

The Barriers Questionnaire

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The Barriers Questionnaire was developed to ask people about the reasons why they had not previously sought treatment. A subset of the 50 items in the current version was included in early research with the Drinker's Checkup:

Miller, W. R., Sovereign, R. G., & Krege, B. (1988). Motivational interviewing with problem drinkers: II. The Drinker's Check-up as a preventive intervention. *Behavioural Psychotherapy*, *16*, 251-268.

The most frequently endorsed barriers to treatment seeking among problem drinkers in this study were: "I thought I could handle it on my own" (69%), "I didn't believe my drinking was causing any problems" (67%), "I didn't think my problem was that serious" (62%), and "I didn't think of myself as an alcoholic" (59%).

The range of items was expanded for use in a randomized trial of unilateral family intervention to engage drug users who have previously refused to seek treatment.

Meyers, R. J., Miller, W. R., Smith, J. E., & Tonigan, J. S. (2002). A randomized trial of two methods for engaging treatment-refusing drug users through concerned significant others. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *70*, 1182-1185.

In this study, 53 drug users were engaged in treatment through the efforts of their concerned significant others, and completed the Barriers Questionnaire to indicate why they had not previously sought treatment. Their responses are summarized in the tables below, which indicate the percentage of clients who rated the item as an "Important" or "Very Important" reason (responses of 2 or 3).

Consistent with the findings of Miller, Sovereign and Krege (1988) with problem drinkers, the barriers endorsed by more than half of drug users had to do primarily with motivation and self-perception of drug use:

I liked getting high.
I thought I could handle it on my own.
I didn't want to be told to stop using drugs.
Using drugs was a way of life for me.
I didn't think of myself as an addict.
I liked drugs and didn't want to give them up.

The Barriers Questionnaire has not been scaled, and interpretation is therefore at the item level. There is an alcohol-focused and a drug-focused version of the instrument, both of which are in the public domain and may be used without permission.

Percentage of Respondents Indicating “Important” or “Very Important” by Item

| | |
|------|--|
| 35.3 | 1. My drug use seemed fairly normal to me. |
| 37.2 | 2. No one told me I had a problem with drugs or encouraged me to seek help. |
| 39.2 | 3. I didn't think I had a serious problem with drugs. |
| 64.7 | 4. I thought I could handle it on my own. |
| 56.9 | 5. I didn't think of myself as an addict. |
| 39.2 | 6. I was concerned about what other people would think of me if I went for help. |
| 43.2 | 7. I was too embarrassed or ashamed. |
| 13.8 | 8. I thought that my family would be embarrassed. |
| 29.4 | 9. I thought my job might be in danger if I went for help. |
| 19.6 | 10. I didn't know where to go for help. |
| 60.0 | 11. I didn't want to be told to stop using drugs. |
| 35.3 | 12. I didn't think it would do any good. |
| 49.0 | 13. I couldn't afford to pay for help. |
| 11.8 | 14. I had no transportation, no way to get there. |
| 5.9 | 15. I needed someone to take care of my children while I was getting help. |
| 17.7 | 16. I didn't have the time. |
| 25.5 | 17. I was afraid I'd be put into a hospital. |
| 43.2 | 18. I didn't think I needed any help. |
| 5.9 | 19. Someone important to me disapproved of my getting help. |
| 23.5 | 20. I hate being asked personal questions. |
| 27.5 | 21. I was afraid that I would fail, or that it wouldn't help me. |
| 9.8 | 22. I thought I was too young to be getting help or treatment. |
| 29.4 | 23. I didn't want somebody telling me what to do with my life. |
| 21.6 | 24. I've had a bad experience with treatment before. |
| 7.9 | 25. Somebody I know had a bad experience with treatment. |
| 19.6 | 26. I was afraid of what might happen in treatment. |
| 35.3 | 27. My drug use wasn't causing any problems as far as I could see. |
| 25.5 | 28. I don't like to talk in groups. |
| 54.9 | 29. I liked drugs and didn't want to give them up. |
| 13.8 | 30. I thought I'd lose my friends if I went for help. |
| 33.3 | 31. I was worried about the bad feelings of going through withdrawal from drugs. |
| 37.2 | 32. I didn't know how I could live without drugs. |
| 11.8 | 33. I thought that going for help might get me in legal trouble. |
| 31.4 | 34. It just seemed like too much trouble to go for help. |
| 78.5 | 35. I liked getting high. |
| 15.7 | 36. I couldn't get time off from work. |
| 58.8 | 37. Using drugs was a way of life for me. |
| 31.4 | 38. Drugs really had not caused much trouble or problems for me. |
| 9.8 | 39. I was afraid of the people I might see. |
| 49.0 | 40. Drugs were not my main problem. |
| 17.7 | 41. I didn't feel safe going where I'd have to go for help. |
| 31.4 | 42. There seemed to be more good than bad about drugs for me. |
| 5.9 | 43. Other people discouraged me from seeking help. |
| 31.4 | 44. I don't like to talk about my personal life with other people. |
| 5.9 | 45. I thought people would make fun of me. |
| 33.3 | 46. I didn't know what would happen to me. |
| 43.2 | 47. I didn't want to go to AA, CA, NA, or other twelve-step groups. |
| 31.4 | 48. I thought that "help" was for people who had worse problems than mine. |
| 39.2 | 49. I had no insurance to pay for it. |
| 31.4 | 50. I thought my troubles would just go away without any help. |

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| 39.2 | 49. I had no insurance to pay for it. |
| 37.2 | 2. No one told me I had a problem with drugs or encouraged me to seek help. |
| 37.2 | 32. I didn't know how I could live without drugs. |
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