

Leisure Activities (2001)

Leisure Activities is a chapter found in *Occupational Therapy: Practice Skills for Physical Dysfunction*, a comprehensive text which provides practical and practice oriented technical detail for clinicians in the field of adult occupational therapy. Occupational therapy is focused on older adults' ability to function independently in all aspects of daily life, and this includes participating in leisure activities. With the decline in abilities, it becomes more difficult for adults to participate in leisure activities.

Chapter 18 of the text, *Leisure Activities*, informs the practitioner of the benefits of leisure for adults, contrasts various forms of leisure, identifies factors that may interfere with leisure exploration and activity, describes a comprehensive leisure evaluation, and identifies specific strategies to promote leisure activity for persons with disabilities.

An elderly person's inability to participate fully in chosen leisure activities results in a decreased sense of competence, decreased motivation, and depression. The occupational therapist focused on ensuring successful performance of leisure activities in the elderly has several goals:

- Identify problems that would inhibit successful participation in chosen activities.
- Take into account how much value is placed on leisure activities in a person's particular culture.
- Explore opportunities for participation in leisure activities within the community.
- Facilitate activities that are personally meaningful, focus on the strengths of the individual, and deemphasize limitations.
- Adapt the chosen activity and the environment to facilitate performance.
- Stimulate performance and help individuals function at their highest possible level.

The occupational therapist can work with the individual to facilitate participation in leisure activities, which offer both psychosocial and physical benefits for the elderly. Psychosocial benefits include increased sense of self-worth, release of aggression, and increased socialization. Physical benefits include increased circulation, improved balance, and maintenance of adaptive and coping skills.

With elderly populations suffering from dementia, more challenges exist for the occupational therapist to promote leisure activities. An even greater focus must be placed on what the individual *can do*, rather than what the individual *cannot do*. An occupational therapist can reduce feelings of stress and depression resulting from unsuccessful involvement in activities by providing obvious purposes for tasks, while offering familiar activities that target procedural memory.

This 7 page chapter can be found in *Occupational Therapy: Practice Skills for Physical Dysfunction*, published by Mosby Inc., an affiliate of Elsevier. The fifth edition of this book is no longer in print, however the sixth edition, entitled *Pedretti's Occupational Therapy*, can be purchased from the Elsevier website at http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/homepage.cws_home.