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Coaching as an Enablement Skill in Occupational Therapy

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Introduction:

Coaching has been formally adopted as an enablement skill by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. What coaching is and how occupational therapists can incorporate the coaching approach and apply coaching skills in practice have yet to be clearly outlined.

Objectives:

The objectives of this paper are to a) explain coaching and the coaching approach, b) outline how coaching skills can be used by occupational therapists to enhance client enablement, c) propose and describe occupational therapy coaching competencies, and d) report on a new MScOT level course that teaches coaching skills to occupational therapy students.

Discussion:

Coaching is a specific conversational partnership for facilitating client occupational change from their current state to a more desired state. The process is highly client-centred, fosters self-directed learning and is grounded in self awareness, personal values and strengths recognition. A key focus is assisting clients to discover what is important to them, contribute more of their unique self to the world and thus create a greater sense of meaning in their lives. There are growing numbers of occupational therapists around the world who have added coach training and skills to their practice toolbox.

Results/Discussion:

The distinguishing feature of coaching in the context of occupational therapy is its focus on occupation. The goal of coaching in occupational therapy is the enablement of occupational change that fosters optimal client health and well-being. Occupational performance is the dynamic interaction of person, occupation and environment. Coaching enables by beginning at the level of the person (affective, cognitive, spiritual). As a result of the client's action-reflection-learning cycle throughout the coaching process, changes can occur at all three levels (person/occupation/environment). This paper will propose occupational therapy coaching competencies in the areas of a) Therapist Mindset, b) Client-therapist relationship and c) Occupational therapy coaching process.

Conclusion:

This paper will explain the potential and benefits of using the coaching approach and skills in occupational therapy.

Contribution:

The coaching approach and coaching skills offer valuable new strategies and intervention possibilities for a profession that enables clients to adapt, redesign and make changes in their lives for health, meaning and fulfillment.