

P01-123 - I NEED TO LIVE A LIFE THAT I CAN ACCOMPLISH

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Introduction: Individuals' self-image and how they view their personal qualities can be of great importance for how and where they seek help for their health problems. Few have studied in-depth the connection between self-image and the use of text-based Internet communication.

Objectives/aims: We examined how members of two Internet-based Alcoholic Anonymous groups explained their preferences for using Internet-based AA groups, either alone or in combination with face-to-face AA groups.

Methods: Data were obtained over the course of one year by means of participant observation and in-depth e-mail interviews with 11 members from different countries. The first author participated in two online AA groups by posting and responding to the topics in the e-mail meeting, bulletin board and discussion forum. The 11 e-mail interviews were semi-structured and asynchronous, that is, they were not conducted in real-time but over a period ranging from five weeks to three months.

Results: Online AA members explain their preferences for using Internet-based self-help groups by referring to their self-image and personal qualities as well as their self-diagnoses (e.g. social anxiety, aspergers syndrom, compulsiveness and impulsiveness). Some use a combination of online and face-to-face groups which helps them to overcome their social phobia.

Conclusion: Internet self-help groups seem to represent an important alternative for people who experience difficulties with face-to-face communication. Participation in online AA groups is easier to combine with everyday life. The Internet groups provide a more anonymous context for people who want to be heard, but not necessarily seen.