

“What makes you happy?” Evaluating an intervention aimed at promoting social participation of lonely people: Identifying concepts that can serve as building blocks of self-chosen activities and developing and testing a questionnaire to measure the success of these activities.

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“Aan geluk kun je werken”

Abstract

Background: Loneliness is a highly prevalent problem related to various consequences for physical and mental health. These problems need to be addressed as loneliness is increasing.

Objectives: This paper evaluates the "happiness-budget" that aims at reducing loneliness in a sample of chronically physically and mentally ill. This budget is used to execute self-chosen activities. Additionally a questionnaire intended for longitudinal research within this project was presented, tested for its suitability and used to describe the study group.

Methods: Two studies were executed; the first was descriptive in nature and took the form of a dossier analysis in order to describe the population and executed activities.

The second study was an extended pre-test of a questionnaire developed to measure effects of the programme within the sample of lonely people. Aims of this study were to describe the population regarding to the concepts assessed with the questionnaire and to test whether the questionnaire could be filled in by all participants.

Results: Executing activities that enabled people to make new contacts and new experiences were most popular. The high occurrence of disease and socially related activities showed the will to fight disease as well as loneliness. Neurological and orthopaedic diseases were the most prominent disorder for the somatic population; the psychiatrics all suffered from psychological problems with some somatic co morbidities.

The sample was found to be severe isolated, but on average mentally quite healthy. The questionnaire could be filled in by nearly all participants within a reasonable amount of time.

Conclusion: The happiness budget was used in a highly functional, curative way. The population was found to be more robust and able to fill in the questionnaire than thought in begin, so longitudinal research within this group.

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