



# Teaching The Value Of Co-occupations For Clients With Dementia To Care Staff And Caregivers At South Highland's Adult Day Center.

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## Introduction

Co-Occupations involves two or more people that engage in a task through shared meaning (Pickens et al., 2009). Engaging in a meaningful task with others can build a strong sense of connection and emotional bond. In an adult day center, employees and clients with dementia tend to have challenges with building that strong sense of connection. Ninety percent of people with dementia experience behavioral and psychological symptoms, such as psychosis, aggression, depression, and cognitive decline in functioning (Aarsland, 2020). These symptoms can impact an individual's ability to complete a simple task, together. Employees may find this difficult to adapt to, while incorporating activities for them to participate in, together. This imbalance or lack of reciprocity can cause a strain on the staff and lead to burnout (Duffy et al., 2009). Co-occupations are known to significantly boost engagement and provide sense of self-worth. Studies have shown that participation in a co-occupations are known to decrease social isolation and behavior disturbances in dementia clients (Groenendaal et al., 2022). When behavior problems are reduced, care staff are likely to have a better outlook on their role within the day center. Ultimately this collaboration of co-occupations provides a more positive, and productive outcome for staff and clients.

- Purpose of project:** To develop an educational program for care staff and caregivers on ways to increase engagement in co-occupations with clients that have dementia.

## Methods

### Program Development:

- Part 1-** Design educational program and materials.
- Created by input from site mentor and staff, observation of services provided at site, and extensive literature review.
- Part 2-** Design post survey and evaluation form.
- Part 3-** Implement the values of co-occupation program with care staff.
- Part 4-** Interpret post survey and evaluation results.

### Program Details:

- Provides knowledgeable information on the values of co-occupations and training on activities to implement with clients and caregivers.
- The program consisted of educational sessions for the staff at South Highland Adult Day Center.
- Participants were asked to complete a 12-question, Likert scale survey at the end of the educational program to measure satisfaction with program. The survey contained 2 open-ended questions for narrative feedback.
- Participants were evaluated on their performance with implementing activities with clients.
- Family caregivers were provided with a brochure version of the program. See brochure version below.



### Program Participants:

Four care staff members employed at South Highland's Adult Day Center.

### Program Topics:

- Understanding the importance of co-occupations.
- Tips/strategies to overcome stressors that impact client engagement.
- Demonstration of activities to implement with clients at site.

**Activities:** Sensory Bin, Aromatherapy, Bingo, and Bracelet-making

## Results

### Number of participants

Four

### Number of educational sessions

Four

### Survey Results

Table 1: Care staff completed a post survey that measured the overall satisfaction of the program

Care Staff Experience					
Please rate the following statements based on your experience with the sessions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I can identify examples of co-occupations appropriate for clients at South Highland Adult Day Center					4
2. I feel confident adapting co-occupations to meet different clients' abilities and needs		1			3
3. I observed increased engagement from clients during the implementation of activities.		1			3
4. The strategies presented are practical and can be easily implemented at work.		1			3
5. The materials were resourceful and useful.		1			3
6. I feel confident about implementing the bingo activity with clients.		1			3
7. I feel confident about implementing the bracelet making activity with clients.		1			3
8. I feel confident about implementing the sensory bin activity with clients		1			3
9. I feel confident about implementing the aromatherapy activity.		1			3

### There were two open-ended questions

**1<sup>st</sup> question-** Suggestions with improving program or activities?

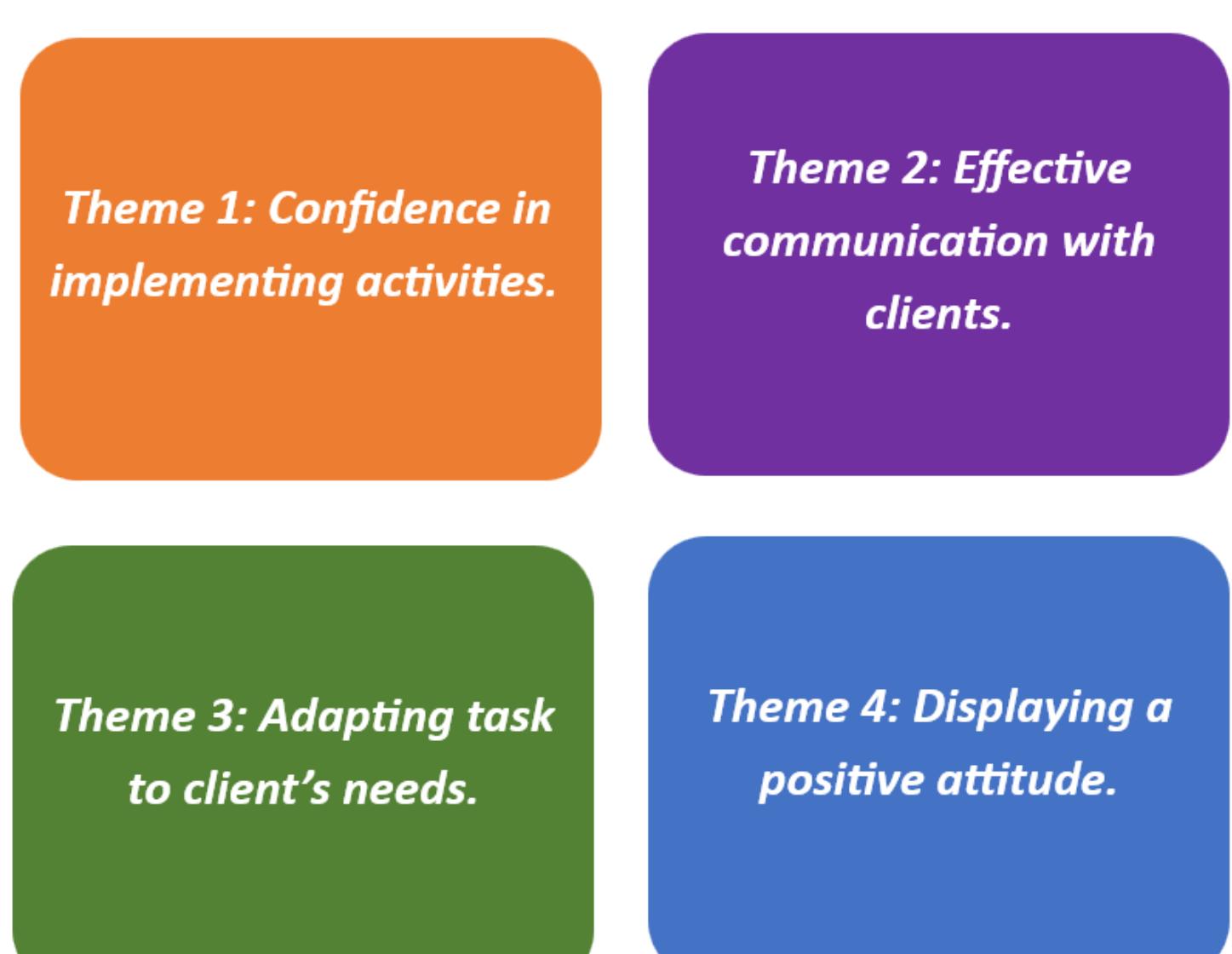
- "Take the participants on field trips from time to time"
- "More frequent training"
- "No suggestions at this time"

**2<sup>nd</sup> question-** Any additional training, resources, or support with moving forward?

- "There's nothing else I can think of at this time"
- "More hand's on training"
- "I would like to learn more tips and strategies"

### Evaluation Results

The evaluation form addressed four categories: Engagement/ Attention, Social Interaction, Motor Skills, and Cognitive Response. These are the emerging themes identified:



## Discussion

### Findings

- Program was effective in improving care staff attitude, engagement, and bonding with care staff/dementia clients.
- Training supported staff learning, confidence in their teaching, and adaptation of the activity.
- A person-centered approach promotes optimal learning with dementia clients
- One staff member reported "disagree" due to the limited number of sessions.

### Limitations

- Limited staff participation.
- Brief timeframe for implementation of the program.
- Staff workload and time constraints.
- Dementia client level of cognitive acuity.

## Conclusion

The project included the developing of an educational program to teach the importance of co-occupations and ways to instill co-occupations with dementia clients. The development of the program consisted of obtaining information from the site, through staff interviews and observation of services that were provided. Additionally, an extensive literature review for the program content was utilized within the development. Once the program was developed, care staff completed the program and concluded the effectiveness of the content with staff. The results of this project proves that care staff greatly benefit from the knowledge as it enhances a positive outlook in their care staff role. Participating in co-occupations with others can create fulfillment and everlasting experiences as the neurocognitive decline might feel lonely for the client, and taxing for the care staff. For care staff, and dementia clients, engaging in co-occupations can improve their quality of relationship and understanding of each other. Limited educational programs are found on this specific subject. This further proves the need for occupational therapy practitioners and other professionals to continue to promote education on the values of co-occupations. Lastly, co-occupations are important in maintaining quality of life efforts, as it encourages meaningful activities for the client despite the disease progression.

## References

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