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“I’m letting them down”

The perceived challenges (and resources) for women when making life changes for health

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- One in 3 GP patients in Ireland present with psychological distress (Hughes et al., 2010)
- Changes in daily life linked to poor psychological and physical wellbeing include;
 - Excessive technology use, decline in social relationships, sedentary behaviour, lack of time in nature, poor sleep patterns (Walsh, 2011)
- Occupational therapists focus on the interrelationship between daily activities (occupations) and health
- Gender differences in risk factors and protective factors for mental health (Plaisier et al., 2008)



Redesigning Daily Occupations (ReDO[®]) (Eklund & Erlandsson, 2011)

- 16 or 10 week group programme
- Phase 1: Occupational self-analysis
 - Activities past, present and future
 - Occupational balance
 - Time-use and patterns
 - Reflection on what to change (and what I can change)
- Phase 2: Making changes
 - Identifying uplifts and hassles
 - Identifying and harnessing supports and resources
 - Practicing occupations in a new way
 - Goal-setting
 - Planning for the future





- In health behaviour change interventions the focus is usually on clearly identifiable behaviours (Michie et al., 2014)
- However, in ReDO[®] the change is personalised
- The aim is that each participant will have begun to make changes to daily life activities to;
 - Have a more satisfactory balance between types of occupation (alone vs others, duty vs self-chosen etc.)
 - Be doing more occupations that give a sense of uplift (or experiencing uplifts in ordinary things more)
 - Have a wider variety of occupational experiences in their lives (i.e. occupations that make you feel like you've learned something, relaxed, satisfied, fun, connected with traditions, blown off steam etc. etc.)

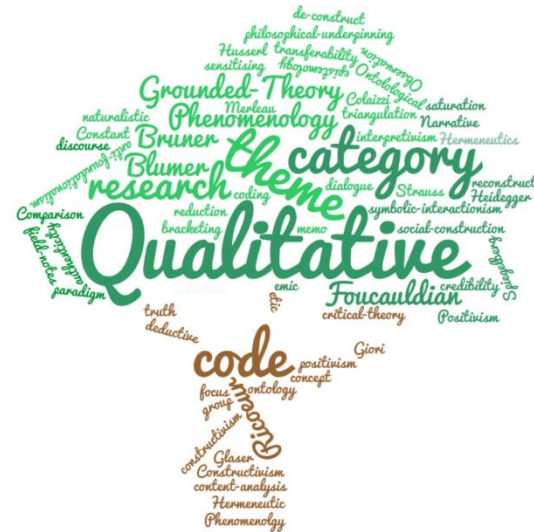
Feasibility study and process evaluation



- Three pilot groups in Ireland (2018-2020)
- Women 18-66, recruited through the GP or self-referral
- Have seen their GP on at least two occasions for stress-related reasons
- 6-9 women in each group
- No control condition
- Post-intervention interviews with participants (n=14) focused on feasibility, acceptability, research considerations and perceived mechanisms of change (Fox et al., 2022a; 2022b)

Data analysis

- Theoretical Domains Framework (V2) (Cane, O'Connor & Michie, 2012) used as a coding framework
 - Directed content analysis
 - Broad framework
 - Includes both structural and psychological processes that are involved when someone is trying to change an aspect of their “doing” (their “behaviour”)
 - Guidance by Atkins et al. (2017)



Capability

Enablers/Strengths/Resources

- Self-awareness and knowledge (experience)
 - *“I know enough today not to go running here, there and everywhere”* (9421)
- Interpersonal skills (experience)
 - *“I can deal with a crisis much better”* (6797)
- Self-monitoring
 - Noticing when you need to rest/need support – and what activities work for you
 - *“I notice the difference if I skip a day at the gym”* (5505)
 - *“Paying attention to the signs”* (6686)

Barriers/Challenges

- Physical, emotional, cognitive illnesses or symptoms
- Attention control
 - When daily life is lived without attention to the present
 - *“eating and not realising”* (4678) *“I get distracted...so overwhelmed”* (1262) *“stop and look at notifications on my phone”* (5505) *“you’re going all day but achieving nothing”* (6686)

Opportunity

Enablers/Strengths/Resources

- Social support from friends, boss, GP, children or spouses
- Enabled activities by accompanying women or encouraging participation
 - *“I was afraid to do things on my own”* (2612).
- A supportive/enjoyable environment (nature, weather, workmates or when the home life is harmonious)
 - *“The night ends on hugs and ‘I love you Mammy’...‘I love you more’”* (3656)

Barriers/Challenges

- Alienation in the home relationship
 - *“I feel trapped...there’s a bit of me that wants to run away from it all”* (4678)
- Social pressure from children, neighbours, in-laws, extended family
 - Social norms (gendered)
 - *“I feel like I’m letting myself down...like I’m being judged”* (1558)
 - *“They look to me as the multitasker...‘Go and ask your mother’”* (4678)
- The interaction with the environment
 - When the living environment is chaotic, interrupted, or there is disagreement between partners
- Critical events
 - Family illness, accidents or bereavements
 - *“The neighbours went against us”* (2612) *“My cousin died”* (4678) *“My dad was in hospital”* (6686)

Motivation

Enablers/Strengths/Resources

- Optimism/beliefs (older women) and gratitude
 - *“You make things work in your life”* (9421)
- Intentions to make changes
 - Sometimes after reaching a lowpoint
 - *“Right. Enough is enough”* (1558)
- Setting goals (as long as they are realistic and can change with circumstances)
 - *“that was my goal, not to miss the class. And I managed it”* (4572)

Barriers/Challenges

- Pessimism
 - *“It won’t work for me”* (1262)
- Social role (especially as a mother/wife)
 - *“I would take a back seat”* (1558)
 - *“when the kids go, I have nothing left”* (4678)
- Accurately judging what I am capable of or entitled to
 - *“you feel selfish”* (3656)
 - *“I set these impossible, unrealistic goals for myself”* (5505)
- Emotions – anxiety, guilt, stress, fear and numbness
- Beliefs that choosing occupations for oneself will have negative consequences (be perceived negatively)
 - *“I feel like I’m letting them down”* (4678)
 - *“I mustn’t upset my children. ..it’s always guilt”* (3656)

Considerations for interventions exploring time-use or life balance for women (in this context)

- Group-based interventions can provide opportunities for:
 - Modelling – comparing and reframing unhelpful beliefs, norms and hearing about others' experience (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)
- Provide tools and activities for self-analysis of time-use and “what works for me”
 - To improve self-awareness/knowledge
- Provide time/space to explore (and challenge?) gender expectations (Tseris, 2023)
- Direct to services for relationship support (underpins the living environment)
 - Where there are social supports, encourage family-level change (Franks et al.,)
- Encourage reflection on strengths, resources (gratitude exercises) (Wong et al., 2018)
- Practical activities to promote “mindful doing”
- Help to make goals realistic, personally meaningful, but avoid increasing pressure to “achieve”



Limitations

- Interviews were not structured using the TDF
 - But barriers and enablers to change were asked about
- Two different interviewers (one a novice)
 - So some interviews were “thinner” than others
- Part of a PhD study
 - So analysis and writing done mainly by one person as part of their project
- Directed content analysis
 - Risk of making results “fit” the framework
- Small number of participants
 - Based in Ireland, relatively similar life circumstances,
 - Attended a programme to begin to make changes to time-use for health



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Thank you for watching

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