant 2 stated, "believing that something else can restore me to sanity, and like turning my will over means that when I have a problem, I call someone...without asking for help I wouldn't have been clean this long. I wouldn't have been able to get through most of the things I've gotten through." Participant 3 stated "going to meetings and being around other people. I'm feeling a true sense of connection and community." Participant 15 said "you're never alone." Participant 14 stated "spiritual friendship is what helps and supports my spirituality. I try to surround myself and participate. And I also try to nurture relationships where I'm supporting someone else's spirituality." Participant 14 stated "I feel like as much



as spirituality is what gives our lives meaning it's also celebrating our spirituality and recovery with each other.”

Feeling accepted as your authentic self was a common theme. Participant 12 stated “these people aren't going to reject me. I can just be myself.”

Participants stated feeling connected to others through meeting attendance, sponsorship, and fellowship. Participant 12 stated attending meeting “helps me again to like to feel connected and to really just stay vulnerable. And you know, allow people like allow people to get to know me.” Participant 9 stated, “So my connection with my higher power, which is fueled by the fellowship and the people in the service is the one of the most important things in my life” and “sponsorship is at the core of me being connected.”

Participants benefited from being able to have a community that made them feel accepted for who they are. From this community, participants further benefitted from the emotional support they received. Continuing to participate in vulnerable relationships fueled feeling connected. Means of feeling connected included reaching out to people, attending meetings, fostering spiritual relationships, relationship with a higher power, and sponsorship.

Positive Action. Positive Action refers to the routines or practices the participant described that contributes to a participant’s development or maintenance of their feelings of spirituality. Positive action emerged as a theme because participants began describing routines or rituals that they perform to feel

spiritual. Meeting attendance, step work, service, meditation, prayer, reaching out, and sharing at meetings were common pieces of spiritual routines that increase feeling spiritual.

Participant 5 stated about meeting attendance:

Seeing the forest for the trees getting a perspective, staying in the moment being present, you know, mindfulness is a practice that I have embraced in my life, and it's been transformational. And I don't think that I would have arrived at that intersection without the aid of Narcotics Anonymous."

Participant 5 stated "I have a higher power, and I like to call it the universe. And so when I participate in the practices that I choose to do. I become in connection with that higher power."

Speaking about sponsorship participant 3 stated "a very important component of spiritual practices remaining open minded." Several participants stated they meditate as part of their spiritual practice including Participant 13 "I think that that meditation really fuels my spirituality, because that's where I kind of discover about my spirit." Participant 5 stated they meditate, practice mindfulness, burn incense, and have an altar, "It's almost like I've created this routine that regulates me. It regulates my own body and presents me to the day, and then that, I think, makes me available for this connection."

Participant 9 stated “daily contact with a higher power and attending meetings regularly helps me.” Participant 13 emphasized the importance of a routine, “there should be some formal practice.”

Nature was mentioned several times as part of spiritual practice, “I go stand under this beautiful big tree that's in the front...I swear to God I feel so connected.” Participant 14 stated meditation, nature, hiking, and “meetings are one way that I tap into my spirituality and participate in spirituality.”

Breathe work was mentioned several times. Participant 11 stated they use breathe work as a spiritual tool to stay present “I do my prayer meditation every morning.” Participant 12 stated “Just like breathing, just breathing and using breath and if I'm in my head stressing out about like the past or the future, I'm not in the moment.”

Having a formal routine that fosters connection was important from participants. The positive action that they chose to take was as unique as them. If their routines were positive, then they benefited spiritually. Although there were some universal actions mentioned such as meditation and mindfulness.

Developing spirituality. Developing spirituality refers to the participant's process of how they began to embrace what spirituality means to them and the actions they took to feel spiritual or increase their spirituality. Some participants (participants 1,2,5,7,8) shared they had difficulty developing spirituality because they struggled with the word “God”. Participants described a process of coming

to terms with their previous experiences with religion and creating their own meaning for spirituality that worked for them.

Literature helped clarify the freedom to choose what spirituality means for the individual (participant 5 shared this sentiment). Sharing at meetings and with other people in recovery was important. Participant 2 stated, "I think I developed my idea of a higher power through sharing both on the floor and off."

Sponsorship is an important part of developing one's own meaning of spirituality. Participant 2 stated, "talking to my sponsor because my definition before recovery was spirituality wasn't for me, and I didn't believe in anything. And I didn't really understand that some people's definitions are different."

Several participants mentioned freedom from religious dogma being important to them- including participants 1, 2, 3, 6,13, and 12.

Step work was mentioned by participant 5 (and 6 and 13), "I have grown spiritually as a result of working the steps" Participant 6 shared their spirituality needed to be more than connecting with people because, "sometimes all the phone calls in the world won't really help." Participant 6 shared their spirituality ebbs, "then there's times where it doesn't really feel like it at all. And I just have abstinence." Participant 7 (and 5,9) stated sharing at meetings is important "I can't unlink the two- sharing at a meeting and participating in and experiencing a spiritual event." Meeting attendance in itself is a spiritual experience and a way to develop spirituality. As shared by participant 6 however, spirituality needs to be more than just a connection with other people.

Watching other addicts possess and practice spirituality helped develop spiritual efficacy for participant 10, “So I think it just happens slowly over time in watching other people trust in their higher power.” Participant 7 also shared their experience of watching others develop their spirituality, “what I see is somebody taking ownership over their own experience and their own relationships with others, their own relationship with themselves, and their own relationship with something greater than themselves.”

Participant 9 stated music was at the beginning of their spiritual development, “So in the beginning, my first concept was a with a higher power. Believe or not, was the Bob Dylan's music.” Participant 9 (and 13) shared that their spirituality is evolving, “That the progression and changing of the connection is constant. What I believe today, I'm certain it's gonna be different, you know, in the future.”

Through the coping resources provided by the N.A. program participants were able to develop their own spirituality. This was sometimes a slow process through reading literature, doing step work, listening to others share about their experience, and engaging in positive action. Notably, spirituality needed to be rooted in something more than just connection with other people. Autonomy over their beliefs was also a key factor in developing spirituality.

Developing Self-efficacy. Developing Self-efficacy refers to the participant's description of feeling confident in their ability to accomplish a task or

feat. This includes believing they are capable of getting “clean” from alcohol and other drugs, embrace principles, think and/or behave in ways that align with their principals, or believe that they can overcome adversity and stay clean.

Participant 5 (and 12) stated “when I’m in a meeting and I get to hear about other people’s struggles and how they cope with them. It’s inspiring spiritually.”

Participant 5 shared service work increased their self-efficacy, “service allows me the opportunity to learn so many things about myself that that it, in fact increases my ability to have success in my life.”

Participant 11 shared “They should have a home group, a sponsor, a foundation to God of understanding. So, you can lean on one at a time to get you through whatever you gotta get through.”

Spiritual practice, positive self-regard, and self-esteem were mentioned. Participant 13 stated when they feel like using, they remember,” I’m worth a lot more. And I kind of attribute that to my spiritual practice.”

Participant 15 stated identification helped them increase feelings of self-efficacy, “It’s gonna be okay that happened to me, too, you know.”

Developing self-efficacy meant that participants began to believe that they could stay clean, and that their life would get better too. Through reading N.A. literature and learning from other recovering addicts, they began to believe that the N.A. program could work for them. Having this hope, they began to witness themselves thinking and behaving differently after applying what they had

learned. Realizing that they were capable of change and success increased confidence and belief in themselves.

Autonomy. Autonomy refers to the participant's ability to define spirituality for themselves. Participants were asked about their personal definition of spirituality during interviews. This code is important because spirituality is individualistic but there are universal commonalities.

Feeling connected to something greater than yourself was shared. Participant 8 shared "spirituality to me is sort of another form of belonging and you know, being part of being in the middle feeling connected...an entity that I could not describe, that I don't know what it is, but that, I do believe was there for me." Participant 2 shared:

My grandma teaches meditation. So that's another way that like spirituality takes on meaning for me. Just like some kind of practice that involves something other than yourself that connects you to something, like meditation. Prior, sometimes even yoga, or for me it can be singing.

Feeling connected with self was a theme that emerged from participants. Participant 5 stated, "spirituality is something I access by being in touch with myself, but also by rituals" and "I have a higher power, and I like to call it the universe" and "having a connection with the higher power that is defined by me, and also has a benefit in my life."

Participant 6 shared spirituality is about relationships, “I would say my relationship with myself, my relationship with the world around me, my relationship with people in my life. You know how I how I feel about myself...I guess my overall connection to everything.”

Participant 3 shared their feelings about spirituality:

It's the component of self that remains when all of the surface level stuff is stripped away...And I would say that spirituality is one of the greatest commonalities we have between each other as humans. So, it's kind of like the core at the human experience or of conscious existence.

Participants shared spirituality was connection to a higher power, spiritual principles, other people, themselves. Participant 10 shared “to me is the connectedness. Part of that spirituality is the connectedness with other spirits in the program.” The NA fellowship was mentioned as a higher power. Participant 13 shared, “the fellowship is a power greater than myself. It's not something I can control.”

Behaving in a spiritual manner with the world was a theme. Participant 1 stated, “Spirituality to me, is just being an ethical person.” Participant 14 shared “First and foremost, it's a relationship with reality. Relationship of some sort with a higher power involves that it's also a source of meaning for life.”

Participant 15 shared “I believe that it is the part of me when I'm operating in my life and interfacing with others, and I'm operating at my optimum level with them, using spiritual principles.”



Participant 5 shared “I guess it's listening for the guidance within and trying to square that with being a human being moving through the world, trying to do all the things that we do as adults.”

Several participants struggled to describe spirituality. Participant 12 stated, “you know it's not really something that I have like a definition, for I just think it's kind of like a feeling, and it's like a practice that you put like, I would put into play to you know, love myself, love other things like that.” Participant 7 shared, “it's a relationship with something that is intangible...I have a hard time defining spirituality in a conventional way. I'm acutely aware of things that block me from feel it from being able to express my spirituality.”

One of the unique features of Narcotics Anonymous is that members are encouraged to seek out their own higher power and spirituality. This autonomy was vital to the success of the participants. Participants diversity of beliefs but also a common language with which to speak about their experience is a strength for the fellowship. Being able to identify with and understand each other while also having spiritual autonomy is why the program is successful for these participants.

Protective factors. Protective factors refer to anything that the participant mentioned that helped build resilience to relapse. Participants were asked about their spirituality before relapse (if they had identified as being someone who

relapsed). Participants also shared how they resist urges to use AOD or “act out” in old ways or ways that were not in alignment with their principles.

Several participants shared about a support network working as a protective factor. Participant 7 stated:

Ultimately it comes down to my relationships. So, I think about my relationship with my family. I think about my relationships at work, my relationships with my sponsor and my sponsees and I’d be lying if I didn’t say there was some ego... You know a strong relationship with my own spirit and a spiritual relationship with others as something that helps me to make good decisions.

Participant 5 shared about fellowship and sponsorship “They were in my life, and my spirituality was affected by that, and my desire to hurt myself.” Connection was mentioned as relapse prevention, “I still need the connection. I still need the support.”

Participant 11 shared about their spiritual routine, “I pray. and I meditate. And I basically I play the tape through.”

Participant 13 shared about gratitude, “I think of what I’ve achieved since I’ve been clean, and what spirituality has given me in the life that I live today.”

Participant 14 shared about continuing to attend N.A. meetings:

Why do we still have to come to the rooms? Because we can’t lose touch with the disease, so we can’t lose touch with, you know, frankly identifying

with the worst symptoms. So, if we stop hearing about it then we start to think, oh, maybe I can use a little bit.

Since N.A.'s focus is abstinence from drugs and alcohol it is a frequent topic at N.A. meetings. Therefore, people in recovery are often sharing why they stay, how they stay, and what happened if/when they used AOD. This culminates into a protective factor against relapse. Participants shared that spirituality helped them resist urges to use. When urges arose, they engaged with their spiritual routine, expressed gratitude for their relationships, thought about their values, and overall engaged with the resources in the program.

Sharing at meetings. Sharing at meetings refers to when participants attend a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and share on the floor while at the meeting. A portion of N.A. meetings is dedicated to allowing time for members to share. Members typically share on the topic or just check in with the group depending on the format of the meeting. Sharing is an important component of the N.A. program since it is a means of self-discovery and a way to being of service.

Participant 10 shared, "while I'm speaking, I'm learning stuff about myself" Participant 6 stated sharing at a meeting helped them, "to not be so self-obsessed, and to put it out there, and then for also for others to relate to it, and just let it boil down to like just, you know, a human experience." Connection and relieving stress were themes. Participant 5 stated that sharing, "decreases that

sense of isolation.” Participant 8 stated “It makes it so I can't hide so much, it makes it so. I can't be in denial as much.” Participant 11 stated “it helps me a lot, because I don't keep it in before I got before I got into recovery. I would just keep things in, and I would just explode, and I would just use over the smaller things.”

Participant 13 shared about authenticity and acceptance:

I try to share my truth and share what's going on and be honest. When I find when I'm like authentic, and I'm really honest, that that's where I feel more at home with myself, and I feel more accepted, And I feel more spiritual in a sense.

Participant 15 stated sharing is a way to give back “sharing is for me something that I would do for the newcomer. I really don't like to talk about myself.” Themes of connection, feeling spiritual, self-honesty, and coping with life arose.

Sharing at meetings is cathartic. It can help others and help the person sharing. Participants stated that sharing helped them learn about themselves and reach a deeper level of honesty. In response to sharing at this level of honesty they felt more accepted by others afterward. Participants shared that in addiction they often feel isolated, self-centered, and self-loathing. It is logical that feeling accepted after being deeply honest would foster feelings of connection and spirituality. In some ways using AOD is a function of a lack of self-acceptance.

Perspective on life. Perspective on life refers to how spirituality has influenced the participants thoughts and beliefs about life. Participants also spoke about their perspectives on life organically throughout the interview. Prior to coming to N.A. participants were generally pessimistic. Spirituality had a positive effect on participant's perspectives and therefore their life satisfaction.

Participant 2 shared, "I think I went from like a negative overall to a positive one." Participant 13 shared "almost every area of my life has gotten better since I started pursuing spirituality."

Participant 3 shared service work helped, "just connection with myself, and remind me of what it is that I want out of life, and what I want to be doing." Participant 5 (and 6) shared "We have equanimity in our existence, and so, because of that my higher power for a lack of a better way of saying it, loves me and loves you."

Connection with others and higher power, love, and giving back to community were important. Open mindedness was also an important facet of perspective. Participant 5 shared, "I think it teaches me patience and tolerance and acceptance and broadens my point of view and my perspective" Participant 9 shared "My higher power is the most important thing in my life" and "There's nothing greater than helping other people."

Participant 7 shared about relationships becoming more meaningful and being open minded, "But my perception of those relationships, and how the important those relationships are to me is more than just the transactional nature

of what I was used” and “I think my own spirituality has led me to kind of have the courage to always you know, reevaluate the premise of my own beliefs.”

Participant 11 shared about a change in behavior, “if I try to manipulate people and try to get the outcome that I want, no matter if it's a job or something else. I'm not gonna feel good about it because I didn't work for it, or I didn't put in the right steps to get it.”

Participant 12 shared, “There's like this very pure spot, and I think you can either continue to act on that, or you can go the opposite” and “If I do make a mistake. I just try to keep moving forward.” Self-compassion is an important piece of the change in perspective for some participants.

Participant 14 shared about being able to accept all of life's trials, “It's not like all the good things in life are spiritual, and all the shitty things aren't, aren't. There's a lot of shitty things that can still be spiritual” and “learning to understand the way the world unfolds and stuff is a part of spirituality.”

Continuing to participate in life in a spiritual way that aligns with participant's values and principles was mentioned. Participant 14 shared about making decisions “there are healthy ways of dealing and responding and spiritual is in the ways that it's all spiritual, you know, and then there's ways we can just shut down and not participate.” Participant 15 shared about their responsibility in interactions, “I have to keep my side of the street clean. It's too much work to operate in all their defects. It's so much easier to use spiritual principles, it's less work.”

Participants shared about feeling happier, capable of being vulnerable, personal growth, not being impulsive, resisting urges to use AOD, trusting people, and having a purpose and self-acceptance.

Participant 1 shared about a transformation with the help of his sponsor, “I’ve noticed that when I’m spiritually fulfilled, I tend to be happy and that that guy has helped me out so much...” And “You start to realize that without the drugs. You have really become a person that you really never thought you were and that is an amazing feeling, to be honest.”

Participant 3 shared about vulnerability, “It seems clear to me that there is you know, that spiritual component, some, some something greater than myself that’s at work when I allow myself to be vulnerable and be connected to another person.”

Participant 7 shared about growing as a person by using spiritual principles with a community, “I find other people that practice them. Then you know, I can grow, and other people around me do” and, “What I found is that I am open to experiences that I don’t necessarily understand.”

Participants shared about a change in thinking. Participant 5 shared “it has helped me not be so impulsive with my thinking on the short-term fix. And instead, think of the long-term gain and the opportunity that I have to be present.”

Participants shared about their emotional health. Participant 5 shared “I’m not as afraid anymore.” Participant 8 shared spirituality has “helped deal with

some of the guilt and shame” and “it's really nice to be in a position where I want my life.”

Emotional regulation and self-acceptance were mentioned. Participant 13 shared “deep down inside, you know the disease, or myself well, wants me to suffer and be miserable. But my spirituality can kind of outshine those thoughts if I sit with myself long enough.” Participant 14 shared, “My spirituality sort of gives me a frame of reference for understanding. You know just self-acceptance, I guess” and, “The point of my life is to have as much of a positive net, positive impact in terms of helping people awaken to their to their own purpose and meaning in life and spirituality.” Several participants mentioned helping others as being an important change in their perspective.

Feeling capable of having strong relationships was a change in the psychosocial health of participants. Participant 1 shared “my spirituality has helped me stay clean in that way because through my spirituality I was able to gain the trust of the people and trust them myself.”

Spirituality had an overall positive effect on the lives of participants. They shared that every area of life was an opportunity to work spiritual principles. Viewing life this way has the potential to make it more meaningful. They shared about a transformation of their thoughts, behaviors, values, and beliefs. They expressed happiness and satisfaction with life.

In conclusion, the open coding portion of the research identified the following categories for further analysis: Perspective on life, Sharing at meetings,



Protective factors, Autonomy, Developing Self-efficacy, Developing spirituality, Positive Action, Connection and Identification, Personal History, Literature, Service, Step work, Alcohol and other Drug use (AOD use), Sponsorship, Function of Meeting Attendance. The following section will discuss how these categories were used to create axial codes.

### Axial Coding

The axial codes in this section were created from the previous section of open coding. The axial codes created were Spiritual Routine, Coping Resources, Connection, and Trauma and Isolation.

#### Spiritual Routine

Definition: Spiritual routine enhances spirituality which positively affected the participant's perspective on life. Spiritual routine is a part of the positive action that members take in Narcotics Anonymous. Spiritual routine helps to increase feelings of self-efficacy and is a protective factor against relapse. Spiritual routine was more beneficial if performed regularly.

Open codes within this theme: Autonomy, Meeting Attendance, Literature, Positive Action, Developing Self Efficacy, Protective Factors, Sharing at meetings, Step work, Service, Perspective on Life, Sponsorship.

Participants shared that a spiritual routine that can be used to generate feelings of spirituality and lead to freedom from addiction. From this foundation, recovering addicts may embrace additional practices like meditation, prayer, being in nature, lighting incense, etc. Participants shared that their spiritual routine is something they need to practice regularly to feel connected to self, others, and/or their higher power.

Some core components of the Narcotics Anonymous program are attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings regularly, sharing at meetings, and reading the Narcotics Anonymous literature. These are community-based resources that contribute to a spiritual routine. They function both as a part of spiritual routine and as places where members can learn how to develop spiritual routine.

Service work functions as a part of spiritual routine and a way in which to give back to the community. Giving back enhances feeling of connection to higher power and community. Being of service relieved emotional suffering related to self-centeredness, low self-esteem, and isolation.

Self-efficacy was linked with taking positive actions that increased spirituality. Participating in their spiritual routine and witnessing themselves be able to overcome challenges and remain clean from AOD contributed to feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Participants explained that sharing at meetings was a way to be self-reflective, authentic, and feel wholeheartedly accepted by others. Likewise,

attending meetings helped participants to feel empathy, less judgement, connected to others, and learn from others how to stay clean.

Step work functions as both a part of spiritual routine and as a feeling of connection, whether it be to higher power, self, or sponsorship. Completing the Narcotics Anonymous 12 steps is a way for participants to increase self-awareness, create healthier relationships, find self-acceptance, better themselves, and identify their higher power.

Unique to this theme only, is the code of autonomy. Autonomy in defining their own high power and spirituality was important to the success of participants in staying clean. Although participants stated they received guidance from the fellowship, sponsorship, and literature their belief was ultimately their own. Being able to hold one's own beliefs appeared to contribute to feelings of self-efficacy. Being given the autonomy to develop a relationship with a higher power of their own helped participants; in some cases, to heal from past experiences with religion and in other cases to develop spirituality for the first time. This led to a feeling of spiritual self-efficacy. Since spirituality is a critical component in 12 step programs, it is vital that members be able to develop their own understanding. This understanding and the accompanying spiritual routine may change and evolve to meet their unique needs at the time.

### Coping Resources

Definition: Coping resources come from social networks and help an individual change their situation, change the meaning attributed to the situation, and/or change the emotional reaction to the situation (E. Schott, personal communication, February 12, 2024). Participants believe that they can continue to have freedom from addiction and be successful in all areas of life because of what they have learned and experienced in Narcotics Anonymous. In Narcotics Anonymous participants learn about positive actions they can use to stop using AOD and change their lives.

Open codes within this theme: Meeting Attendance, Literature, Positive Action, Developing Self Efficacy, Protective Factors, Sharing at Meetings, Developing Spirituality.

Coping Resources from the Narcotics Anonymous community include literature and meetings. While participating in these activities' participants can learn how to live without the use of drugs/ alcohol and develop spirituality because of what they read, hear being shared, as well as their experience in the community. One participant shared that the Narcotics Anonymous literature taught them how to be a better person. Participants shared that they learned how to develop spirituality from attending meetings and reading literature.

Participants gained self-efficacy through giving (e.g. sharing, being of service) and receiving (e.g. listening at meetings, sponsorship, literature) from others in the Narcotics Anonymous program. Listening to other recovering Narcotics Anonymous members share their own experiences of overcoming adversity while being able to stay clean creates hope and faith for other members.

These coping resources help participants to change their perspective on adversity. They begin to see adversity as an opportunity to grow and practice spiritual principles, they are empowered, instead of feeling like a victim. Coping resources protect against relapse.

### Connection

All the participants who were interviewed shared at some point in their interview about how connected they felt because of Narcotics Anonymous; whether it be connected to themselves, others, the universe, or their higher power. Feeling connected helped participants believe that they too can have freedom from addiction. Utilizing the support from Narcotics Anonymous increased feeling of connection. Feeling connected to others is a protective factor against relapse.

Open codes within this theme: Meeting Attendance, N.A. Literature, Positive Action, Protective Factors, Sharing at Meetings, Developing Spirituality, Step work, Service, Perspective on Life, Sponsorship.

Most aspects of the Narcotics Anonymous program led to feelings of connectedness whether it be through literature, sponsorship, steps, meetings, or fellowship etc. Coincidentally, these are the same activities that helped to develop spirituality.

Through positive action, participants connect to themselves, community, and higher power. They were relieved of self-centeredness and gotten a larger perspective through which to view the world. Participants shared that their perspective on life is a better, more positive one now that they are in Narcotics Anonymous. Participants shared that feeling connected to others helped them to feel accepted and loved for who they are.

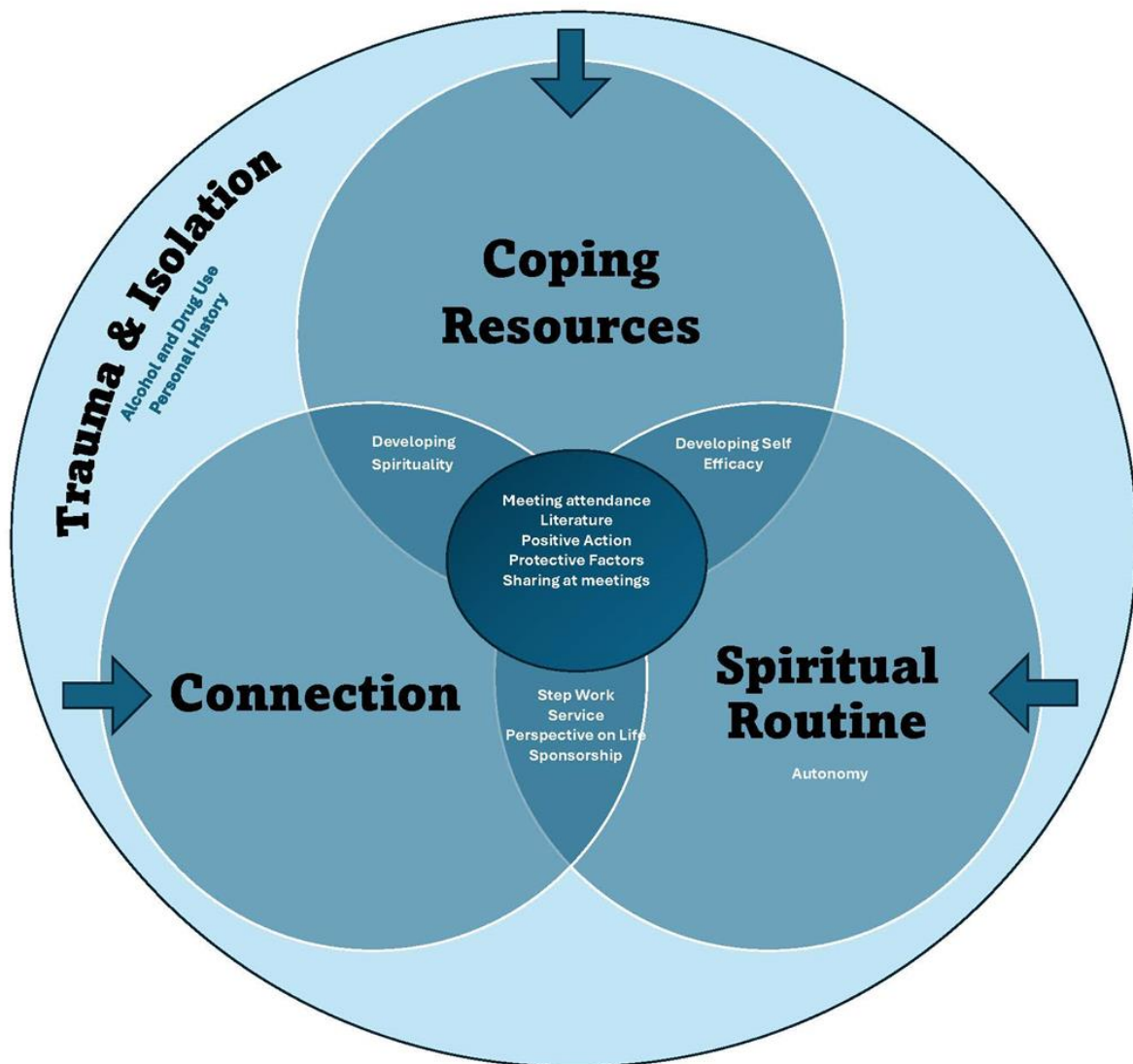
One of the main ways of feeling connected was through sponsorship. Participants shared that they can be vulnerable, authentic, and still feel loved by this person who also acts as a spiritual guide. Participants shared feeling connected to their higher power helped them to feel safe and supported. Feeling connected to something positive that is greater than yourself appears to be the antidote to the isolation and suffering that is addiction.

### Trauma and isolation

Definition: Many participants had adverse childhood experiences, experienced trauma, and/or were struggling with their mental health. These life experiences provide context maladaptive coping skills, their biopsychosocial status, and feelings of isolation prior to entering the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

Open codes within this theme: AOD use, Personal History. Participants shared about their personal histories which often included the profound effects that trauma had in their lives. Many participants experienced emotional/physical/sexual abuse, parents with mental illness, assault, domestic violence, and other experiences with high correlation to addiction. These experiences no doubt shaped their perspectives on the world and lay a foundation for future AOD use.

Often, prior to a relapse they were emotionally unstable, emotionally suffering, isolated, detached from themselves and others, fearful, and had suicidal ideation. Participants shared that their spirituality was gone prior to relapsing. They were no longer connected to their higher power or others. They were closed off from everything and even though drug use hurts deep down, in moments of suffering and vulnerability, using alcohol/drugs seems like a good idea in comparison.



**Figure 1. Addiction to Spirituality.** This figure demonstrates the relationship between the axial codes and open codes. The axial codes are Trauma and Isolation, Connection, Spiritual Routine, and Coping Resources. The open codes are sorted into each axial heading. Participants began their spiritual journey from trauma and isolation by entering either through spiritual routine, coping resources, or connection. The arrows represent the entrance points to the process of a spiritual awakening.



## Discussion

Most participants shared that they experienced traumatic events and/or had challenges with mental health. They may have experienced psychological distress and isolation prior and/or after they began using AOD. Once introduced to Narcotics Anonymous, participants could begin on a journey of spiritual awakening through coping resources, connection (or identification), and/or spiritual routine. If a person can attain all three components: connection, spiritual routine, and coping resources, then their feelings of spirituality may be stronger, and they can achieve abstinence longevity.

All three components of spirituality had certain codes in common: Meeting attendance, Literature, Positive Action, Protective Factors, and Sharing at meetings. These codes simultaneously function as sources of connection, coping resources, and as part of a spiritual routine (the axial codes). The three components of spirituality (the axial codes) are multifunctional which could explain why the 12-step program is so impactful.

Coping resources are derived from social networks and help an individual change their situation, change the meaning attributed to the situation, and/or change the emotional reaction to the situation (E. Schott, personal communication, February 12, 2024). For participants in this research, the community of Narcotics Anonymous provides resources of literature and meetings. Meetings are a valuable place to learn about how other people stay clean in the program, give back, and share struggles. This reciprocal atmosphere

based in spirituality can be healing. Participants learn from each other new ways of thinking and behaving that are spiritual in nature. This is critical because participants shared that while using AOD they felt spiritually bankrupt, isolated, suicidal, had low self-esteem, and behaved in ways that were not in alignment with their values.

A spiritual routine could be the Narcotics Anonymous program itself e.g. attending meetings, reading literature, step work, sponsorship, and being of service. However, participants often bolstered their routine with meditation, mindfulness, nature, and other positive activities that enhance their spiritual feelings. Importantly, this routine needs to have some focus on remaining abstinent from AOD, which is why participants continue to attend Narcotics Anonymous.

Feelings of connection arose from participants following their spiritual routine and utilizing the coping resources from their Narcotics Anonymous community. Connection to self, community, and a higher power came from being a participating member in a community, self-exploration and reflection, reading affirming literature, and having a therapeutic relationship with a sponsor.

During the interview process, participants were asked to rate their level of spirituality. Participant responses ranged from 0-10 with the average response being 7.26. Participants who rated themselves lower on the scale were still able to accumulate clean time and benefit from the components of spirituality.

In conclusion, spirituality and addiction are incompatible. Addiction is compulsive- leading to negative consequences and harm. Spirituality led participants to want to avoid causing harm, give back, help others, and overall elicits feelings of positivity and connection. The cognitive-behaviorism orientation explains spirituality as a function of beliefs, values, behaviors, and experiences (Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham, 1988). By engaging with the core elements of connection, spiritual routines, and coping mechanisms within Narcotics Anonymous, participants underwent a positive transformation in their thoughts, feelings, perspectives, values, behaviors, and overall life experiences. Spirituality was both a byproduct of the Narcotics Anonymous program and infused into the essence of the program's keystones.

#### Implication of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice

This research has the potential to be adapted by micro social workers when designing group therapy curriculum. This research may also add to the knowledge base of the social work profession. Social workers often work with people struggling with addiction. This research may be applicable to all kinds of addiction, not just alcohol and drugs.

At the macro level, this research has the potential to create awareness for policymakers. Addiction is still a stigmatized disorder in many places.

## Summary

This chapter included data evaluation including data analysis, data interpretation, and the implication for social work. Data analysis was performed using the bottom-up approach to coding beginning with open coding and then axial coding. From there a theory was proposed about the relationship between addiction and spirituality.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

This chapter includes the termination process, communication of findings to study site and study participants, ongoing relationship with study participants, and the dissemination plan. Participants were made aware of how they can access the research findings in the debriefing statement. There will be no ongoing contact with researcher participants because no further contact is necessary. It may be beneficial however to remind participants of how to access results.

#### Termination of Study

This research achieved a beginning understanding of the relationship between spirituality and recovery from addiction. Specifically, spirituality that is sustained by the Narcotics Anonymous 12-step program. More research that includes a greater number of marginalized identities would be beneficial. Research focused on how identity affects one's experience in the Narcotics Anonymous program may be beneficial. For example, LGBTQ+, non-Christian,

and people of color may experience the Narcotics Anonymous program differently because of their identity.

#### Communication of Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

Participants were informed that they could obtain a copy of this study at <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu>. This research will be disseminated to the social work community through a poster presentation at California State University, San Bernardino.

#### Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

This researcher will have no ongoing contact with the study participants at this time. Ongoing contact is not necessary since the research has concluded and participants have undergone the termination process. The participants could sent an email reminder that they can access the final research results through email at the university scholar works website: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu> or request the executive summary by contacting TMorris@csusb.edu.

#### Dissemination Plan

The target audience for dissemination is anyone involved with people in recovery from addiction including the Narcotics Anonymous World Service

Committee, social work journals, governing bodies of the community, local social work organizations, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers. The results of this study could be disseminated to the social work community by giving presentations at relevant staff meetings and submitting findings to newsletters that are sent out to social workers in the related fields.

The study will be published at the university scholar works website: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu> . It will also be disseminated at the School of Social Work Research Symposium at the end of the academic year. An executive summary can be emailed to participants or participants can contact TMorris@csusb.edu.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Developed by Elizabeth Romberger

### Engagement Questions

1. What gender do you identify as?
2. What is your age?
3. What race/ethnicity best describes you?
4. How long have you been attending NA meetings?
5. Presently, how long do you have clean from drugs/alcohol?
6. How many NA meetings do you attend monthly?

### Topic Questions

7. How do you define spirituality?
8. Would you say that you are spiritual?
9. Please rate your spirituality on a scale of 0 to 10. 0 being not spiritual at all and 10 being very spiritual.
10. How does attending NA meetings effect your spirituality?
11. How does sharing at NA meetings effect your spirituality?
12. How does NA sponsorship effect your spirituality?
13. How does being of service in NA effect your spirituality?
14. How has doing the NA steps effected your spirituality?
15. How has the NA literature effected your spirituality?
16. How does being a part of a fellowship/ spending time with other NA members effect your spirituality?
17. When you feel the desire to use drugs/alcohol how does your spirituality effect your ability to stay clean?
18. Have you relapsed since joining NA? If yes, can you describe your spiritual condition prior to relapsing?
19. Tell me about your experience developing spirituality in NA.
20. Has spirituality effected your beliefs about yourself or your perspective on life?

### Termination Questions

21. Are there any questions or concerns regarding this topic that I have overlooked or that you want to add?
22. Is there anyone who you think would have a different perspective on spirituality that may want to participate in this research?

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## **Recovery and Spirituality INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the association between spirituality and recovery. This study is being conducted by Elizabeth Romberger under the supervision of *Teresa Morris, Ph.D., M.S.W., B.Sc., Professor Emerita, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino*) This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research is to collect information on the association between spirituality and recovery (aka abstinence from mind- and mood-altering drugs). Spirituality and higher power are mentioned in 7 out of 12 of the Narcotics Anonymous Steps. Spirituality is considered an indispensable component of the program. Members can choose their own higher power- from atheism to conventional religion. Exploring the correlation between spirituality and abstinence may provide insight for recovery from addiction.

**DESCRIPTION:** You can choose to provide responses to the interview questions. You may choose to skip questions. You can stop the survey at any time. Your responses will be kept confidential, coded into a database, and analyzed to identify commonalities with other respondents. A conclusion will then be synthesized from all participant responses.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** To ensure confidentiality of your responses, you will be assigned a pseudonym on the Zoom platform. You will not be asked to identify yourself by name, birth date, or address. Additionally, please keep other people's identity anonymous in your responses. Per Institutional Review Board policy, data collected will be kept on a password protected computer and stored securely at all times for a period of 3 years.

**DURATION:** 10-45 minutes depending on the length of responses.

**RISKS:** There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in the research.

**BENEFITS:** Your contributions will help to explore the relationship between spirituality and recovery (and abstinence from mood- and mind-altering drugs).

**VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH:** This research will include the collection of audio and video files.

I understand this research will be Video Recorded. Initials\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that this research will be audio recorded. Initials\_\_\_\_\_

**CONTACT:** Phone (909) 537 5561 / [TMorris@csusb.edu](mailto:TMorris@csusb.edu)

**RESULTS:** Interested parties can research the results in the CSUSB thesis database.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:**

I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

## IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 4-17-2024

IRB #: IRB-FY2023-280

Title: Spirituality and Recovery from Addiction: Experiences Of Narcotics Anonymous Members

Creation Date: 2-25-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Teresa Morris

Review Board: Main IRB Designated Reviewers for School of Social Work

Sponsor:

### Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	<b>Exempt</b>
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### Key Study Contacts

Member	Teresa Morris	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	TMorris@csusb.edu
Member	Teresa Morris	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	TMorris@csusb.edu
Member	Elizabeth Romberger	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	elizabeth.romberger2082@coyote.csu

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