

Being and becoming part of the 'action': Partnering with injured workers to promote social change

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Introduction: The year 2010 marks the anniversary of a five-year research partnership between an occupational therapist and the Canadian Injured Workers Alliance. The aim of this partnership was to generate evidence and share knowledge to support change in addressing the system barriers to return to functioning and work for persons with disabilities and work injuries

Objectives

In celebration of this partnership and our journey, this presentation shares first-person reflections of the first two authors and the first author's personal narrative on "being and becoming part of the action". This presentation underscores the importance of occupational therapists to engage in partnerships but more importantly to be open to be a part of and become a conduit of change.

Methods. A phenomenological perspective, using purposeful and thoughtful reflections on the values, essences, and resources in this partnership, revealed new understandings that supported my engagement and ongoing commitment to becoming part of the action to promote change. The challenges and successes in this partnership over five years will be shared with participants along with the reflections about this journey.

Results. Findings from the reflections and this narrative suggest that becoming part of social change requires: being uncomfortable with occupational injustices; experiencing and sharing discomforts along the way; a willingness to embrace the struggles and the successes; redefining and reframing the way and means to contribute; embracing a collective role; learning new skills; adopting new ways of doing; being in awe; and being patient, but not too patient.

Conclusion: Sharing reflections through this presentation are offered to motivate and mentor occupational therapists in moving toward action with the people we serve. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on the need for social change within their communities, consider ways to overcome challenges, and to begin with partnering as a means to becoming a collective part of social change.

Contribution to practice/ evidence base of occupational therapy: Occupational therapists, clinicians and researchers have much to offer the people and the communities in which we serve by working in partnership to eliminate injustices. Together, with our partners, we can promote occupational justice and participation.