

# ALLIANCE NEWS



Alliance for Better Communities

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## THE GOD FACTOR: HOW IT AFFECTS SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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As human beings, we all tend to feel emptiness and loss if we lack something powerful and compelling to fill that void. We long for a connection to something

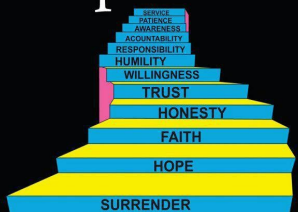


greater than ourselves that we perceive as bringing certainty in a world beyond our control. Modern culture, particularly social media, induces people to live as self-centered individuals, disconnected from others. Desperate to feel a part of something greater than themselves, many turn to drug use as an perceived antidote to feelings of alienation and loneliness.

**Vision:** To have a community that is fully committed to the health and safety of its residents.

**Mission:** To reduce underage drinking and substance abuse and expeditiously address any emerging threats.

### 12 Steps



Nonetheless, many substance abusers realize, as their addiction escalates, that instead of feeling complete and more connected, drug use makes them feel increasingly empty and depressed. They often turn to religion for relief, because they believe everything else has failed them.

The field which seeks to understand the relationship between brain science and religion is known as neurotheology. Studies have shown an improvement in depression and anxiety in people who view themselves as “religious”. On the other hand, people who struggle to reconcile religious beliefs with adverse events in their



I think that sex, drugs, art and religion very much overlap with one another and sometimes one becomes another.

— Brian One —

AZ QUOTES

lives have been found to suffer increased anxiety and depression.<sup>1</sup>

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIDA, conducted a study in 2005 to determine how heroin and cocaine users viewed the relationship between spirituality and recovery, and to what extent they perceived or reconciled discrepancies between their beliefs and behavior.



The goal was to determine if elements of spirituality, even if not religious, could effectively be incorporated into treatment programs. The substance abusers participating in the study expressed a need for the integration of spirituality in some form to serve as an alternative to conventional religious services or 12-step programs. Those conducting the study concluded that further research and experimentation would be required to determine what types of spiritual intervention are most effective in mitigating the cravings and aberrant behaviors of substance abusers.<sup>2</sup>



A study of 2,947 people who undertook 12 months of treatment for substance abuse found that remission rates were highest among those with “high spirituality”, and relapse rates were highest for those determined to have “low spirituality”. The one exception to this finding was with crack cocaine users who reported that religion was

not important to them. They actually used less of the drug than those considered more spiritual. Remission was found to be tied most closely with regular attendance at religious services. The authors of the study concluded that social bonds were significantly increased for those who attended services weekly, and that these bonds accounted for the higher remission rates among this group.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, infamous religious cults, such as the People’s Temple led by Jim Jones have used drugs as a means of brainwashing and mind control. In 1978, Jones convinced 918 of his drug addled followers to commit suicide by ingesting cyanide.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, when not employed for nefarious purposes, religion and spirituality have proven integral to the process of breaking the cycle of substance abuse.



# OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY HIGHLIGHTS





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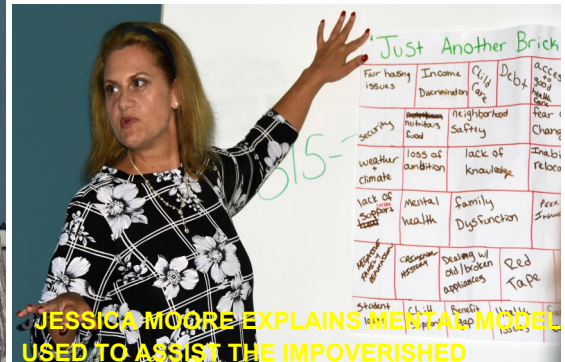
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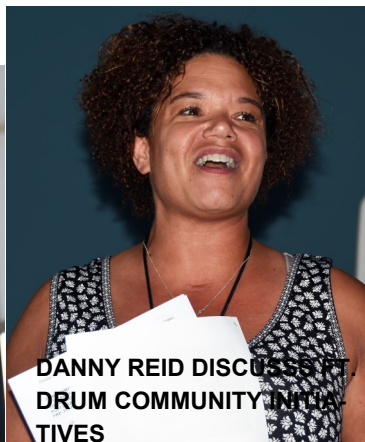
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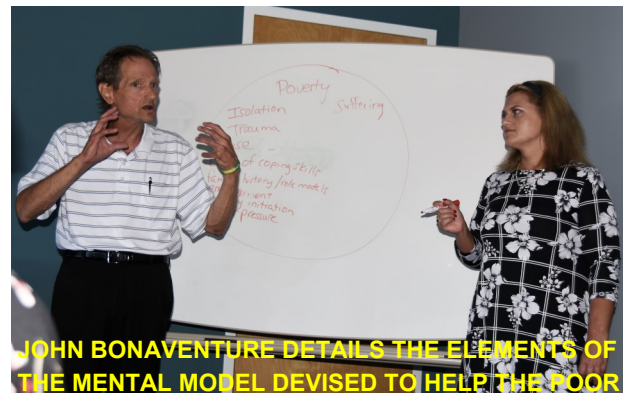
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