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Path guide: a way to include clients in Occupational Therapy education

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Introduction

In regard to required knowledge for staff in the mental health area, communication and interaction skills are very often identified as inadequate. In order to offer the client excellent care, the staff working in this field, such as occupational therapists, need to be properly educated in meeting and collaborating with clients. The client has to be seen as an individual with a past, present and future. To build a relation based on trustfulness, respect and acceptance is necessary and requires knowledge.

Objectives

The aim was to support the student to develop communication and interaction skills and to develop conscious use of self so it becomes an effective tool when meeting clients, both in the assessment and intervention process.

Description

Nine clients from the community health service served as guides. Before meeting the students the clients went through a course consisting of 5 occurs, 3 hours for each. The main objective for the course was to learn how feedback can be given, and to develop the role as a guide.

During semester two in the occupational therapy program each student individually interviewed a client regarding his/her ability to manage the daily life situation. During the interview a tutor was present. The interview took approximately 20 minutes and directly afterwards the student received feedback from the client and the tutor.

Discussion and Contribution to the Practice

For many students this was their first meeting with a client and especially with a client from the mental health area. The skill training section gave students the opportunity to test out their own ability in communication and interaction under safe conditions. The skills training gave the students very important experience and knowledge that would be especially useful during their coming field work. The students perceived the feedback from the clients as particularly valuable. In addition the clients took on a new role, finding themselves in the position of supporting someone.