Rebuilding the ‘self’ in cancer survivorship

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I’m an occupational therapist

and so this relationship is important

Health and well-being

Everyday meaningful activities (occupations)
My PhD

How do our activities of daily life enable us to construct our identities?

A satisfying repertoire of daily occupations

Participating in the world, adapting to change, expressing oneself

A resilient sense of identity
Identity

Continuity, but changing

Shaped by society and also self-consciousness

Multiple parts
In my PhD . . .

• I used narrative analysis to understand the meanings that people attach to important activities.

• I constructed a framework which provides a representation of how our everyday activities help build our identities.
The Framework of the occupied self: three dimensions

- The changing self
- The active self
- The located self
Each dimension has different facets. These may be more or less important for each individual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The changing self</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The active self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The located self</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table represents the different aspects of an individual's identity over time, place, body, and society/relationships. Each dimension has unique facets that may vary in importance for different individuals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The changing self</th>
<th>Self is changed</th>
<th>Occupation is changed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The active self</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The located self</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each dimension has different facets. These may be more or less important for each individual.
## The changing self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self is changed</th>
<th>Occupation is changed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Approach problems differently</td>
<td>• On management group now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## The active self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• New skills</td>
<td>• Low carbon foot-print</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## The located self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Society/relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Connection to history</td>
<td>• In the countryside</td>
<td>• Near industry</td>
<td>• Being with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Small house on water</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Canal communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biographical disruption

Illness and trauma can impact on identity

‘I’m not the same person that I was before’
This matters, because:

- Social interactions may change
- Everyday activities may change
- Continuity, is threatened
- The anticipated future is altered
- New, maybe conflicting, views of the self may emerge
Surviving cancer

- Cancer survivorship has doubled in the last 40 years
- 2 million people in the UK

*People survive – but how well do they live?*
My plan

- To develop a useful and relevant therapeutic tool, based on my framework, to help survivors and their therapists to imagine and plan ways forward for rebuilding the ‘self’
Participatory design process

- Potential end-users have input into the design of the tool

- 2 groups of people with expertise will help me:
  - cancer survivors
  - Specialist occupational therapists
An iterative cycle

- Show prototype design to groups
- Discuss and get feedback
- Go away and make changes to the prototype
Prototype possibilities

• A self-help workbook with therapist manual?
• An on-line tool?
The next stage after this

- Building a bidding team
- Finding funds
- Piloting in a clinical setting

- And in the future, applications in other areas, e.g. mental health
Challenges

• Getting published (professional journals vs high impact!)

• Fitting in to current research structures
Achievements & Impact

• Conferences
  – virtual and real
  – national and international
• Clinically based masterclasses
• PG supervision
• Building networks
Thank you!

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