

Need for Cognition: An Important, Neglected Personality Variable in the Development of Spirituality Within the Context of Twelve Step Recovery from Addictive Disorders

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Abstract : The Twelve Step approach to recovery from substance use and addictive disorders is considered an evidence-based model that assists many who recover from a chronic, progressive, fatal disease. Two key processes that contribute to the success of obtaining recovery from substance use disorders (SUD) are meeting engagement and the development of spiritual beliefs. Beyond establishing that there is a positive relationship between the development of spiritual beliefs in recovery from SUD's, there has been a paucity of research exploring individual differences among individuals in this development of spiritual beliefs. One such personality variable that deserves exploration is that of the need for cognition. The need for cognition is a personality variable that explains the cognitive style of individuals. Individuals with a high need for cognition enjoy examining the complexities of a situation before coming to a conclusion. While individuals with a low need for cognition do not value or spend time cognitively dissecting a situation or decision. It is important to point out that a high need for cognition does not necessarily imply a high level of cognitive ability. Indeed, one could make the argument that a low need for cognition individual is not "wasting" cognitive energy in perseverating the multitude of aspects of a particular decision. This paper will present two case studies demonstrating the development of spiritual beliefs that enabled long-term recovery from SUD. The first case study presents an agnostic individual with a low need for cognition cognitive style in his development of spirituality in support of his recovery from alcoholism within the context of Alcoholics Anonymous. The second case study represents an adamant atheist with a high need for cognition cognitive style. This second individual is an intravenous cocaine addict and alcoholic who recovers through the development of spirituality within the contexts of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The two case studies will be contrasted with each other, noting how the individuals' cognitive style mediated the development of spirituality that supported their long-term recovery from alcoholism and addiction.

Keywords : spirituality, twelve step recovery, need for cognition, individual differences in recovery from addictions

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