

# Occupational Therapy Considerations for the School-Aged Child Transitions to Adulthood Ages 18 and up

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- Presenter Disclosure: Financial: Patti Sharp has received an honorarium for presenting this course. Non-financial: Presenter has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.
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## Pediatric Primer Series

- Child Development, Birth – 5 years
  1. In Utero
  2. Premature Infant
  3. Newborns 0-1 year
  4. Babies 1-3 years
  5. Toddlers 3-5 years

## Pediatric Primer Series

- School-Aged Children, 5-18 years
  6. Early Childhood, 5-7 years
  7. Mid-Late Childhood, 8-10 years
  8. Preadolescence, 11-13 years
  9. Adolescence, 14-18 years
  10. **Transitions to Adulthood**

## Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Define the 'transitional' period of life.
- Describe typical and atypical developmental challenges experienced during the transition period.
- List occupations for young adults in transition between adolescence & adulthood.
- Explain the OT role in transitions services.

## Transitions to Adulthood

**“Adolescents and young adults  
need freedom to choose, but not  
so much freedom that they cannot,  
in fact, make a choice,”**

*Erik Erikson, 1968*

## Transitions

- Transitions or movements occur throughout an individual's life as they navigate through different life stages, settings, and situations.

## Transitions

- May be expected or planned
  - Life stage/phase endings & beginnings
- May be sudden and unexpected
  - Necessitated by sudden injury or illness

## Postsecondary Transitions

- In OT, the term 'transitions' is most often refers to the transition between adolescence & adulthood, or the 'postsecondary transition'
  - Change in developmental phase
  - School to work/volunteer position
  - High school to college
  - Living with caregivers to living independently

## Postsecondary Transitions

- The purpose of public education is to prepare youth for further education, employment, and independent living.
- The purpose of OT is to promote participation in daily occupations
  - Occupational demands change with transitions
  - Environments & contexts change as well

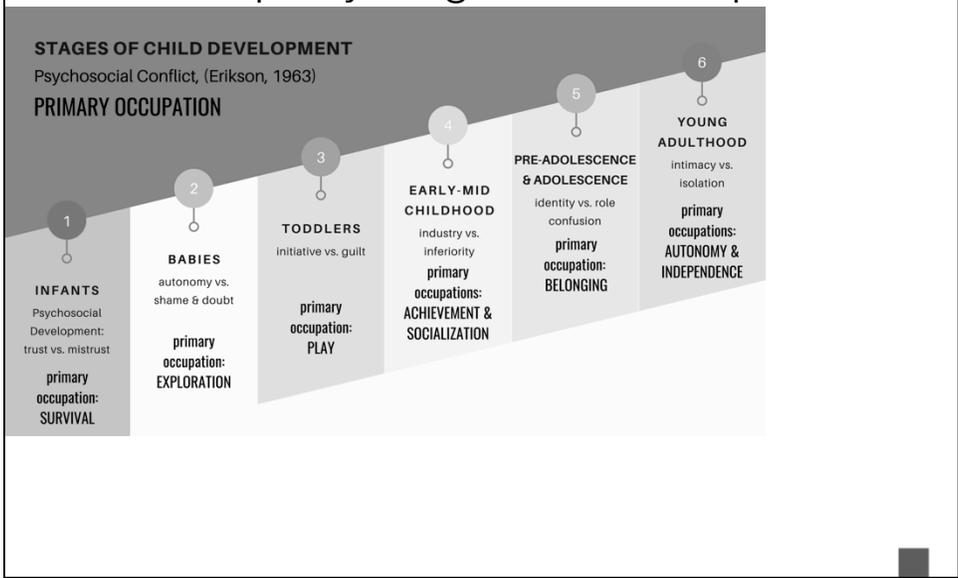
## Occupation in Transitions

- OT intervention can help make transitions smoother and facilitate meaningful participation
  - Planning & preparation
  - Individualized support
  - Adaptation of activities and/or environments

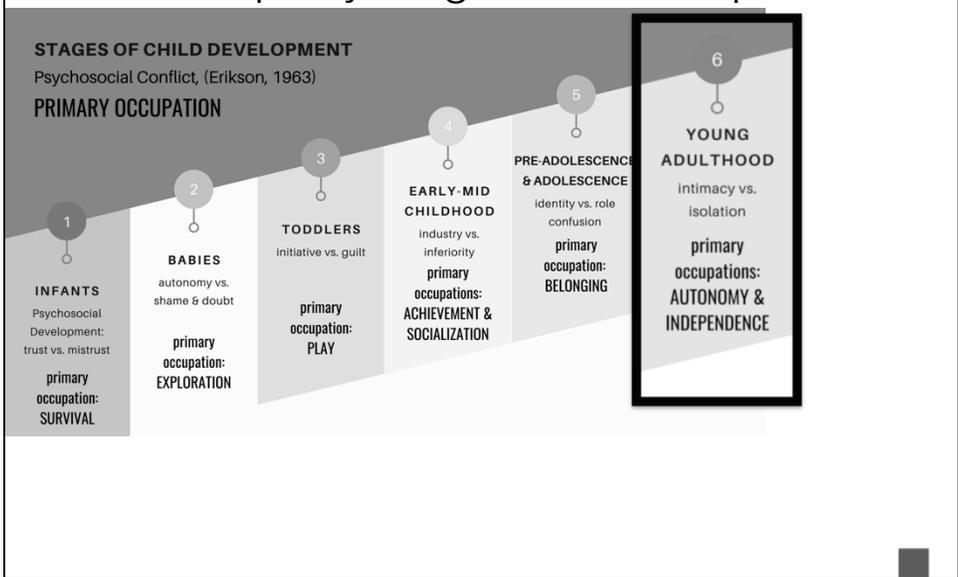
## Occupation in Young Adults (YAs)

- Occupation refers to activities that support the health, well-being, and development of an individual (AJOT, 2017)
- Occupational demands for the young adult include employment, education, recreation, independent & community living

# What shapes young adult development?



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## What shapes young adult development?

- According to Erikson (1963), individuals struggle with intimacy vs. isolation starting in early adulthood around age 18-19 through age 40
  - Major conflict centers on forming intimate, loving relationships with other people
  - Success → fulfilling relationships
  - Failure → feelings of loneliness and isolation

## Intimacy vs. Isolation in YAs

“The more you know yourself,  
the more patience you have for  
what you see in others,”

- Erik Erikson, 1968

## Intimacy vs. Isolation in YAs

- Intimate & meaningful relationships
  - Romantic partnerships and friendships
  - Sharing self while maintaining identity
  - Forging emotional intimacy and closeness
  - Making commitments to others
  - Caring about the needs of others

## Developmental Tasks of YAs

- Self-Determination
- Identity Consolidation
- Individuation

## Self-Determination

- Theory that posits that people are motivated to grow and change by three innate and universal psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2004)
  - Need for competence/achievement/mastery
  - Need for connection/relatedness
  - Need for autonomy/independence

## Self-Determination

- Key Assumptions
  - People are actively directed toward growth
  - Intrinsic motivation is important

## Self-Determination & Young Adult Occupation

- Occupations are “the things that people do that occupy their time and attention; meaningful, purposeful activity; the personal activities that individuals choose or need to engage in and the ways in which each individual actually experiences them” (Boyt-Schell, Gillen, & Scaffa, 2014).

## Self Determination

- *“Self-determination is defined as having the skills to make choices and decisions, problem solve, set and attain goals, advocate and be a leader, and self-regulate and control oneself. It is the most important practice for successful transition” (Otenlicher, 2013, p. 252)*

## Self-Determination & Young Adult Occupation

- Individuals demonstrate increasing self-determination over time as they begin to make choices and manage their own lives (Kader et al., 2018)

## Self-Determination & Young Adult Occupation

- Self-Determination is important in many contexts
  - Social – being a supportive & positive friend
  - School – intrinsic motivation to achieve
  - Work – highly engaged, motivated to improve

## Identity Consolidation

- Adolescence is about identity exploration, development, and formation
- Early adulthood is about consolidating the identity and developing into responsible young adults who can make decisions

## Identity Consolidation

- Identity consolidation during early adulthood is a process of investing oneself in new adult roles, responsibilities, and contexts and evaluating one's ongoing experience in order to construct a coherent, grounded, and positive identity (Pals, 1999)

## Individuation

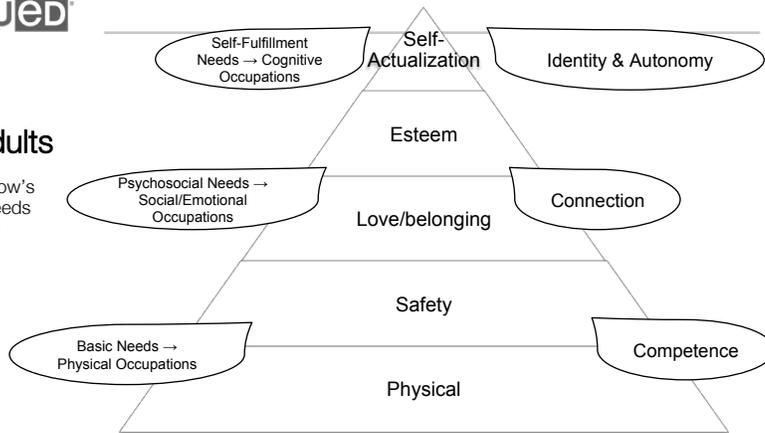
- Individuation is the process that occurs when a young adult grows into a separate self and defines who he or she is as an individual, different from their role as part of the family
  - Young adults need increased emotional, social, physical space from caregivers

## Individuation

- Facilitated by
  - Establishing & maintaining boundaries
  - Transferring loyalty & prioritization from caregivers to romantic partner
  - Taking financial responsibility

## Needs in young adults

Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)



## Physical Occupations of YAs

- Comfort in adult physical body
- Performance skills
  - Independence in ADLs, mastery over several IADLs
- Performance patterns
  - Establishment & maintenance of healthy routines & habits in terms of physical activity, nutrition, sleep, medical care, sexual health & roles

## Social Occupations of YAs

- Establishment & maintenance of supportive roles
- Communication & friendship skills

## Emotional Occupations of YAs

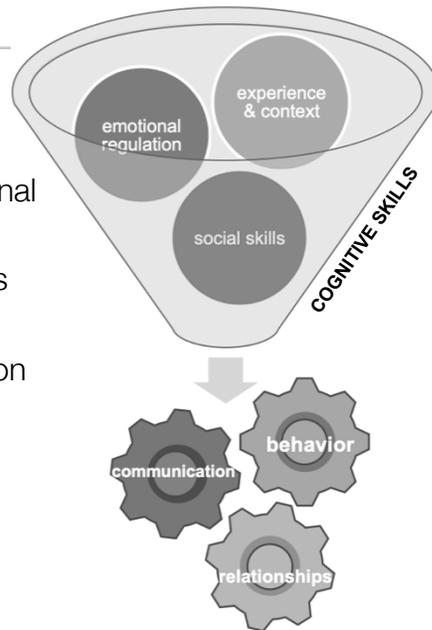
- Emotional regulation skills
  - Capacity to modulate or maintain an emotion in service of a goal
- Considering consequences when engaging in behaviors & activities

## Cognitive Occupations of YAs

- Formal Operational Stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 1972); ages 12-adulthood
- Development of complex sophisticated & advanced thinking

## Social-Emotional Competency

- Development of social & emotional skills with respect to context
- Regulated by cognitive functions
- Expressed in communication, behavior, interpersonal interaction



## Education Occupations of YAs

- Work Readiness Skills
  - Personal qualities & abilities
    - Creativity, problem-solving, initiative, self-direction, integrity, work ethic
  - Interpersonal skills
    - Conflict resolution, conversation skills, teamwork
  - Professional competencies
    - Ability to learn & adapt, reading, writing, math, safety

## Education of YAs

- Children with disabilities "age out" of the public education system during the semester in which they turn 21 according to US federal law
- State laws can adjust this somewhat
- Transition services should begin between ages 14-16 years

## Education of YAs

- For any given year in US schools
  - 1/3 of students with disabilities are of transition age (in school, receiving services, aged 14-16+)
  - 10% of students with disabilities leave school
  - 70% of students with disabilities graduate, as opposed to 88% of students without (Cleary & Persch, 2020)

## Transitions for Typical YAs

- In the United States
  - 67% enroll in college immediately after high school
  - Others enroll in trade school/vocational programs, volunteer programs, or seek employment (US Department of Education, 2019)

## Transitions for Typical YAs

- In China
  - More than 60% of high school graduates in China now attend a university, up from 20% in the 1980s, and this is rising as China invests more in higher education (Levin, 2010)

## Transitions for Typical YAs

- In the United States
  - Average age of moving out of parents' home is 19 (Dey & Pierret, 2014)
  - 30% of young adults move back between 18-34 years (Fry, 2016)
  - 31% of 18-to-36-year-olds lived in and own homes

## Transitions for Typical YAs

- In China
  - 70% of young adults ages 18 to 36 in China live independently and own their own homes (Williams, 2017)

## Postsecondary Statistics - US

- People with disabilities are 2x as likely to drop out of high school (US Department of Labor, 2018)
- 18.7% of Americans with a disability were employed, compared to 65.9% of person without disabilities (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018)

## Postsecondary Statistics - China

- People of working age with disabilities
  - Employment rate of those with disabilities is 50% of non-disabled (Liao et al., 2017)
  - 21% of people participate in paid work in 2007 (Shan, 2018)

## Postsecondary Statistics - China

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was signed by China's government in 2007
- Updates issued in 2017 to foster further transformation

## Postsecondary Statistics - China

- Transformational Disability Policies
  - Education Policy
  - Rehabilitation Policy
  - Both help promote social inclusion & quality of life for disabled people based on the social model of disability (Zhao & Zhang, 2018)

## Need for services

- Individuals with disabilities often have lower outcomes than their typical peers in the areas of socialization, home independence, employment, & postsecondary education (Wagner et al., 2005)
- Young adults with high-incidence disabilities experience poor postschool outcomes (Trainor, Morningstar, & Murray, 2016)

## OT's Role in Transitions

- The purpose of OT is to promote participation in daily occupations, "...to promote health, well-being, and participation in life," (AJOT, 2017)
- Transition programs promote employment, education, recreation, independent & community living (Kohler, Gothberg, & Coyle, 2017)

## OT's Role in Transitions

- OT provides distinct value in transitions planning
  - OT practitioners possess a broad understanding of how illness, injury, or developmental disabilities affect participation and ways to address physical, cognitive, sensory, and psychosocial challenges.

## OT's Role in Transitions

- OT provides distinct value in transitions planning
  - “OT’s distinct value is to improve health and quality of life through facilitating participation and engagement in occupations, the meaningful, necessary, and familiar activities of everyday life.” (AOTA, 2016)

## OT's Role in Transitions

- OT provides distinct value in transitions planning
  - Occupational therapy practitioners focus on the use of occupations to promote mental and physical health, well-being, and participation in life (AOTA, 2014)

## Factors in Transitions

- Providing transition services earlier increases employment outcomes
- Social bonds and successful relationships increase student success in transitions (Cimera, Burgess & Wiley, 2013)

## Factors in Transitions

- Independence in IADLs can predict positive employment outcomes (Pillay & Brownlow, 2017)
- The number one predictor of employment upon graduation is work experience during high school (Wehman et al., 2018)

## Factors in Transitions

- Transitions at life stage endings & beginnings can be planned throughout adolescence
- Those necessitated by sudden injury or illness require planning on demand

## Unexpected Transitions

- Motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) are a leading cause of sudden and severe injury and disability for young adults in the US (Dorney, et al., 2019)
  - 9% of drivers involved in serious crashes are ages 15-20, while this age group only accounts for about 5% of licensed drivers (NCSA, 2018)
  - Common serious injuries include traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and spinal cord injuries (SCI)

## Global Burden of TBI & SCI

- Global Statistics (Badhiwala & Fehlings, 2019)
  - Prevalence of TBI 759/100,000
  - Prevalence of SCI 368/100,000
  - Main causes (NSCISC, 2019)
    - TBI – 1) falls 2) MVA
    - SCI – 1) MVA 2) falls

## Traumatic Brain Injury in YAs

- Mild TBI – concussion
  - Account for the majority of TBIs (CDC, 2019)
  - Short or long-term impairments in memory, vision, emotional regulation, & motor skills
- Severe TBI
  - Impact similar to chronic disease
  - Lasting impairments in cognitive, motor, sensory, & behavior functioning (Harrison-Felix et al., 2015)

## Spinal Cord Injury in YAs

- Impairment depends on neurological level of injury
- Motor and sensory function are impaired
  - Higher up on the spinal cord → more involvement
  - Cervical → tetraplegia (impaired UEs, chest, LEs)
  - Thoracic injury → paraplegia (impaired chest & LEs)
  - Lumbar injury → paraplegia (impaired LEs)

## Spinal Cord Injury in YAs

- Impairment depends on extent of injury
  - Complete Injury
    - ~ 35% of injuries (NSCISC, 2018)
    - Spinal cord is fully severed
    - No motor or sensory function below the level of injury
  - Incomplete Injury
    - ~65% of injuries
    - Spinal cord is compressed or injured, but not fully severed
    - Some motor or sensory function is retained – can be unpredictable

## Unexpected Transitions

- Process is the same as for students with chronic disabilities, though timeline may be shortened
- Additional challenges center around the acute grieving process for caregivers and student (Yehene et al., 2019)

## OT Intervention for Transitions

- “Transition services provide an opportunity for occupational therapy practitioners to apply the full scope of practice in the school setting,” (AOTA, 2017)

## Evidence-based OT for transitions

- Early, paid work experience
- Student involvement in transition planning
- Emphasis on student's social competence
- Development of life skills
- Use of assistive technology
- Collaborative interdisciplinary and interagency teamwork (McConnell et al., 2012)

## OT Intervention for Transitions

- Evaluating strengths
  - Need for employment & education
- Facilitating skill development
  - Employment & Adult living skills
- Supporting development of self-determination
- Coordinating adult health care resources

## Evaluating Strengths

- Develop Occupational Profile, highlighting strengths and interests
- Assess
  - Self-Determination
  - Life Skills
  - Vocational Skills

## Self-Determination Assessment

- AIR Self-Determination Scale Purpose
  - profile student's level of self-determination, identify goals, develop strategies (Wollman et al., 1994)
- ARC Self-Determination Scale
  - Purpose - identify strengths and weaknesses, facilitate student participation in planning process, conduct self-determination research (Wehmeyer, 1995)

## Life Skills Assessment

- Life Skills Inventory/Independent Living Skills Assessment Tool (Washington State DSHS, 2000)
  - Caregiver-completed assessment that addresses the domains of money management, health, independent living, transportation, employment, postsecondary education, and social/interpersonal skills

## Vocational Skills Assessment

- Vocational Fit Assessment (Persch et al., 2015)
  - Assessment of student abilities & internship demands
  - Uses Demands & Abilities Transforming Algorithm
  - Creates Job Matching Report
    - Identifies the pros and cons of each potential job match
    - Reveals areas of need for goal setting and skill development

## Facilitating Development

- Promote the following:
  - A sense of personal identity
  - Autonomy in daily life activities
  - Independent decision making
  - Life skills for adulthood

## Facilitating Development

- Additional education needs for students with disabilities
  - Adult-based system navigation
  - adaptive behavior skills
  - disability awareness & disclosure (Berg, et al., 2017)

## Vocational Options

- Vocational options for those with disabilities
  - Day program, sheltered workshop
  - Internships to prepare for employment
  - Supported employment (workplace, customized, self)
  - Community/vocational rehabilitation
  - Competitive integrated employment

## Day Programs & Workshops

- Also called sheltered workshop employment
- Facility employment in which the majority of people have a disability
- Supportive environment, limited hours & demands

## Supported Employment

- Includes mentors who can help an employee learn a new job, social networks within the job, employee trainings, and assistance
- May include customized modifications to work environment, changes to certain job functions, adjustments to supportive policies or practices

## Customized Employment

- A process for individualizing the relationship between employee and employer that meets the needs of both (Wehman et al., 2013)

## Community Rehabilitation

- Vocational rehabilitation, work hardening
- A therapeutic process that helps those with developmental, psychological, physical, and other impairments or health-related disabilities obtain, maintain or return to employment

## Competitive Integrated Employment

- Competitive integrated employment is work performed by a person with a health-related disability ("health impairment") within an integrated setting. Wages are at least minimum wage or higher and at a rate comparable to non-disabled workers performing the same tasks.

## Case Study

- George is a 19 year-old young man working with OT in his high school. George has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and plans on staying in school until he turns 21, but he, his OT, and other school personnel have begun transitions planning.

## George - Evaluation

- Motor skills – WNL
- Education – Good performance in academics with normal routine, decline with disruptions
- Executive functioning – Poor organization, time management, difficulty prioritizing tasks

## George - Evaluation

- Social-Emotional Competence – Difficulty with self-awareness and understanding others' non-verbal communications

## George - Evaluation

- IADLs
  - Volunteers 2x/week at a local animal shelter
  - Independent to navigate public bus system, though frequently misses intended pick-up times
  - Good with personal money and health management

## George – Transition Plan

- Strengths – Cognitive skills, moderate to good self-determination, work experience
- Preferences – Wants to work with animals, may want to go to college but not right away
- Difficulties – Executive functioning skills, emotional regulation, social skills

## George – Transition Plan

- Measurable postsecondary goals
  - After graduation, George will find employment related to animal care
  - After college or vocational training, George will work in an animal service industry
  - George will navigate public transportation independently
  - George will set a personal budget

## George – Transition Plan

Supporting IEP Goal	Transitions Services	Persons Involved
By December 2021, George will complete a career assessment to identify careers that match strengths, skills, interests, preferences.	George will complete a career assessment and discuss the results with the transition team.	George, parents, OT, Transitions Team
By June 2022, George will research job opportunities related to animals and begin the application process.	George will obtain application forms for several job opportunities and will complete at least one.	George, parents, OT, Transitions Team

## George – OT Interventions

- Use of assistive technology is recommended to facilitate successful postsecondary transitions for students with disabilities (Goegan et al., 2019; Holzberg & O'Brien, 2016)
  - OT worked with George to program reminders and alerts which synced with his watch for scheduled activities

## George – OT Interventions

- Social Competence –
  - George improved self-awareness using cell phone recording self-monitoring (Bedesem & Dieker, 2014)
  - George worked with OT by using cognitive problem-solving strategies to plan and rehearse adaptive social responses (Roger, Ireland, & Vun, 2008)

## George – OT Interventions

- Life Skills –
  - OT ensured that George's remaining high school education included functional curriculum (Bouck, 2013) to ensure mastery of community mobility, personal safety, and use of technology

## George - Outcomes

- George adapted well to using new technology. His organization and timeliness improved, which decreased his stress, even with disruptions in routine.
- George also improved community navigation using public transportation.

## George - Outcomes

- George struggled most with social-emotional skills. He problem-solved taking notes on his cell phone to jot down reminders about interpreting non-verbal communication. Although it was initially awkward, this increased his comfort in asking others for clarification and ultimately increased his social competency.

## George - Outcomes

- George was able to get a supported job at the local animal shelter right after high school graduation. He was reliable and on schedule. His supervisors appreciated his motivation and were able to slowly remove supports. George began to explore college after a year, attended a vet tech vocational program at the local community college.

## Thank you!

- Patti Sharp, OTD, MS, OTR/L