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Finding the Spirit in Client Narratives

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Competent occupational therapy delivery involves developing cross-cultural and contextual awareness, knowledge, and skills to optimize client treatment outcomes. To do this, occupational therapy practitioners need to look at elements embedded in the client's narrative, particularly spiritual aspects. Many healthcare providers present themselves as having privileged positions and being bodies of knowledge when confronting clients who seek their services (Franits, 2005). Too often the client's perspective and position has little or no opportunity to come forth to present an equally important body of knowledge...the context of being, which is embedded in the client's narrative. Because disability fragments the client's life, only the client can subjectively relate how the event impacts his/her life. Sharing this story uncovers things that are meaningful to the client. In creating a space for the client to share his or her story, the groundwork for trust is constructed. This author suggests a process for constructing authentic relationships through client narratives to find the client's spirit. Hope can be kindled through the spirit (that which the person feels connected to). The benefit of utilizing client narratives to develop occupational therapy treatment strategies includes greater client compliance, improved health outcome, and increased cultural awareness for both the client and the healthcare provider.