Project Ready

Occupational Therapy

What is Occupational Therapy? The goal of occupational therapy is to help patients with physical and/or mental disabilities to become as independent as possible with their daily activities, in order to live productive, satisfying and independent lives.

Scenario 1
Tell a story about students drinking and driving, eventually getting into a car accident. The driver is fine, however, his girlfriend sustained a spinal cord injury and is paralyzed from the waist down, without any active movement or feeling (sensation) below the waist. Talk about the emotional implications of this accident. Imagine how the driver would feel (guilt, legal implications, stress, ashamed). Talk about girlfriend’s physical deficits and how this will affect her everyday activities. How would she put on her pants, shoes, or socks? How would she go to the bathroom? How would her social situation change with a new physical disability (e.g. the prom, boyfriend, future job and family life)? At first, friends will be there for you, but after a while friends move on and family is all that is left.

Activity:
Ask the students: After sustaining a SCI (spinal cord injury), would you want to be dressed by another person and wear a diaper for the rest of your life, or would you want to be independent with those skills? This is what your occupational therapist can teach you after your injury:

(1) Putting pants on
Equipment needs: pants or shorts, long-handled reacher, leg lifter
Task: Have students put on pants using above equipment. Remember, students are unable to use stomach muscles, hips, or legs. Long-handled reacher is used as an extended arm to grasp pants, pull pants over foot and up to knees. Leg lifter is used to lift leg to place in pant hole.

(2) Putting socks on
Equipment needs: socks, sock aide
Task: Have students put socks on each sock using sock aide. Remember, students may not actively move legs.

(3) Putting shoes on
Equipment needs: shoes, long-handled shoehorn, long-handled reacher
Task: Have students put on shoes using above equipment. Discuss what type of shoe most people would prefer to wear after a SCI (Velcro, slip-on shoes: not the most stylish).
Scenario 2
Tell a story about a student who went to a party and under peer pressure tried drugs for the first time in order to be popular. The drugs were laced or contaminated, causing the student to suffer a brain bleed (stroke). The student is now unable to fully move or feel his entire right (or dominant) side. Discuss the emotional implications of suffering a stroke. How would one get dressed every morning with only one hand and leg functioning? How would your social situation change with a new physical disability (prom, significant other, future job and family life)? A long rehabilitation program will be required, taking time away from school, friends and social activities. There is also no guarantee that function will be recovered.

Activity:
Ask the students: After sustaining a stroke, would you want to be dressed by another person for the rest of your life, or would you want to be independent with this skill? This is what your occupational therapist can teach you after your injury.

(1) Putting a shirt on
Equipment needs: button-down long-sleeved dress shirt, tie
Task: Have students put on a shirt using only their non-dominant arm. Have students button shirt including cuffs one-handed. To make the task even more difficult, have students attempt to put on a tie one-handed. Comment on how long this task took. How long does it take to get dressed now every morning before school. Triple this time, and calculate how early one would have to get up every morning before school. What kind of clothing would be easiest to wear now (not the most fashionable—button-less clothing, Velcro clothing)?

(2) Identifying objects in a bag
Equipment needs: bag, eye mask, mitt or potholder, common objects, (i.e. pen, spoon, toothbrush, coins, comb)
Task: Wearing a glove, have students reach into bag on the floor (decreased arm movement), choose an object, and attempt to identify it with vision occluded or while wearing the eye mask. Discuss the length of time it took to identify the object. Discuss the feelings involved during this task (frustration, anxiety, embarrassment, stress). Apply this task to everyday life, for example searching in your purse or pocket for an object (cell phone, pen, change, etc.). How often do we do this without thinking or worrying that we will not be able to feel what is inside? Discuss other daily tasks that will be difficult with decreased sensation (water temperature, holding on to things, etc.).

(3) Opening containers and brushing teeth
Equipment needs: small container with lid, twist-top bottle, surgical glove, 2-pound wrap-around weight, twist-top toothpaste tube, toothbrush
Task: Assume student had a stroke that resulted in right-sided hemiparesis (no movement). Strap weight around right wrist to demonstrate increased heaviness of arm. Place glove on right hand to demonstrate decreased sensation. Have students open up containers and twist-top bottle using left hand only. Have student open toothpaste tube and apply toothpaste to brush one-handed. Discuss the task of brushing teeth one-handed, length of time, frustration involved, etc.

(4) Tying Shoelaces  
Equipment needs: Tennis shoes with shoestrings  
Task: Have students tie shoes one-handed. Make sure student is wearing shoe while tying. Discuss the type of shoe students would prefer to wear after sustaining a stroke.

Scenario 3

Tell a story about friends leaving a party. Some have been drinking, but they swear they have not been drinking much and everything will be fine. On the way, everyone is talking, laughing and having a great time with the radio on loud. Unfortunately, the driver takes a corner too fast and the car spins out of control. The car flips and throws you out of the backseat window. You wake up in the hospital, unable to understand what people are saying. You cannot control your arms and legs and you cannot see properly. You have sustained a traumatic brain injury.

Activity:

(1) Reading  
Equipment needs: Sheet of sentences with jumbled words (OT Handout #3) and an answer key (OT Handout #3 Answers)  
Task: Have students look at the handout in front of them, of a jumbled paragraph, and try to read it. Remind them of how everything they read will seem jumbled including road signs, etc.

(2) Copying a Design  
Equipment needs: Picture of a star, colored pen or pencil, large mirror, table, chair, tape, cardboard piece (to occlude vision)  
Task: Position table and chair in front of mirror. Tape picture of star on table. Have student look in the mirror and attempt to trace the star design without looking down (you may want to occlude vision with a cardboard piece held above paper while student is tracing). Discuss the difficulties experienced with this task, i.e., difficulty controlling movements, “telling your arm what to do”. Persons with a head injury often have difficulties with visual perception, visual-motor tasks and eye-hand coordination.
1. Today it is raining outside.

2. I am looking forward to going shopping today.

3. I just bought a brand new car.

4. My dream house will have a Jacuzzi.

5. My favorite color is red.
Occupational Therapy Scenario 3: Reading Activity - Sentences

1. Daoyt ti si niargni tdieosu.

2. i ma kgniloo dfrowar ot gniog pihpgnso dtoya.

3. i stuj tboguh a dnrab enw rac.

4. ym eardm useoh lliw veah a czzujai.

5. ym vofaeitr rcolo si edr.