The Value of Activity

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Aims of today

• To think about the value of activity
• To identify why activity is important to our physical and mental wellbeing
• To think about how the current COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the activities of the people with learning disabilities you know, care for and support
• To think about the people with learning disabilities you know, care for and support
The role of occupational therapy

• Occupational therapy takes a “whole-person approach” to both mental and physical health and wellbeing and enables individuals to achieve their full potential

• “Occupation” as a term refers to practical and purposeful activities that allow people to live independently and have a sense of identity. This could be essential day-to-day tasks such as self-care, work or leisure

• Activities are the therapeutic tools of occupational therapy
Why is activity important?

- Gives people valued roles.
- Helps people to feel valued.
- Provides opportunities to experience variety in life.
- Increase people’s chances of interacting with others in meaningful ways.
- Increases the possibility of gaining respect from others.
- Attracts others into our lives.
- Improves quality of life.
- A good mix of activities assists in maintaining or improving people’s independence, health and well-being.
How has COVID-19 impacted on our activities?

• We are all having to do things in different ways because of the impact of COVID-19

• Usual routines are harder to follow

• Our roles might have changed or have been put on hold

• Our preferred activities might have been put on hold

• We are experiencing a loss of choice and control
Top tips to keep active and keep well

- Have a routine
- Variety is good
- Prioritise what is important
- Set yourself some goals
- Keep in touch with people
- Diet and exercise
- Get a good night’s sleep
• Describes being unable to engage in meaningful activities due to factors a person cannot control

• This has been an experience people with learning disabilities have had more than most

• The whole world is now experiencing the impact of this collectively

• Can prolong mental and physical illness, lead to erosion of an individuals’ skills

• This is the core business of occupational therapist in learning disabilities and where our skills are so often focused
The impact of the pandemic on the individuals you support

• Even more loss of choice and control
• Even more loss of roles
• The environment has changed - even at home there may be PPE
• Daily activity disrupted - day centres/support staff not available as usual
• Impact of not fully understanding what is going on why for some
• Hard to get materials to do valued activities - craft/flour/seeds!
The impact of the pandemic on the individuals you support

- Loss of motivation to engage – feeling low
- Cannot access the community as usual
- Loss of social and physical contact
- Dealing with loss
- Families and carers having an increased load
Thinking about the people you are supporting: *The Person*

- Consider the person:
  - What roles are important to them?
  - What is most meaningful to them?
  - What do they value?
  - What helps them to feel safe, secure and have some choice and control?

- How can this be maintained?
Thinking about the people you are supporting:

The Activities

• Can you maintain (any, some, all of) the usual weekly timetable?
• Have a visual timetable, developed with the person you are supporting
• What about the activity is key— is it the doing, the experience, the end result?
• Can you try something new?
• Think about the persons interests, skills, abilities and support needs
Swap shop!

• **Usual activity:** Sports session  
  ✓ **Alternative:** Sports in the garden, online ballet, online Zumba, Wii-fit

• **Usual activity:** Allotment with day service  
  ✓ **Alternative:** Can you still visit? have a gardening corner, plant some potatoes

• **Usual Activity:** Arts and craft class  
  ✓ **Alternative:** Arts and craft activities at home, on line ideas, ‘virtual’ group

• **Usual Activity:** Coffee shop  
  ✓ **Alternative:** Online chat and coffee with friends/family, make some cakes

• **Usual activity:** Daily exercise  
  ✓ **Alternative:** Planned regular walks: what can you add to the environment?
Thinking about the people you are supporting: The Environment

• Is the TV on all day? Is it the news? How helpful is this?
• Build opportunities for social interactions into the day
• Think about the activities and spaces you use – try not to spend all the time in one space
• Have a visual timetable, developed with the person you are supporting
Think about all aspects of daily life

• Where are the opportunities for the individual you support to become more involved?
• Is there a greater role they can and would like to play in life?
• Self care
• Domestic activities
• Leisure Activities
Moving forward – The new normal?

• Engagement in activity has never been more important!
• Preventing long term isolation and occupational deprivation
• The world will look different - the rules are likely to be different

• How to support transitions ‘back’…
• Re engaging with previously valued activities, perhaps differently.
• What will this mean for people with learning disabilities?
Questions? Ideas? Sharing?