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Meaningfulness in work among people with psychiatric disability.

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The aim of the present study was to investigate how people with psychiatric disability, with various types of work and employment conditions experience and describe the meaningfulness of work. The study had a qualitative approach and twelve informants living in the community were purposefully selected and interviewed for about an hour according to overarching themes related to work. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were analysed with qualitative content analysis and all of the authors were involved in the analysis process within different stages. The findings resulted in four main themes: 1) work per se has certain characteristics 2) participation in different contexts gives a feeling of normality, acceptance, belonging and fulfilment of norms and values 3) work brings structure, energy and a balanced daily life and 4) work increases well-being and strengthens one's identity. A tentative model is described concerning perceived meaningfulness in work among individuals with persistent mental illness, in which the first three aspects of meaning are a prerequisite for meaning in terms of increased well-being and strengthened identity. Furthermore, it seems important that work has to bring the just right challenge for the individual in order for him or her to perceive the identified aspects of meaningfulness. In conclusion, the present study highlights the importance and meaning of work among people living with psychiatric disability. Work is an occupation that is highly valued and meaningful, enhancing social participation and inclusion in the society and helps the individual to structure his/ her everyday life in a balanced manner.