

BOOK REVIEW

Creativity in Occupational Therapy: Person, Process, Product

Author: Alenka Oven, Head, Occupational Therapy Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

What is the common denominator of creativity and occupational therapy? Moreover, which creativity do we have in mind; that of a client or an occupational therapist?

The author of this monograph uses the fundamental principle of modern occupational therapy as a starting point – everything that takes place in the occupational therapy treatment process is focused on the client. When receiving health care, we all probably want to be treated professionally and competently as well as empathically and with respect of our dignity and rights. This also applies to our encounters with occupational therapists. An occupational therapist is expected to approach a person with empathy, understanding and patience, to carefully examine and evaluate the situation, and together with the person look for optimal solutions, which are always tailored to an individual.

In occupational therapy, creativity has long been recognized as one of the most efficient therapeutic approaches. Its role in therapy is increasingly emphasized. If occupational therapy is to focus on the individual, who is always unique and special, then occupational therapists must always calibrate their knowledge, skills and experience according to the client. This goal, however, can only be accomplished by using a creative approach. The academic curiosity of Dr Oven does not limit itself to the creative activities of a client, which can contribute to rehabilitation and empowerment. The crucial question she aims to answer concerns the other part of the relationship between a professional and a client; what are the characteristics of an occupational therapist that manifest in his or her work and contribute to the therapeutic efficacy of the relationship with a client?

Based on extensive research, the monograph provides answers to the following questions: What enables a meaningful and efficient occupational therapy treatment that is client-centred? Which processes help an occupational therapist combine his or her knowledge into an efficient tool that can facilitate an individual treatment? Why is the creativity of an occupational therapist crucial for both the client and the therapist? Which factors either inhibit or facilitate the creativity of an occupational therapist?

The author argues that while creativity is one of the essential characteristics of a human, it is also the *modus operandi* in the process of occupational therapy. The practical implications of her work suggest, firstly, a need for a restructure of the current occupational therapy education so that the students of occupational therapy can be encouraged to use divergent thinking abilities, think outside of the box, and look for novel solutions to complex problems. Secondly, the author also implies the need for conscious elimination of limiting structures, rigid working procedures, narrow protocols and traditional doctrines in the environments where occupational therapists practice, so that they can work more flexibly. Such environments would not only allow the creativity of occupational therapists, but they would also support it.

The findings from the author's practical work and the examination of theories show that an essential shift is required in the way creativity is approached in occupational therapy. Dr Oven shows the reader that a Copernican Revolution might be needed. Creativity is not merely another tool in the hands of an occupational

therapist that makes him or her more efficient. It is the distinctive ability that separates a doctrine-led routine approach from the approach that is centred on a client and his or her needs.

I recommend this publication to all health professionals interested in exploring the modern concept of individualised health care through the lenses of occupational therapy. An occupational therapist enacts his or her creativity through the uniqueness of a case, more specifically, through the specifics of the personality of a client within his or her circumstances. The monograph is also a valuable academic resource for occupational therapists, students and experienced practitioners.

This manuscript is a timely, fresh and exciting read, that addresses several critical questions in the field of occupational therapy that are connected with the human, its vulnerability, and the need for a purpose-filled existence as well as with our shared humanity that should mark the professional relationship between the therapist and the client. This humanistic approach can only be achieved by supporting the client's abilities, initiating new possibilities and leaning on the creative potential of a therapist who is sensitive to the needs of others.

Dr. Zalka Drglin

National Institute of Public Health
Ljubljana, Slovenia