

0267

Being, belonging and becoming: A client-centred conceptual framework for developing occupation-based services.

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Introduction: Occupational therapy conceptual frameworks have historically been profession-driven and focused on self-care, productivity and leisure occupations. For a client-centred profession, it seems rather paradoxical that few models of practice have been based upon client experiences and perspectives. In a study exploring participation in an occupation-based program, mental health users identified being, belonging and becoming as important program needs for addressing their occupational goals. This triad has been subsequently used as a framework to develop, guide and evaluate occupation-based programs. Clients identified how the creation of an affirming, inclusive social environment, the choice to self-determine one's occupational direction and the opportunity to develop competency through occupational engagement helped to foster their civil participation and inclusion in community.

Objectives: This presentation will examine the conceptual stability and utility of a framework developed collaboratively with mental health consumers and used to develop a community-based occupational program. The characteristics of staff, place and programs identified to foster participants' occupational needs and goals will be shared.

Methods: Sixty-eight surveys were completed by active members of an occupation-based, consumer-run mental health program as a part of an annual evaluation. SPSS software was used to analyse the numerical data and textual comments were imported into NVIVO8 software and analyzed thematically.

Results: Despite a variety of economic, political and health care funding challenges faced by the program, the evaluation highlighted the conceptual stability of being, belonging and becoming in addressing members occupational needs and the utility of the framework in helping to create an environment in which consumers meaningfully participate in their community. Being, belonging and becoming is a useful framework to develop community, occupation-based services.

Conclusion: Occupational therapists are encouraged to consider being, belonging and becoming as a useful conceptual framework to enable clients' occupational participation as well as a vehicle to create occupational opportunity in communities which marginalize and exclude mental health consumers.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: Client derived and evaluated frameworks have the potential to guide occupation-based services in meaningful ways. It is important for occupational therapists to consider whether current frameworks meet client or professional needs.