

# Title: Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Health

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The book *Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Health* highlights the complexity of unemployment amongst people with mental illness primarily in first world countries. The book is edited by an occupational therapist but aims to address the rehabilitation community in general, in order to better facilitate the practice of vocational rehabilitation for individuals with mental illness.

The first chapter introduces the theme of employment for individuals with mental illness. The chapter is written concisely and accurately highlights not only the negative implications of unemployment but also the value of employment for these people. The chapter concludes with key summaries related to evidence-based vocational programmes in a bid to alleviate the negative impact that unemployment evokes.

The following two chapters follow the theme of evidence-based programmes and introduce core concepts of various vocational approaches. The second chapter challenges the traditional belief that 'training the individual before vocational placement occurs' and presents the theoretical constructs related to the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. Chapter three is written in the form of a case study and focuses on the practical implementation of the IPS model. The research findings in both chapters are that the IPS model has shown significant success in attaining vocational outcomes for people with severe mental illness.

Chapter four looks at stigma as a barrier to gainful employment for individuals with mental illness. Strategies to reduce employer stigma are also discussed.

Chapters five and six delve into the motivational aspects that have the potential to "interfere with vocational recovery". The chapters offer various approaches to facilitate motivation for employment and make specific mention of the extensively researched strategy of motivational interviewing. Despite the thoroughness of

the writings, the complexity of this problem encourages further reading.

Chapter seven focuses on principles that assess, establish and maintain effective therapeutic relationships; however there is little evidence that determines whether specific strategies should be followed for individuals with mental illness or for specific vocational contexts.

The importance of vocation in recovery for young people with mental illness is addressed in chapters eight and nine. These chapters highlight a different approach to address specific problems that younger individuals face, e.g. vocational immaturity as opposed to the conventional vocational approaches generally offered for adults.

Principles to address work-related social skills as well as job retention are addressed in chapter ten. A suggested protocol, Integrated Supported Employment (ISE) which is a combination of IPS and social skills training, illustrates an effective strategy to ensure job retention.

Chapter eleven looks at how the symptoms of mental illness can interfere with employment outcomes and talks about various strategies to reduce the negative impact of symptoms. The penultimate chapter focuses on addressing the concept of supported education, specifically for individuals who experience disruption in their educational attainment as a result of mental illness. Strategies to facilitate supported employment in order to enhance the employability of these persons despite the disruption are discussed.

Chapter thirteen concludes the book by discussing how personal information for people with mental illness should be managed. The chapter highlights strategies to facilitate the client taking responsibility for deciding how their information should be managed.

*Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Health* is an easy-to-read book and follows a systematic approach to each chapter, where the chapter begins by highlighting the problem associated within a specific theme and concludes with practical suggestions on how these barriers can be overcome. Although research quoted throughout the book is not generalisable to the South African context, the strategies presented appear logical and may guide our South African way of thinking when approaching the issue of employability of individuals with mental illness. However, with South Africa's overwhelming issue of unemployment for both able-bodied persons as well as persons with disabilities, the true applicability of this book can only be ascertained by South African research within the paradigms presented in this book.

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