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Facilitating Occupational Therapy Groups in Mental Health and Other Practice Settings

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Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course participants will be able to:

1. Name at least three types of groups that are unique to occupational therapy.
2. Identify at least four group interventions appropriate for mental health and in general practice settings.
3. Describe at least two methods and techniques that may be used to facilitate a group.

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Groups in Occupational Therapy

Although they share commonalities with other types of groups, occupational therapy groups are unique.

- The activities or occupations chosen for groups are the means by which client goals are met through their active participation.
- The use of occupations sets occupational therapy groups apart from other types of groups, such as traditional group therapy.
- Client outcomes result in improved occupational performance and function for the individual.

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Definitions Of Groups In OT

- **Activity:** Members engage in a common task directed towards occupational performance in areas of occupation
- **Task:** (Fidler) Provides an end product or service, however task accomplishment is not the purpose, but a shared experience to process
- **Developmental:** (Mosey) Group interaction skills are developmental in nature: Parallel, project, egocentric cooperative, cooperative & mature

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Groups in OT, continued

- **Directive:** (Kaplan) Meets the needs of the most seriously mentally ill and lower functioning clients. Highly structured and consistent format---Orientation, introduction, warm-up, selected activities & wrap-up
- **Sensory Intervention using Sensory Modulation Approaches:** (Champagne) Sensory stimulation, sensorimotor activities, environmental modification, sensory diets, and calming rooms. Uses activities that increase the awareness of bodily sensations and responses or facilitates bodily relaxation

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Groups In OT, Continued

- Psychoeducational: Teaches specific information or techniques. Commonly used with shorter lengths of treatment
- Community and Self-Help: Focus chosen by the developer
- Thematic: Organized around topic or theme
- Expressive/projective: Uses creative media to facilitate the recognition, acknowledgement or expression of feelings & ideas
- Vocational
- Education
- Leisure

(Cara, 2013, pp. 292-296)

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Examples

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Activity Cooking Group

- Cooking group for teenagers age 17-19 with autism spectrum disorder.
- Emphasis on the activity of cooking easy and healthy recipes in a kitchen environment similar to the group home the teenagers will be transitioning to in the next year.
- Through the participation in the cooking group, the teenagers will learn healthy recipes, cooking and cooking skills needed for the successful completion of future IADL (i.e. home management and meal preparation). Through the participation in the group environment, teenagers will also gain important social interaction skills needed for work and leisure occupations.
- **Activity example:** baked ziti

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Thematic Cooking Group

- Cooking and nutrition group for women with eating disorders, with a focus on discussion about healthy eating habits.
- Each week the facilitator will provide a theme of a particular habit or recipe, the group members will journal their thoughts on the topic, and then the group members will actively participate in a collective discussion while completing the recipe.
- **Activity example:** Making a salad with grilled chicken and fruit

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Task Cooking Group

- Cooking group for children with social anxiety. The group will focus on the interaction between group members within the group atmosphere while carrying out cooking tasks such as baking and cooking snacks.
- Group members will have to work together to complete recipes and will be encouraged to problem solve with other group members when planning and executing recipe steps (e.g. which toppings to add).
- **Activity example:** Making pizza for the group to share

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Directive Cooking Group

- Cooking group for adults with schizophrenia with clearly defined roles for each participant contingent upon participant skills (i.e. Mark is chopping vegetables, George is putting cheese on top, Kim is washing the dishes, etc.).
- There will be clearly defined structure to each group section including an orientation to the group, introduction to the recipe, assignment of roles, completion of the recipe, and a wrap up for group processing.
- **Activity example:** Making chocolate chip cookies

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Psychoeducational Cooking Group

- Cooking group for adults with diabetes and their families with a focus on learning healthy recipes and how to utilize nutrition and diet to help manage diabetes.
- Group members will learn ways to substitute healthier options for preferred meals and then practice healthy recipes within the group setting.
- **Activity example:** Making oatmeal muffins, substituting applesauce for part of the sugar and oil

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Starting A Group

- Conduct a needs assessment
- Groups begin with evaluation and assessment of the individual or population to receive services
- Environment/location for group
- Purpose of group
- Selection criteria
- Source of referrals
- Specific activities
- Outcome measure

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- What are the group members interests and goals?
- Consider the functional and developmental level of the individual and grade for success
- What are the clinical program or settings' purpose, goals and requirements for clients (i.e., 12 step/recovery, community re-entry, etc.)

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Starting A Group, Cont'd.

- Create a therapeutic environment: Atmosphere, setting, décor, lighting, etc.
- Keep supplies and equipment organized, especially important with items that can cause harm
- Consider safety

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Commonly Used Groups And Interventions

- Collage
- Arts & Crafts
- Reminiscence
- Cooking
- Living Skills
- Self-expression
- Sensory
- Home Management
- Horticulture/Gardening

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Groups And Interventions

- Money Management
- Medication Management
- Healthy Eating/Exercise/Wellness
- Seasonal Activity (Baking Christmas Cookies, Carving Jack O'lanterns, Thanksgiving Meal)

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Groups And Interventions

- Psychoeducational Groups:
- Coping Skills
- Anger Management
- Stress Management
- Parenting
- Communication Skills
- Social Skills

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Basic Outline for Facilitating/ Running a Group

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Beginning

- Welcome the group members to OT
- Introduce yourself
- Explain what OT is
- Introduce the group's topic or purpose and why it can be beneficial
- Stress that group is a safe place and confidentiality (and also exceptions)

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Beginning continued

- Ask group members to introduce themselves and tell why they are there/in attendance
- Next:
- Start all groups with announcements

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Middle

- Present the task or activity planned
- Depending upon the group, offer choices of activity
- The activity
- Group completes or participates in the activity
- Group finishes activity, cleans up area/puts supplies away

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End

- Process group with members
- Have members identify what they have gotten out of group
- Bring closure
- Thank group for participating

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Questions and Comments

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References

Cara, E. & MacRae, A. (2013). *Psychosocial occupational therapy: an evolving practice* (3rd ed.). Clifton Park, NY: Delmar, Cengage Learning

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