

Life balance: theories and research from multiple perspectives

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The idea of living a balanced life that fosters health and well-being is fundamental to occupational therapy and represents an emerging sphere of practice and research for occupational therapy. Globally and across disciplines, scholars have been studying various aspects of lifestyles that contribute to health, well-being, and quality of life but there is no common understanding or definition of what that really means.

The objectives of this workshop are to summarize the most recent research addressing the topic of lifestyle patterns and health from multiple international perspectives, to describe theoretical models of life balance, identifying their conceptual commonalities and divergences, and to compare methods used in recent research for understanding aspects of lifestyle balance.

The panel of international researchers from Canada, Australia, Sweden and the United States will present 5 theoretical approaches for conceptualizing a balanced life and 5 empirical studies using different methods for measuring lifestyle patterns. This is intended to stimulate interest and foster opportunities for networking and collaboration of future research related to health and well-being and to advance occupational therapy practice into the wellness arena.

The life balance perspectives and theories presented will include: a model of lifestyle balance, an occupational integrity model, an experiential life balance model, a class critique on life balance, and a life coaching perspective.

The life balance research presented will include: a study comparing life balance perspectives of mothers with and without inflammatory arthritis, 2 studies that explore life balance using the unique methodologies of structural and experiential dimensions, and the Canadian Time Use Survey, and 2 qualitative studies using in depth interviews of South African grandmothers, and life stories of people with rheumatoid arthritis related to their conceptions of a balanced life.

The theories and research presented at this workshop are foundational to the literature on wellness, lifestyle balance, and time use measurement, and will enhance understanding about how to promote optimal lives for ourselves and our clients. This presentation highlights novel, creative, and boundary-pushing developments in the field that will shape the future of OT practice.