

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN ADDICTION WELLNESS

Overview

Community is a critical component to supporting the wellness journey and quality of life of a person struggling with alcohol and other drugs. Through the support, love and comfort of close relationships, people are better able to overcome the obstacles associated with addiction. At Face It TOGETHER (FIT), we measure members' relationships and community connectedness through social capital, along with personal and cultural, using the Recovery Capital Index (RCI). Improvement in social capital doesn't rely on the mere existence of relationships or on the density of connections, because some relationships can have a negative impact.¹ FIT members report social networks as one of their most critical areas of weakness when they first start with our peer coaches. The RCI is used to customize coaching support and to track progress in all areas, including our members' familial and social relationships.

Methodology

This analysis looked at change over time regarding three metrics on social supports: 1) I am satisfied; 2) I can count on; and 3) I want to share with. Of the members who met with a FIT peer coach between 1/1/16 and 6/5/19, 79 members with the disease of addiction expressed concerns with their social networks when they first started coaching. Baseline and follow-up responses were on an ordinal scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Results

After 30 days of engagement with a coach, our members with the disease report significant changes related to their social supports, one of six areas that make up social capital:

- 42.1% are more satisfied with their friends and/or social network. Male members are more likely (44.4%) to be satisfied than females (37.5%).
- 73.1% can count on their friends when things go wrong. Male members are more likely (78.5%) to see a positive change in this area than females (60%).
- 84.6% have friends they can share their joys and sorrows with. Female members are more likely to report a positive change (100%) than males (69.2%).

Members who stay engaged with a peer coach longer than 30 days continue to demonstrate positive change in some of these social network areas. After 60 days, 54.5% are more satisfied with their networks. After 90 days, this increases to 57.9%. Female members are more likely to be satisfied with their social networks after extending their engagement with a coach for more than 30 days: 60 days (63.6%), 90 days (70.0%).

Figure 1: Member change at 30 days of engagement. Social support metrics by gender.

