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Occupation and meaning: Narrative in everyday activities of women with chronic rheumatic conditions.

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This ethnographic study explored how processes of meaning take place in the everyday activities of four women with chronic rheumatic conditions. Using the French philosopher Ricoeur's theory of narrative in action, the results showed how processes of meaning were closely linked to action and how the participants enacted possible meaning-related stories in their everyday lives. When enacting meaning, the women showed ambiguity by linking together events in ways that varied according to the situation. Thus the enacted processes of meaning were not goal-directed or clear but rather complex processes embedded in the women's network of cultural activity. Sometimes they enacted meaning as part of a complete, coherent story; at other times meaning appeared as fragments with unclear connections. The results were relevant for occupational science and occupational therapy because the women's everyday activities functioned as interpretative spaces providing opportunities for 'trying out' significant issues of meaning, and thus worked as a way for the women to relate to and communicate with their social and material worlds.

Keywords: narrative, occupation, ordinariness, ethnography, chronic rheumatic conditions.