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**Living with  
Occupational Overuse  
Syndrome -**

**A phenomenological study**

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts in Psychology  
at Massey University*

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## ABSTRACT

The incidence of Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS) has been increasing significantly in industrialised countries since the late 1970s. Research is revealing more about its causes, and the physiological and anatomical nature of the condition. However, little research has been done into the experience of the person with OOS as they work towards recovery. In the current study thirteen people with OOS were interviewed. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used, with the aim of gaining insights into the lived experience of OOS. Findings suggest that the experience of OOS is essentially paradoxical in nature. It comprises of four main processes - 'Coming to terms with an OOS diagnosis', 'Seeking a treatment that works', 'Trying to do the right thing' and 'Learning to co-exist positively with OOS'. These processes occur concurrently and there are many inter-relationships between them. Each of these processes involves a major paradox that the person with OOS must attempt to resolve. These all involve, in one form or another, the fundamental paradox for the OOS sufferer, that of finding a healthy balance between keeping tight control and letting go - between 'working hard at getting better' and 'releasing into relaxation, acceptance and attitude change'. Implications for therapy and future research arising from these findings are suggested.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT		i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		ii
Chapter One	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND .....	1
	Introduction .....	1
	A background to OOS .....	2
	The political nature of OOS .....	3
	Physical aspects of OOS .....	6
	Psychological aspects of OOS .....	9
	Organisational factors relating to OOS.....	11
	Social and economic aspects of OOS .....	12
	Links between OOS and other conditions.....	15
	Treatment .....	16
	Implications for 'Living with OOS' .....	18
	Why this study is needed .....	18
Chapter Two	INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGY .....	19
	Evaluation of phenomenological research .....	24
	Phenomenology and health research.....	25
Chapter Three	METHOD.....	27
	Recruitment of participants.....	27
	The interviews.....	28
	Transcription of tapes.....	31
	Phenomenological reduction or bracketing .....	31
	Data analysis .....	34
Chapter Four	INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS .....	39
	Introduction to participants .....	39
	Overview of findings: Living with OOS.....	43

Chapter Five	COMING TO TERMS WITH AN OOS DIAGNOSIS.....	45
	From symptoms to diagnosis .....	45
	Why me? Why Now? .....	51
	The Loss of their old life – a waiting time .....	55
	Struggling to come to terms with OOS.....	62
	Summary .....	67
Chapter Six	SEEKING A TREATMENT THAT WORKS .....	69
	No-one knows what to do ... but everyone has advice .....	70
	Treatment: a long, slow and painful experience .....	72
	The Treatment experience .....	78
	Factors effecting motivation towards treatment .....	85
	Summary .....	92
Chapter Seven	TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING.....	93
	Modification of work practices .....	95
	Time off work and rebuilding working hours.....	100
	Doing ‘homework’ recommended by therapists .....	101
	Exercise.....	104
	Difficulties related to ‘doing the right thing’ .....	106
	Summary .....	109
Chapter Eight	LEARNING TO CO-EXIST POSITIVELY WITH OOS .....	111
	Putting up with pain.....	111
	Monitoring and responding to the needs of the body .....	113
	Moving towards a more caring relationship with the body .....	117
	Post script: finding the silver lining behind the cloud .....	127
	Summary .....	127
Chapter Nine	DISCUSSION .....	129
	Implications for practitioners.....	136
	Future directions in research.....	141
REFERENCES	.....	143
APPENDICES	.....	152