

Title: Volition as narrative: Understanding motivation in chronic illness

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Major Finding: Volition is embedded in a life narrative. Narratives illustrate how individuals understand themselves and serve as a context for future actions and choices.

Participants: n=2

- 1 male, 1 female
- Diagnostic condition: Bipolar Disorder
- Setting: USA

Method: Semi-structured interviews began with a request to hear participants' life stories, and more specific questions were posed to further develop an insider's view of their experiences. All interviews were transcribed into the Ethnograph program for qualitative and narrative analysis.

Analysis: Content analysis to identify themes, along with peer review.

Findings:

- Self-knowledge is fostered by relating past, present, and future events in a life course to a narrative plot.
- The importance of a life narrative lies not in the actions or events, but the meaning experienced as a result of those events.
- Narratives illustrate past, present, and future personal factors that motivate a person and contribute to their overall volition.

Conclusion: Narratives are a useful way to better understand a person's volition. Narrative helps to explain how self attribution, motives, and intentions are formed. Personal narratives motivate an individual by serving as a context for future choices and actions.

Implications for future research: Narratively-organized volition may be a useful way to investigate personal motivations and predict future success in therapy.

Evidence-based practice implications:

- **Cultural and historical contexts of a client should be considered when interpreting their life narrative.**
- **An understanding of a client's sense of personal causation can be reached by eliciting his/her life story.**
- **More effective occupational therapy treatment planning can be achieved when the 'how' and 'why' of client choices are illustrated through a volitional narrative.**

