

The Lived Experience of People with a Mental Illness of Their Engagement in Therapeutic Recreation

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to extrapolate the meaning for people living with a mental illness of their participation in a therapeutic recreation experience. The study's participants engaged in a five-day adventure camp, known as Recovery Camp, alongside undergraduate health care students. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used as an exploratory method to interview 25 participants (n=25). Van Kaam's structured analytical framework guided the analysis of the transcribed narratives. The findings provide insight into using therapeutic recreation to enhance personal mental health recovery. Recovery Camp was viewed by participants as having a transformational effect on forming positive social connectedness and improving their self-identity. Participants perceived the Recovery Camp experience as one that gave them a sense of purpose and increased their motivation to undertake further activities. The insights gained of the benefits of therapeutic recreation for people living with a mental illness can be used to promote purposeful community engagement.

Keywords : interpretive phenomenology, lived experience, mental illness, personal mental health recovery

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