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

A resilient sense of identity

Participating in the world, adapting to change, expressing oneself
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
The changing self

The active self

The located self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Society/relationships</th>
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Each dimension has different facets. These may be more or less important for each individual.
### The changing self

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### The active self

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<th>Self is changed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Approach problems differently</td>
<td>• On management group now</td>
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### The active self

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<td>• New skills</td>
<td>• Low carbon foot-print</td>
<td></td>
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### The located self

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| • Connection to history | • In the countryside  
• Near industry  
• Small house on water | • Being with friends  
• Canal communities |
Biographical disruption

Illness and trauma can impact on identity

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

- Continuity, is threatened
- The anticipated future is altered
- Everyday activities may change
- Social interactions may change
- 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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