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Cultural activities in the work place

There is growing evidence indicating that cultural activities (writing, music, visual arts, dancing and theatre) can be used in public health work. Singing in a choir may for instance provide meaning in life, physical exercise, short-term kicks of wellbeing hormones, social bonding and improved breathing. Furthermore in our research cultural activities are significantly associated with good handling of emotions which is central in social functioning in the modern worksite. What relevance does such knowledge have for modern working life? Findings were based upon a two-year follow-up study of 6000 Swedish working men and women. Emotional exhaustion and working conditions including cultural activities at work were recorded at start. With adjustment for confounders (age, gender, demand and decision authority at work, non-listening manager and education) a statistically significant “protective effect” of cultural activities against emotional exhaustion was shown. Accordingly there is reason to test cultural programs in worksites. A thorough discussion regarding individual needs, ethical aspects and practical handling is needed. Diversity is central practical experiments in worksites have indicated that jealousy and unwanted effects among non-participants in programs could arise. Several kinds of cultural activities should therefore be available. If handled wisely, cultural activities could increase cohesiveness and creativity in work sites.

Biography

Tores Theorell is an emeritus Professor in the Department of Neuroscience at Stress Research Institute, Stockholm University, Karolinska Institute. He is a Physician and defended his dissertation in 1971 at the Karolinska Institute with his thesis on “Life events in relation to myocardial infarction”. He has done his practice in Clinical Internal Medicine and Cardiology from 1967-1978 and Social Medicine from 1978-1980. He was a Professor at the National Institute for Psychosocial Factors and Health in 1981.

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