

The path to recovery is determined by the person in recovery.

Session 19

Spirituality

Provides an overview of spirituality and how it is often used in recovery organizations.

The goal of this session is to provide an overview of the use of spirituality in the field of treatment and recovery support efforts. This session will also provide peer specialists the forum to better understand and strengthen the use of spirituality and faith based recovery support services in their daily practices. In this session you will review the following:

- Faith Based Foundational Input to Recovery Movement
- Review National Guiding Principles for Recovery Oriented Systems of Care
- Engage in discussion on Spirituality and Recovery
- Define differences between Religion and Spirituality
- Process working definition for Spirituality
- Review National Data on Spirituality in Recovery

It's important to note that peer specialists are not required to believe in or participate in faith-based recovery practice. Understanding spirituality and its role in recovery for many peers and its use in many organizations can help peer specialists provide support to peers.

Discussion Question: What is an estimate of the percentage of peers you may work with that have shared that they personally attribute their recovery to a Higher Power/Spirituality? Share your answer with the group if you wish.

What is one thing you hope to get out of this session?

Review: The guiding principles and definition of recovery

- Many pathways to recovery
- Recovery is Self-Directed and empowering
- Personal recognition of a need for change
- Recovery is Holistic
- Recovery has cultural dimensions
- Recovery exists on a continuum of improved health and wellness
- Recovery is supported by peers and allies
- Recovery emerges from hope and gratitude
- Recovery involves a process of healing and self-redefinition
- Recovery involves addressing discrimination and transcending shame and stigma.
- Recovery involves (re)joining and re(building) a life in the community
- Recovery is a reality, it can and will happen.

U. S. Dept. of Health and Human Services SAMHSA/CSAT (Guiding Principles and Elements of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care) www.samhsa.gov.

Recovery: A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

Spirituality: the quality or supernatural influence of any activity which drives the human being forward towards some form of development – physical, emotional, institutional, social – in advance of his present state. For purposes of this session, supernatural is defined as that which cannot be explained by science or natural law.

Religion: refers to a belief system to which an individual adheres. Religion involves particular rituals and practices — the externals of our belief system. Many people find spirituality through religion; however, some people find spirituality through communing with nature, music, the arts, quest for scientific truth, or a set of values and principles.

-Joint Commission: *The Source*, February 2005

“Many individuals in recovery cite strength acquired from religion and spirituality as main factors in contributing to their long-term recovery as a source of personal strength, and as a self-protection mechanism.” – SAMHSA National Summit, August 2009

Not everyone is religious, nor is religion a requirement for spirituality.

Within a spiritual assessment, it is important to determine if a peer has a religious affiliation; however, that is not the sole purpose of assessing spirituality.

A person may not practice religion, but may still have spiritual needs that should be met. Any assessment process should identify those spiritual needs, in whatever form they take.

-Joint Commission: *The Source*, February 2005

Discussion Question: What spiritual activities, if any, have helped you in your recovery?

Spiritual Practices are Diverse. Here is a small sample of spiritual practices identified by peers in recovery.

- chanting
- creating shrines
- dancing
- drawing mandalas
- drumming
- journal writing
- making crafts
- meditation
- mindfulness training
- participating in 12-step groups
- participating in bible study groups
- participating in prayer vigils
- participating in religious services
- participating in rituals and ceremonies
- participating in spirituality support groups
- participating in a sweat lodge (temazcal)
- participating in Talking Circles
- praying
- Qigong
- reading sacred texts or spiritual self-help books
- receiving healing advice from a medicine man (curandero) or medicine woman (curandera)
- singing
- spending time in nature
- t'ai chi
- volunteering to serve the community
- yoga

Impact of spirituality on recovery

In the first analysis of its kind, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University released a 52-page two-year study, *So Help Me God: Substance Abuse, Religion and Spirituality. (2001)* This study concluded that God, religion, and spirituality are key factors for many in prevention and treatment of substance abuse and in continuing recovery. Key findings of this study are:

- Adults without emphasis on spiritual belief are:
 - 1 ½ time more likely to use alcohol and cigarettes
 - 3 times more likely to binge drink
 - 4 times more likely to use illicit drugs other than marijuana
 - 6 times more likely to use marijuana

Other research suggests that spiritual beliefs can serve as a protective factor against substance use, and against relapse. It's important to understand that these statistics may be present for a variety of reasons and do not mean that having religious or spiritual beliefs are necessary for successful recovery. However, for those in recovery who have spiritual beliefs, it is important that they be able to include those beliefs as part of their recovery.

Missouri's Focus on faith-based recovery: In Missouri, people in faith based recovery programs have high rates of abstinence and staying free of legal problems.

	2015	2004-2014
Alcohol and Drug Free	88%	83%
No New Legal Problems	97%	95%

Talking to peers about their spirituality

Spirituality will play different roles in recovery for each individual peer. Peer specialists should be ready to engage in conversations as necessary with peers about their spirituality and how they see their spirituality playing a part in their recovery. Outlined below is an assessment called the FICA, which can help peer specialists and other health professionals ask non-judgmental and open-ended questions about spirituality.

F – Faith and Belief

- Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?
- Do you have spiritual beliefs that help you cope with stress?
- What gives your life meaning

I – Importance & Influence

- What importance does your faith or belief have in your life?
- How do they influence you in how you take care of yourself?
- What aspects of your faith or beliefs are helpful or not so helpful to you?

C – Community

- Are you part of a spiritual or religious community?
- Is this of support to you and how?
- Is there a group of people you really love or who are important to you?

A – Address in Care

- How do you need me to help you address these issues in your recovery?

Being present for conversations about spirituality

For some peer specialists, conversations with peers about spirituality can be uncomfortable. Since conversations about spirituality could be a common occurrence in the work of a peer specialist, it is important that peer specialists work to improve their comfort with talking to peers about spirituality and helping peers develop their recovery goals that include their spiritual beliefs and practices. Outlined below are some recommendations on effectively working with peers when it comes to spirituality.

- **Begin by working on yourself.** What are your personal strengths and weaknesses related to spirituality and religion? What wounds have you suffered? What healing still needs to occur? What are your personal biases and triggers?
- **Use the spiritual assessment questions for personal reflection.** Explore your own spiritual journey through co-counseling, journal writing, and sessions with spiritual mentors and/or therapists as needed.
- **Get clear on how far you are willing and able to go** in discussing spirituality and religion with the people you serve. What would lead you to refer the individual/family to someone with more specialized knowledge, or to seek consultation?
- Approach spiritual conversations with an eye toward **finding strengths** and an attitude of **curiosity**.

Group Activity: Your instructor will divide your group into pairs. You and your partner will take turns role-playing the part of a peer specialist. Using the open-ended questions from the FICA on page 7, ask your partner about the role they want their spirituality to play in their recovery. Come up with one way you as a peer specialist could support the peer in how they want to use (or not use) their spirituality in their recovery.

Notes:

Review Questions – Session 16 – Spirituality:

- 1. How many pathways to recovery are there?**
- 2. True or False: Religious and spiritual beliefs are always the same thing.**
- 3. Peer specialists are expected to work towards being comfortable talking about _____ with peers.**
- 4. What does FICA stand for?**