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Shame, guilt, and depression in men and women in recovery from addiction

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Abstract

Men and women in recovery from addiction were compared on levels of depression and self-conscious affect including proneness to shame, guilt, externalization, detachment, and pride. The sample consisted of 130 subjects (88 men and 42 women; mean age 33.04), 90 of whom were active participants in a 12-step recovery program, and 40 of whom were in a residential treatment community. Subjects completed The Beck Depression Inventory and The Test of Self-Conscious Affect. Significant differences between the sexes were found for proneness to shame, detachment, and depression. Women were significantly higher on shame and depression; men were significantly higher on detachment. The subjects were compared to subjects who were not chemically dependent. It was found that these recovering drug-addicted subjects scored significantly higher in proneness to shame and externalization and significantly lower on

proneness to guilt. Treatment implications of proneness to shame in the drug-addicted population, and particularly in women, are discussed. The use of confrontational drug treatment strategies may be contraindicated.



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Keywords

addiction; depression; guilt; recovery; shame

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