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A Model of Occupational Integrity: Another Perspective on Life Balance (Poster)

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Introduction:

An underlying premise of occupational science and occupational therapy is that humans do better with a balanced lifestyle. What life balance means, how to design it, and how to recognize it when one has it have not been defined.

Objectives:

This poster session illustrates and explains the Model of Occupational Integrity as a new way to approach the concept and enablement of life balance.

Description:

To date, the predominant approach to examining life balance in the occupational science and occupational therapy literature is allocation of time across occupations. The behavioural approach to understanding life balance is based on the assumption that there is a correct configuration of time, roles, activities, and projects that leads to balance and subsequently well-being. We suggest that the concept truly linking the configurations with well-being is not life balance, but rather the extent to which a person designs and lives in integrity with his or her personal values, strengths and attribution of meaning. We refer to this concept as occupational integrity. Living in occupational integrity is defined as integrating into one's occupational choices the values that matter most to the person.

Results/Discussion:

The model of occupational integrity shows how human beings interact with the environment through the medium of occupation/daily activity. The model postulates that a fundamental challenge facing all people is reconciling their own need for authenticity with the demands and expectations of their environment. The model identifies that fundamental to this process of reconciliation between the person and environment is personal values identification, clarification of personal meaning and purpose, and making choices.

Conclusion:

The model of occupational integrity expands the focus of therapy beyond "doing" to interventions at the level of the person and identity, including helping clients to identify their strengths, values and purpose, what is meaningful and satisfying for them and then designing and living their lives in congruence with that.

Contribution to Practice:

The model of occupational integrity offers valuable new dimensions and intervention possibilities for a profession that purports to enable clients to design and engage in meaningful, satisfying and balanced lifestyles.