Building Strengths: The Heart and Art of Therapeutic Recreation

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Look out cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies,
this is me

https://youtu.be/CjxugyZCfuw
Chiji Cards
Objectives

- Increase understanding of the role of therapeutic recreation in behavioral health treatment
- Explore evidence-based practices in TR
- Learn interventions to utilize within treatment settings and potential outcomes
- Increase knowledge of the benefits and application of strengths-based approaches to treatment

**Participate!**
TR/AT Services - Curriculum (Program Protocols)

- Fitness
- Mindfulness/Sensory
- Yoga/Meditation
- Labyrinth
- Team Building
- Horticulture/Garden
- Therapeutic Drumming/Music
- Healthy Living Education Series
- Art Therapy/Open Studio
Outcomes

- Improvement in physical health status
- Improvement in psychosocial status
- Improvement in cognitive status
- Improvement in life, recreation and community activities
- Improved understanding of 12-Step and Recovery principles
- Improvement in OVERALL WELL-BEING
TR/AT Services - Program Purpose

- Adjunct treatment service - Protocols
- Provide an alternative learning method - learn by doing
- Teach new recovery and life skills
- Manage symptoms
- Motivate and inspire
- Actively seek change
- Self-expression - non-verbal
- Emphasize the wellness and recovery connection
- Connect the Dots - 12 Step Philosophy, Higher Power, Spirituality - makes concepts tangible

Focus on client strengths
Meet

Jenny

Sara
A little about each girl

Jenny

- Fixates on animals and lights/motion
- Displays attention-seeking behaviors around peers
- Displays off-task behaviors when fatigued at school
- Is at times non-compliant
- Displays self-stimulating behaviors
- Displays poor socialization skills
- Has dependencies on others
- Runs away
- Has tantrums
- Disoriented and short attention span
A little about each girl

Sara

– Likes cats and playing computer games
– Likes to make friends
– Works hard at school, but likes to take breaks
– Stands up for herself when picked on
– Has many hobbies that interest and absorb her
– Chooses her friends wisely
– Loves people
– Goes for walks
– Insists on having her way
– Changes her mind about things at times
– Talented in some areas
https://youtu.be/MtduVS9BSxw
Principles of a Strengths-Based Approach

• Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths
• Difficulties are also sources of opportunity and challenge
• We do not know the upper limits of a participant’s capacity to grow and change – never assume we do!
• Collaboration (not expert domination) with participants
• Every environment is full of resources
• Context matters
• Hopefulness matters
• Strengths can be nurtured (thus, must be assessed, planned, focused on, and evaluated)
Assumptions in a Deficit-Based Approach

Since disease or pathology assumes the cause of the problem, it also becomes the solution.
Assumptions in a Strengths-Based Approach

The individual has aspirations and dreams

The individual may need help realizing those dreams
Understanding the Paradigm Shift From Different Perspectives

Youth development
Problem free is not fully prepared

Physical health
Absence of disease is not holistic health

Mental health
Absence of mental illness is not psychological well-being
Theories that Support the Strengths-Based Approach

Flow
Learned Optimism
Authentic Happiness
  • The Pleasant Life
  • The Good Life
  • The Meaningful Life
  • The Full Life
Well-Being
How does new research on brain functioning inform strengths-based practice?

Integration of psychology and neurology (fMRI, PET, QEEG.....)

Focus is power
   The act of paying attention creates chemical and physical changes in the brain.

Expectation shapes reality
   People’s preconceptions have a significant impact on what they perceive.

Attention density shapes identity
   Repeated, purposeful, and focused
Strengths- What the Research Says

- Increased use of **signature strengths**:  
- Increased life satisfaction  
- Increased happiness  
- Decreased depression  
- Increased engagement and hope  
- Increased involvement in life passions  
- More positive relationships  
- Increased progress toward life goals  
- And more...

• Seligman (2005)
Well-Being
The **PERMA** Model of Well-Being

**Positive Emotion**
Positive emotions are an essential part of our well-being. Happy people look back on the past with gladness; look into the future with hope; and they enjoy and cherish the present.

**Relationships**
Everyone needs someone. We enhance our well-being and share it with others by building strong relationships with the people around us - family, friends, coworkers, neighbours.

**Accomplishment**
Everyone needs to win sometimes. To achieve well-being and happiness, we must be able to look back on our lives with a sense of accomplishment: 'I did it, and I did it well'.

**Engagement**
When we focus on doing the things we truly enjoy and care about, we can begin to engage completely with the present moment and enter the state of being known as 'flow'.

**Meaning**
We are at our best when we dedicate time to something greater than ourselves. This might be religious faith, community work, family, politics, a charity, a professional or creative goal.

From Martin Seligman's *Flourish*, 2011
Well-Being

- LEISURE WELL-BEING
- COGNITIVE WELL-BEING
- PHYSICAL WELL-BEING
- PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
- SOCIAL WELL-BEING
- SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

Anderson & Heyne (2012)
What is recovery?
Recovery is a process of change whereby individuals work to improve their own health and wellness and to live a meaningful life in a community of their choice while striving to achieve their full potential.
Four Major Domains

Health: Overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) as well as living in a physically and emotionally healthy way;

Home: A stable and safe place to live that supports recovery;

Purpose: Meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society; and

Community: Relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.
What is wellness?
Wellness is...

- SAMHSA’s Wellness Initiative defines wellness as the presence of:
  - Purpose in life
  - Active involvement in satisfying work and play
  - Joyful relationships
  - A healthy body and living environment
  - Happiness
The Eight Dimensions of Wellness

**EMOTIONAL**
Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

**ENVIRONMENTAL**
Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

**INTELLECTUAL**
Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

**FINANCIAL**
Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

**SOCIAL**
Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

**PHYSICAL**
Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.

**SPIRITUAL**
Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.

**OCCUPATIONAL**
Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one's work.

Leisure and a Flourishing Life
Why do you play?
What are your favorite leisure activities? Why do you do them?
The Role of Leisure in a Strengths Approach

*Strengths approach*

- Leisure is a key component of life quality and well-being as it is controlled by the participant, providing important sources for self-determination and utilization of strengths.
- In the process of building meaningful leisure, well-being is improved across multiple domains.
Strengths – The Heart of Practice

A definition of strength:

The quality or state of being strong; vigor; power of resistance; vigor of action; a strong or valuable attribute; a source of power or encouragement; sustenance.

(Webster’s Dictionary)

• Internal Strengths
• External Strengths
Internal and External Strengths - Leisure
Flourishing through Leisure: An Ecological Extension of the Leisure and Well-Being Model (Anderson & Heyne, 2012)

PERSON in the ENVIRONMENT

Enhancing the Leisure Experience

Facilitation of leisure skills and knowledge:
- Savoring leisure
- Authentic leisure
- Leisure gratifications
- Mindful leisure
- Virtuous leisure

Facilitation of leisure environments:
- Real choices for leisure
- Typical lifestyle rhythms
- Social supports
- Inclusive environments
- Physical accessibility
- Administrative inclusivity
- Programming inclusivity

Developing Strengths and Resources

Facilitation of psychological and emotional strengths:
- Capacity for happiness
- Emotion regulation
- Self-awareness/self-acceptance/self-congruence
- Autonomy/self-determination/goal directedness
- Competence
- Optimism

Facilitation of cognitive strengths:
- Ability to attend
- Concentration
- Following directions
- Memory
- Problem Solving
- Goal setting
- Aspiration discovery

Facilitation of social strengths:
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Reciprocal relationship skills, friendship skills, leadership and citizenship skills
- Social confidence

Facilitation of physical strengths:
- Physical health
- Mobility
- Fitness - endurance, strength, flexibility
- Energy and vitality
- Physical activity skills

Facilitation of spiritual strengths:
- Hope and inspiration
- Sense of meaning and purpose
- Peace of mind
- Reflection and wisdom
- Self-actualization
- Sense of connectedness/feeling a part of something bigger
- Other character strengths and virtues

Facilitation of spiritual resources:
- Culture of hope, support and encouragement
- Proximity to nature
- Quiet places in public spaces
- Places of spiritual nourishment
- Beauty and aesthetics in the environment

From the Leisure and Well-Being Model (Caruthers & Hood, 2007; Hood & Caruthers, 2007)

LEISURE WELL-BEING
I find enjoyment in my leisure experiences and they positively impact other aspects of my life

COGNITIVE WELL-BEING
I think in a focused way and learn eagerly

PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
I feel happy and perceive I am in control of my life

SOCIAL WELL-BEING
I relate well to others and belong to valued social groups

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING
I do and act in my daily life with vitality and no barriers

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING
I live my life hopefully, in harmony with my values and beliefs

WELL-BEING
I experience a state of successful, satisfying, and productive engagement with my life

A Flourishing Life

Environmental resources and personal strengths that cultivate growth, adaptation, and inclusion

What the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Does

Participant’s goals, dreams, and aspirations

Outcomes the Participant Experiences
Physical Well-Being

• What does the research say?
  – Physical activity:
    – Improves neuroplasticity and the ability of the brain to learn
    – Decreases anxiety and depression
    – Improves ability to concentrate (esp. ADD)
    – Guards against negative effects of stress
    – Reverses aging process
Spiritual Well-Being

- **What does the research say?**
- Aesthetic environments and access to nature strengthen spiritual well-being
- Belonging to a faith community or regularly practicing a form of spirituality promotes many benefits:
  - Live a healthy lifestyle
  - Have a sense of purpose
  - Enjoy a consistent social network
  - Cope effectively
  - Derive meaning from both ordinary and traumatic events

Lyubomirsky (2008)
Strengths-Based Implementation
Values in Action
Signature Strengths Questionnaire

• Measures character strengths and virtues
• 24-item short form
• Long form online www.authentichappiness.org
Mindfulness
Nature-Based
Sensory
Music
Practice: Mindfulness

Rock Stacking
PRACTICE: Mindfulness

Ocean Drum
Wellness

NEW-R-
Nutrition and Exercise for Wellness and Recovery

Case Studies-
Female- RWC
Male- RHC
Practice: Wellness

Yoga Pretzels
Sensory Self-regulation
Pause-Connect-Engage
Team Building
PRACTICE: Team Building

Group Juggle

Helium Stick
Labyrinth - data

- Blood Pressure Monitoring

Of the 90 clients, 50 or 56% had an improvement in their systolic blood pressure after participating in the labyrinth session with an average improvement rate of 10.28 mmHg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of cl.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>result</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Improved, Avg = 10.28 mmHg, Min = -2 mmHg, Max = -36 mmHg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>no change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>n/a (pre or post measure was not documented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>did not improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
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Yoga- data

- **Pre/post relaxation response**

Each yoga session we collected pre/post scores
10-point Likert Scale
Relaxation Response

<table>
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<th>Summary:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of clients that improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total clients surveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of clients that improved</td>
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Sensory- data

- Pre/post surveys- Sensory Connection Self-Regulation
  - Rating Scale for Group Experience (each session)
  - Proficiency Rating Scale for Self-Regulation Skills (beginning and end of program)
  - Measures: anxiety, mood, and ability to focus

![Pie chart showing outcomes from the sensory group: 63% improved, 21% declined, 16% no change.](image-url)
Leisure Step-Up (Dehn) - data

- **Young Adult Men’s**

Preliminary data shows noted increase in self-reports on the following indicators:

- Perception of leisure being enjoyable
- Perception of ability to plan leisure time independently
- Interest in exploring new leisure interests
- Perception of how good they feel physically
- Perception of their ability to concentrate and focus on tasks and remain engaged in leisure activities
- Perception of healthy diet intake
- Perception of enjoyment of social situations
- Perception of self-esteem
- Perception of ability to manage stress with healthy coping skills
- Reported decrease in depressive symptoms
Mindfulness (FMI)- data

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fribourg Mindfulness</th>
<th>% of clients that improved</th>
<th>Average score improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RHC A2 (n = 33)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>RHC EUnit (n = 9)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n = 42)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Body Part Debrief

How could you use strengths-based TR in your practice?
References

- Van Hout, M. C. Perception of social context and activity following participation in a physical fitness intervention during residential adolescent addiction treatment.
To learn more:

www.recreationtherapy.com
www.arttherapy.org
www.samhsa.gov/wellness
Questions?