

Perceived life balance among working people without recent long term sick leave

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Introduction Commonly, a balanced life is assumed to be related to health and wellbeing (1) and of interest within occupational therapy since Meyer 1922 (2). Despite this, 'balance' lacks an agreed upon definition (1). How people perceive balance has mostly been researched among persons with disorders. No study has been found about people's own perceptions of balance in the general population. *Objective* The aim was to explore perceptions of balance in the working population. Individual interviews were conducted with 12 women and 7 men, meeting the criteria working and no continuous sick leave exceeding 30 days within the last two years. They were recruited by convenience and theoretical sampling. The transcribed interviews were analyzed according to Grounded Theory (3) for a description grounded in data. *Results* The emerging core category was life balance in multiple time perspectives. Perceiving life balance in the short time perspective was described as "things running smoothly" while in the longer as "finding one's place". After analyzing categories for relationships four themes describing life balance appeared viz. life balance: is individually defined, relates to health and is promoted by safety, is affected by context and individual strategies and finally includes four interrelated aspects (balance in amount of and variation between activities, balance in physical and mental self, balance between self and others and, time balance). Examples of strategies for promoting life balance were: flexibility, control, sensitivity toward oneself, responsibility, prioritization, presence, resistance against disturbances and healthy habits. *Conclusions* The exploration gained more knowledge about the content and complexity of life balance and the relationship between life balance and health was supported. Furthermore, understanding of what working people describe as needed for life balance has practical implications for occupational therapists e.g. the need for variation between activities.

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