The aim of this study is to enhance the understanding of rehabilitation through narrative approach. The study is divided in two parts. The first part serves as an introduction to the whole work, whereas the latter part is constituted from three separate articles, all dealing with rehabilitation. The objectives of this study are fourfold: to situate the narrative approach in the field of the applied social psychological research, to examine the rehabilitation research from variety of perspectives of the applied research, to clarify the basis of the narrative approach through social psychological theories and to examine the narrative possibilities of the rehabilitation in the light of the empirical research.

The introduction article examines backgrounds and interests of applied research. Applied social psychological research may have many kinds of aims however in its most common usage it usually refers to developing or evaluating interventions. That kind of application is defined as ‘the pure science model’. Applied research can be carried out also using ‘the social science model’ where the attention is pointed towards the background conditions and the nature of social problems. The study seeks to scrutinize rehabilitation research from a variety of perspectives and interests of the applied research. The study relies theoretically on narrative approach with special focus on two theoretical orientations (constructivism and social constructionism). In the introductory article I construct a theoretical framework mentioned above, within which the applied researches presented in second part are studied. The research argues that after undergoing illness or other kind of life change people have to combine past, present and future into a narrative form to make events and experiences meaningful and understandable. Another central result of the study is to acknowledge the variation within the social stock of narratives. There are different kinds of metaphors and logics to interpret life events and to make them meaningful. At the end of the introduction article I state that the narrative approach offers many possibilities for applied research within rehabilitation.

Second part of the study consists of three articles, all dealing with rehabilitation. First one (Valkonen 1997) is based on the interviews of people who took part of rehabilitation in order to maintain working capacity. I examine the experiences concerning working capacity and rehabilitation and interpret the rehabilitation as a narrative process. In the second article (Valkonen 1998a) I take a look at the social stock of narratives that is connected to the hearth attack. The empirical material is collected using the method called non-active role - playing. The meaning of hearth attack changed when it was connected to metaphor of life style, struggle, emancipation, fate or chance. The third article (Valkonen 1998b) utilises the same empirical method now focusing on the social stock of narratives concerning the changes in working capacity. Narratives that I found followed individual, social, institutional and deterministic logic.