

Ordinary Life

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When I was preparing the running order for this issue, I was struck by the title of one of the papers. [Carlsson and Adolfsson, 2023](#) write about ordinary adult life from the perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities. The mention of an ‘ordinary life’ struck a note with me as I wondered what the concept might include. This brought me back to an old Peter Hames song, *Ordinary Man*, which was recorded by the Irish ballad singer, Christy Moore ([Moore, 2006](#)):

I’m an ordinary man, nothing special nothing grand
I’ve had to work for everything I own.
I never asked for a lot, I was happy with what I’d got
Enough to keep my family and my home.

Sometimes, nuggets of wisdom are found in least expected places! The words of this song give an insight into ordinariness and point to potential aspects of an ordinary life, such as family, home, work to provide sustainable income and, perhaps having a sense of happiness with one’s life. These harmonise with previous participatory social action work that I engaged in, focused on the important rights in the lives of adults with intellectual disabilities ([Sheerin, 2011](#)). I recall that family, home and employment were to the fore back then.

[Glasgow \(2023\)](#) elaborates on ordinariness in his treatise on the ‘ordinary meaningful life’ noting that ‘important activities add meaning to our lives’ (p. 416). Such *eudaimonic* happiness plays an important role in ordinary human lives and has even been reported to play a role in mediating or moderating depression in older people ([Carrapatoso et al., 2018](#)). It is also sometimes referred to as subjective vitality or meaning in life ([Ryan and Frederick, 1997](#)), suggesting that it underpins the drive and energy for life itself.

It is likely that work, family and home are also related to meaningfulness, as they provide context and opportunities for engagement in meaningful activities. These are, however, usually dependent on choice, something that may be significantly impacted by the presence of impairments such as are present in intellectual disabilities. [Brannelly et al. \(2019\)](#) observes that the diminishment of choices and opportunities may move ordinariness, and thus meaningful life activities, beyond their reach.

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Support from others may seek to redress this, but the resultant ‘ordinary life’ may be quite different from that experienced by others in society (Huus et al., 2022).

Provision of resources may go some way to help people with intellectual disabilities achieve a level of ordinariness in their lives, by reducing barriers (Wilkinson-Meyers et al., 2015), but sadly, it is often the case that the funding models underpinning these are inadequate and restrict life choices (Sheerin et al., 2023). Societal attitudes and disablist perspectives are also important factors in limiting these choices, making it likely that the ordinary life may remain unreachable for many people with intellectual disabilities.

These may seem to be theoretical musings, but they are important considerations as we continue to seek better and equitable lives for people with intellectual disabilities.

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