

*Psycho-Spiritual Transformation in Teens Who Volunteer: The Young Hero's Journey*

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Abstract

The traditional literature on volunteer service rarely touches its capacity for personal growth and spiritual awakening or the processes involved in this growth. This study is an in-depth phenomenological exploration and assessment of the relationship between volunteer service, psycho-spiritual transformation and the processes involved in that transformation. The participants consisted of a group of 15 teenagers (8 males and 7 females) ages 14-18, chaperoned by 4 adults, who volunteered to spend two weeks in Nicaragua building housing for in a remote village. Data analysis revealed that 14 of the 15 teens experienced significant spiritual transformation as judged by analysis of the teens' self assessments and by expert assessment (the 4 chaperons) of the teens' behavior and expression. Six conditions were identified that are considered important for meaningful, potentially transformative volunteer experiences.