

EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY & STRESS REDUCTION NEEDS AMONG ADULTS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the spiritual and/or religious practices before and after diagnosis among persons living with HIV/AIDS?
- What intervention components would be useful to reduce stress?
- Would persons living with HIV/AIDS participate in a spiritual-based intervention to reduce stress?

METHODS

- Summer 2003
- Conducted qualitative study: focus groups
- 5 AIDS Service Organizations participated
 - Adults living with HIV/AIDS
 - Rural & urban Alabama counties
- Responses were recorded
- Monetary incentives distributed

DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS

- 31 participants
- Age ranges: 31 – 54 years
- 74% African American
- 39% women
- 26% married
- 55% > 12 years of education
- 23% employed
- Average years of diagnosis: 9.5 years

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE RESULTS

- Before HIV/AIDS Diagnosis: Religious
 - Most attended church regularly
 - Most reported routine religious practices
- After HIV/AIDS Diagnosis: Spiritual
 - Some continued attending church
 - Almost all reported having a strong, deeper relationship “with a higher power”
 - Most had not disclosed HIV status to spiritual leaders for fear of discrimination

STRESS INTERVENTION RESULTS

- Suggested Components
 1. Prayer
 2. Support Groups
 3. Peer helpers
 4. Self-actualization activities
 5. Personal Touch Programs
 - Hugs
 - Massage Therapy

SUMMARY

- Participant practices shifted from routine religious behaviors to strong spiritual beliefs after being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS
- Participants were comfortable discussing spiritual behaviors in community versus religious settings
- A spiritual-based program would be of interest and useful in reducing stress
 - Prayer was #1 suggestion for stress reduction

CONCLUSIONS

- Our study demonstrated that adults living with HIV/AIDS...
 - Believed spirituality is important
 - Had a strong spiritual foundation
 - Needed stress reduction techniques
 - Wanted low or no cost stress reduction methods
 - Confirmed that spiritual interventions are feasible