

# Meaningful Activities and Sources of Meaning for Community-Dwelling People Living with Dementia

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## Abstract

To examine how people living with dementia at home engage in meaningful activities, a critical component of quality of life. Ethnographic study design using semistructured interviews, participant-observation, and ethnographic analysis. Home setting. People living with dementia were recruited through 3 geriatrics programs in the San Francisco Bay Area, along with 1 primary live-in care partner for each. Participants were purposively sampled to maximize heterogeneity of dementia severity and life experience. We asked participants to self-identify and report meaningful activity engagement prior to dementia onset and during the study period using a structured questionnaire, semistructured dyadic interviews, and observed engagement in activities. Home visits were audio-recorded, transcribed, and inductively analyzed using thematic analysis. Twenty-one people living with dementia (mean age 84 years, 38% women) and 20 care partners (59 years, 85% women), including 40% professionals, 35% spouse/partners, and 15% adult children. Overarching theme: specific activities changed over time but underlying sources of meaning and identity remained stable. As dementia progressed, meaningful activity engagement took 3 pathways.

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