

## MEANINGFUL WORK ROLES: MEANING IN LIFE

- I. Introductions
- II. Assumptions/Orientation article
- III. Recovery Principles as life principles
  - A) Self-determination
  - B) Strengths-based
- IV. Work and wellness
  - A) Life sustenance, including non-employment
  - B) Functional societal contribution
  - C) Identity-giving/emotional centering
  - D) Spiritual dimension meaning for life
- V. Intentionality, Purpose, Meaning
  - A) Roles
  - B) How, not what (learning from error; finding models)
  - C) Process vs content (authenticity; in the moment; humility)
- VI. Learning from each other/social learning (I learned; I wasn't taught)
  - A) Examples of how and what to say and do/Empathy
  - B) Sharing moments and reflections
  - C) Learning together
- VII. Vignette

### **1. The Mental Health Benefits of Work: Do They Apply to Welfare Mothers with a Drinking Problem?**

Zabkiewicz, D. & Schmidt, L.A. J Behav Health Serv Res (2009) 36: 96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-008-9148-9>

*Repeated measures analyses suggest that women who enter welfare with a drinking problem may not experience the same decline in depression symptoms following employment. Improving the connections between welfare and treatment services for women with alcohol problems may, however, have important implications for their mental health.*

### **2. Mental health and work: Impact, issues and good practices**

Mental Health Policy and Service Development. Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence; Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. World Health Organization. Geneva, 2000

*Access to satisfying work remains one of the most sought-after goals of the adult population of most countries. Employers, employees and unions are starting to realize that, for this population, mental health problems are the single most important cause of disability responsible for a global burden of disease larger than that due to infections, AIDS, cancer and physical accidents. The impact of mental health problems on absenteeism, productivity and job satisfaction is only starting to be realized;...the disability associated with severe mental health problems can no longer serve as an excuse to deny those who so wish reasonable access to competitive employment. It is a precondition to full citizenship.*

### **3. Successful and Schizophrenic**

Elyn R. Saks --- New York Times. Sunday Review: Opinion. JAN. 25, 2013

*“Every person has a unique gift or unique self to bring to the world,” said one of our study’s participants. She expressed the reality that those of us who have schizophrenia and other mental illnesses want what everyone wants: in the words of Sigmund Freud, to work and to love.*

### **4. The meaning and importance of employment to people in recovery from serious mental illness: Results of a qualitative study.**

Dunn, E. C., Wewiorski, N. J., & Rogers, E. S. (2008). The meaning and importance of employment to people in recovery from serious mental illness: Results of a qualitative study. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 32(1), 59-62.

*Conclusions: Overall, individuals reported that employment conferred significant benefits in their process of recovery from mental illness and that work played a central role in their lives and identities. The themes from this study should be considered when developing employment or other recovery-oriented programs for people with serious mental illness. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)*

#### **5. Mental health service users' experiences of returning to paid employment**

Melanie Boyce, Jenny Secker, Melanie BoyRobyn Johnson, Mike Floyd, Bob Grove, Justine Schneider & Jan Slade. Disability and Society. Vol. 23, Issue 1, 2008

*There was consistency with previous studies of factors associated with high and low levels of job satisfaction. Even those participants who were less satisfied with their jobs identified benefits and none described any negative effects.*

## Vignette

(19 year-old Josh was released from the Farm Home a year ago, and has been steadily developing a good enough routine at home to keep his family happy with him, and the employment specialist helped him get a job at the last small sawmill still operating outside of town.)

I don't want to work on the green chain; it's for people who can't do anything else and aren't going anywhere in life.

Has something happened at the mill?

No. I just want to do something important. I don't want to be like my dad and them.

Your boss said he likes your work. What's wrong?

I don't know.

Have you thought of asking them for a raise?

No. But, that's not the point. I'll need more money to eventually move in with my girlfriend, but I can still live with my parents for now. It's just that after I work the green chain, I don't have the energy for playing music with the band or anything fun.

But you've got bills to pay. Are you going to give up your car and smart phone?

No, but I'll figure that out. Plus, I've been working 4 days a week now for five whole months. It's a dead end job, and these meds are making me tired.

Your family's been forest and mill workers going back to your great grandfather, though; isn't that right? Plus, what other types of work are available around here? The nearest town of any size is 40 miles away.

1. What changes need to happen in this process?
2. What principles could become the source of some movement in a positive direction?
3. Will the employment specialist or the young man be the first to throw in the towel?