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Everyday life of CAPS users in Brazil

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In Brazil the Psychosocial Attention Center (CAPS) is a strategic mental health service to review patterns of care in psychiatric hospitals and build a network of care in the community. The aim of this study is to describe the everyday life of people who attend CAPS and identify some possibilities for social inclusion of these people.

As the philosophical basis for this research, Ágnes Heller's everyday theory was used. The population of this study was people experiencing mental health problems, users at CAPS in São Paulo. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 17 service users and 12 people indicated by them as salient in their network. The data was analyzed through the discourse analysis.

The research participants described that the mental illness had a negative effect on the service users' everyday lives; they associated the disease with loss of social roles, inactivity in the daily life, and the tendency to stop their occupations. As the illness settles, this means their everyday life becomes less interesting, empty, and idle. However, in contrast to the emptiness and idleness described by the service users, and the imbalance in their everyday activities following mental illness, the service users expressed that they are able to do things, and they maintain interest in occupations. In their view, occupations help them in getting better, make it possible to organize the day, feel fulfillment, build a social network and get the power over their own lives again.

As expressed by the people interviewed, the process of recovery is related to the occupations that the users do, and life changes when their everyday occupations change. They said that especially after started the treatment the range of daily occupations increased.

It is relevant that CAPS as well as occupational therapists address the service users' everyday life in the process of recovering. It is salient to know what mentally ill people do to help them get balance in their everyday life and engage in meaningful activities.