

Social Inclusion: Occupational Therapy in Mental Health Practice

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This paper will discuss social inclusion as a positive phrase aimed at promoting equality of opportunity, maintaining social cohesion, building social capital and minimising social exclusion. According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK for people experiencing mental health issues there is a creative synthesis between recovery and social inclusion as recovery both requires and allows social inclusion, and social inclusion helps to promote recovery. Both are key concepts for mental health practitioners.

The guiding principles of occupational therapy are that our interventions move the client in the direction of fuller participation in society through the performance of occupations that are appropriate to his or her age, social and cultural background, interests and aspirations. Occupational therapists are therefore, key in helping people develop coping skills to manage their illness and live life.

Case studies from Uganda and the UK will show how occupational therapy interventions based on individual assessment and goal setting, personally meaningful occupations utilised in individual and group therapeutic contacts have enabled clients experiencing mental health issues to reintegrate into their communities. The paper highlights how the occupational therapy process enables the individual to recognise their own strengths and skills, and gain confidence of these in their unique environment thus enabling social inclusion.