Researching the effects of object encounters:

How can we evidence the effects of handling objects on wellbeing?

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Museums benefit health and wellbeing through:

- positive social experiences, leading to reduced social isolation
- opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills
- calming experiences, leading to decreased anxiety
- increased positive emotions, such as optimism, hope and enjoyment
- increased self-esteem and sense of identity
- increased inspiration and opportunities for meaning making
- positive distraction from clinical environments, including hospitals and care homes
- increased communication between families, carers and health professionals


What is the role of objects and what are the benefits of object handling?

Quantitative measures: Mood adjective checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Affect</th>
<th>Negative Affect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Irritable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Inspired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Lighthearted</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) to assess psychological wellbeing developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988)

Quantitative measures: Visual analogue scales

EQ VAS to assess health status and general wellbeing developed by EuroQol Group (1990)

Experimental and Control conditions

Experimental condition: Looking at, handling and discussing museum objects
Implicates visual, tactile and verbal modalities

Control condition: Looking at and discussing photographs of museum objects (the same set of objects as used in the experimental condition)
Implicates visual and verbal modalities

Experimental and Control comparisons of positive mood

Outcomes - qualitative inductive thematic analysis and grounded theory

New perspectives
- Excitement, enjoyment, wonder, positive feelings (e.g., privilege, luck, surprise)
- Learning (including skills and confidence)
- Energy, alertness, flow
- Cheered up
- Sense of identity, meaning-making opportunities
- Something different, inspiring
- Calming, relieves anxiety
- Passing time
- Social experience
- Tactile experience

References


For Further information:

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