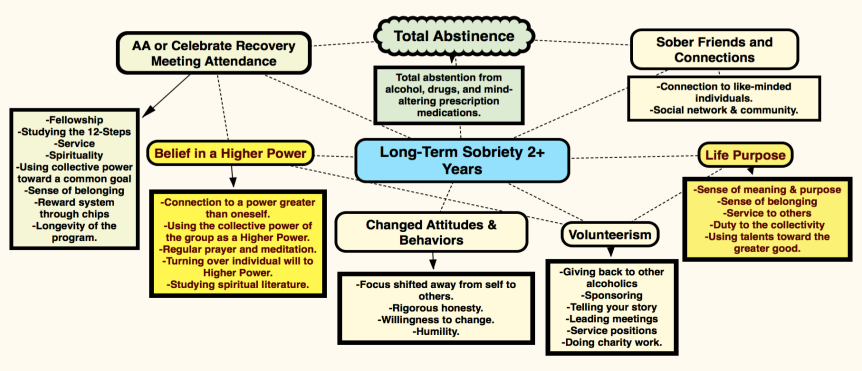
The Role of Spirituality in Long-Term Sobriety: The Power of the Collective & Life Purpose

Michelle S. Fondin, author and Ayurvedic practitioner

Abstract

Statement of the problem: Long-term sobriety from alcohol addiction is a difficult goal to obtain. According to the National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, only 14.6 percent of people with alcohol abuse and dependence ever receive treatment. Of those 14.6 percent only a small percentage make it beyond the 90-day mark of total abstinence. If long-term sobriety is evasive to most, what makes some people successful? Researchers have studied people in recovery for 150 years and lack conclusive evidence on what makes a person get and stay sober. While statistics show that a majority of attendees in 12-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), have a drop out rate of 95% in the first year of sobriety, success is achieved for the other 5%. Alcoholics Anonymous, a spiritually-based program, with over two million members, has several draws for a longitudinal study on long-term sobriety; the longevity of the program itself, the global access to everyone regardless of income level, and members in long-term sobriety.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: I attended over one hundred hours of AA meetings and interviewed those who had between two and 36 years of sobriety. I interviewed a control group of ten recovering alcoholics with at least two years of continual sobriety. The criteria for the intensive interviews were three-fold. The alcoholics in the control group had to have alcohol as their primary drug of choice. They had to be attending at least one 12-step meeting per week and they had to have had continual, uninterrupted sobriety for at least two years. In addition, those selected needed to be alcoholics (alcohol dependent) and not simply heavy drinkers. And they had to be in active recovery rather than being “dry drunks”.



Findings: The infographic above shows the findings of alcoholics in continual long-term sobriety for more than two years. The formula for long-term recovery, according to the control group, is largely dependent on several actions leading to a spiritual path and way of living. While each of these factors contributed to sustained sobriety not everyone participated in every single category, all the time, with the exception of one category. One hundred percent of the control group stated that their long-term sobriety was a direct result of their relationship with a Higher Power.

Conclusions & Significance: Not a single person in the control group was pre-selected based on any question regarding religious or spiritual beliefs. The criteria for selection was uniquely based on abstinence, attendance in a 12-step group, and alcohol as the primary drug of choice. The interviews were geared toward determining the factors for sustained sobriety. Living a spiritual life including belief in a Higher Power, prayer, meditation, and service to others as well as connection to a spiritually-based group appear to be a significant formula for long-term sobriety.

Recent Publications:

1. White, W. & Laudet, A. (2006). Spirituality, science and addiction counseling. Counselor Magazine, 7(1), 56-59.
2. Laudel, Alexandre B., Savage, Robert and Mahmood, Daneyal. (2007) Pathways to Long-Term Recovery: A Preliminary Investigation. Journal of Psychoactive Drugs.
3. Bliss, Donna Leigh. (2007) Empirical Research on Spirituality and Alcoholism: A Review of the Literature. Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions. Vol. 7(4).
4. Lilianfeld, Scott O., Arkowitz, Hal. (2011) Does Alcoholics Anonymous Work? Scientific American.
5. White, William L. M.A. (2012) Recovery/Remission from Substance Use Disorders: An Analysis of Reported Outcomes in 415 Scientific Reports, 1868-2011.



Biography

Michelle S. Fondin is the author of *Help! I Think My Loved One Is an Alcoholic: A Survival Guide for Lovers, Family, & Friends (2016), The Wheel of Healing with Ayurveda: An Easy Guide to a Healthy Lifestyle (New World Library, 2015),* and upcoming books *7 Days to Chakra Healing* and *Enlightened Medicine.* Michelle is a writer for Deepak Chopra’s website, Chopra Lifestyle and is an Ayurvedic Practitioner, meditation, and yoga teacher.

Email: mfondin@me.com Phone: 571-265-4559