

# REFLECTIONS OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TECHNICIAN, MY DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNEY

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# My background

- ▣ 2<sup>nd</sup> youngest of seven children
- ▣ Grew up in Apartheid years
- ▣ Parents worked in factories after school
- ▣ Grew up with strong values
- ▣ Did not finish matric
- ▣ Married with three children
- ▣ Work history:
  - 1980-1991: St Josephs Home
  - 1991- 2007: Lentegeur Psychiatric Hospital
  - 2007-current: Stikland Psychiatric Hospital

# Background to Problem

- ❑ Nine years after becoming an occupational therapy assistant (OTA), a national decision was made that all OTA's who wished to bridge to an OT degree first had to write a special national examination to bridge to an OT Technician. Optimistically I passed this exam and became an OTT. However:
- ❑ I could not pursue the OT degree because it required that I give up my job to study full time and financially I could not afford this.
- ❑ A further national decision was made in 2002/3 that there will no longer be any further OTT/OTA training.
- ❑ Limited opportunity for mentoring & support because I was mostly supervised by newly qualified, less experienced OT's who in many instances knew less than me.

# Problem described

- ▣ I was left with a deep sense of loss: I could not become an OT, and I was now part of a “dying profession.”
- ▣ I was disappointed and despondent.
- ▣ I had lost hope, my sense of belonging, my professional identity, my purpose...
- ▣ My sense of “being” or “becoming” within OT was gone...

# My journey begins

- ▣ My main objective was to regain my sense of being and becoming to be able to give my best to my clients, my family and my colleagues.
- ▣ I needed to find meaning for me, within me...
- ▣ I wanted to be a better version of me
- ▣ I intended to regain my sense of purpose and self-identity

# Holistic approach to my own development

How did I get my “Mojo” back?

## LIVING SPACE

- TAKE GOOD CARE OF ME
- TOOK UP RUNNING AS A HOBBY
  - 7 Comrade marathons
  - 13 Two Oceans marathons
  - African X 3 day stage race
- ENOUGH SLEEP
- GOOD DIET
- ONGOING SELF REFLECTIONS
- SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT/FAITH BASED ACTIVITIES
- POSITIVE THINKING
- POSITIVE SELF TALK
- FOUND SAFE SPACES TO VENT/CONFIDE IN OTHERS



# LEARNING SPACE

- FORMAL
  - Wrote special exam at University of the Western Cape to obtain matric exemption (2007)
  - BA Degree (2012)
  - Post grad Honours degree in Public Administration (2014)
- INFORMAL
  - Short courses
  - Mentoring from outside my work place





# WORKING SPACE

- FOCUS ON MY CLIENTS AND THEIR WELL-BEING
- VALUE-BASED PRACTICE
  - RESPECTFUL
  - CARING
  - INNOVATIVE
  - INTEGRITY
  - RESPONSIVE
  - COMPETENT
- MAKE WORK FUN
- ONGOING SELF DEVELOPMENT
- BE CURIOUS, HAVE AN ENQUIRING NATURE
- TEAM PLAYER
- SHARING OF SKILLS
  - OTA workgroup
- SELF REFLECTION
- EXPANDED MY CIRCLE- DRAW ON OTHERS' EXPERTISE



## SOCIALIZING SPACE

- QUALITY TIME WITH MY FAMILY
- COFFEE DATES WITH OLD AND NEW FRIENDS



## How did I change...?

- ▣ “It is not the strongest of species that survives. Nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change”.

Charles Darwin

# How did I change...?

- ▣ Emotionally stronger
- ▣ Inner-meaning & purpose regained and even stronger
- ▣ Sense of fulfilment
- ▣ Self-confident
- ▣ Enhanced leadership skills, able to inspire others, influence decisions
- ▣ Passionate about OT as a profession, happy to be able to contribute to the process
- ▣ Optimistic outlook on this journey called life

# Conclusion

- ▣ Recognize that leadership can be found at all levels of the profession.
- ▣ Employee needs:
  - Have purpose, meaningful contribution
  - Skilled to do the job
  - Informed about the company's future
  - Level of autonomy
- ▣ “Happiness is an inside job!”

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING