

Title: Timevarying predictors of helping in AA among individuals with alcohol use disorders: Findings from Project MATCH

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Summary:

Objective: Alcoholics Anonymous and 12-step facilitated treatments for alcohol use disorders encourage individuals in recovery to consider the needs of others and engage in service-oriented activities as a method to stay sober. Several investigations have also demonstrated the benefits of helping others to the helper in maintaining sobriety. The purpose of this study is to examine prospectively the demographic, clinical, and psychological characteristics that predict helping others in the context of AA involvement following treatment.

Method: Data were derived from Project Match, a longitudinal investigation of the efficacies of three different behavioral interventions for individuals with alcohol use disorders. Proportional hazards regressions were conducted to determine associations between static and timevarying predictors in relation to the likelihood of starting to help others.

Results: Approximately 13% of individuals in this large epidemiologic sample began to help others over the course of one year following treatment. Results indicated the only baseline predictors of engagement in service were higher levels of age and clinical severity, effects that were explained by varying levels of AA affiliation. Timevarying predictors of service included higher sober time, self-efficacy, and levels of religious beliefs, which remained significant after controlling for measures of AA affiliation. Neither demographics nor treatment assignment were predictive of engagement in service.

Discussion: These findings extend previous work regarding helping behaviors in individuals in recovery from substance use disorders. Findings suggest that helping does not depend on demographics or treatment modality, but that individuals who have accumulated some sober time and who have experienced growth in both confidence to resist drinking and spirituality are most likely to help in AA. Results highlight the intertwined roles of spirituality and helping in recovery.

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