

Life balance in adolescents

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Introduction: Occupational balance or the broader concept lifestyle balance has extensively been studied by occupational scientists in different clinical samples like people with mental illness and women with stress-related disorders. The knowledge about life balance and occupational balance in children and adolescents is however scarce.

Objectives: 1) To explore how life balance is perceived by adolescent. 2) To explore therapeutic application of the Life Balance Inventory (LBI) for goal setting in a psychiatric setting.

Method: 1) Concept analysis using a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, individual in-depth interviews of adolescents aged 12 to 18 years with a healthy development. 2) Action research in a psychiatric setting, where therapists and clients express their experiences with the use of the LBI in goal setting.

Results: 1) Five related dimensions of balance among 11 healthy youngsters were found: balance in time use for school and leisure; satisfactory amount of occupations generating positive experiences; social dimension in occupations; a structured day provides a sense of control and support of family. 2) The LBI was perceived useful to formulate personal goals for people with substance use disorder and for patients in an acute mental illness facility.

Implications for practice and research: The dimensions of life balance expressed by adolescents are inspiring for professionals in clinical practice and for assessment development. The Life Balance Inventory seems a feasible tool to be used for goal setting in different psychiatric populations.