

# Understanding effort and maximum effort – their vital importance to activity participation, being, becoming and occupational therapy

Dr Wendy Sherwood PhD, MSc, DipCOT, Vona du Toit Model of Creative Ability Foundation (UK)

Assoc. Prof. D Casteleijn; Dr C Taylor



CONNECTED IN DIVERSITY: POSITIONED FOR IMPACT  
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. 21-25 MAY 2018

[WWW.WFOTCONGRESS.ORG](http://WWW.WFOTCONGRESS.ORG)

# BACKGROUND

The theory of creative ability (Du Toit, 1974)

Effort and maximum effort essential for:

- Mastering challenges
- Growth in motivation and occupational performance
- Health and well-being

Just right  
challenge –  
for flow

(Csikszentmihalyi  
1988)

Effortless

# PROBLEM – WHAT IS EFFORT?

## Effort

- 1) how much effort a client is capable of;
- 2) whether s/he is putting in adequate effort for mastering challenges;
- 3) how to facilitate effort.

No definitions, descriptions, explanations in OT theories, models, measures or OT literature



Effort cannot be adequately understood, assessed, facilitated or measured

Aims: To formulate a theory of the relation of effort and maximum effort to the conditions for, process, and results of activity participation.

Formal Grounded Theory – theory generation; applicable broadly

OTs providing activity-based therapy to patients in mental health and physical settings in South Africa (observation of, followed by interviews with OTs and patients); interviews with OTs in the UK

Observation and/or interviews with members of the UK public.

Total sample 71

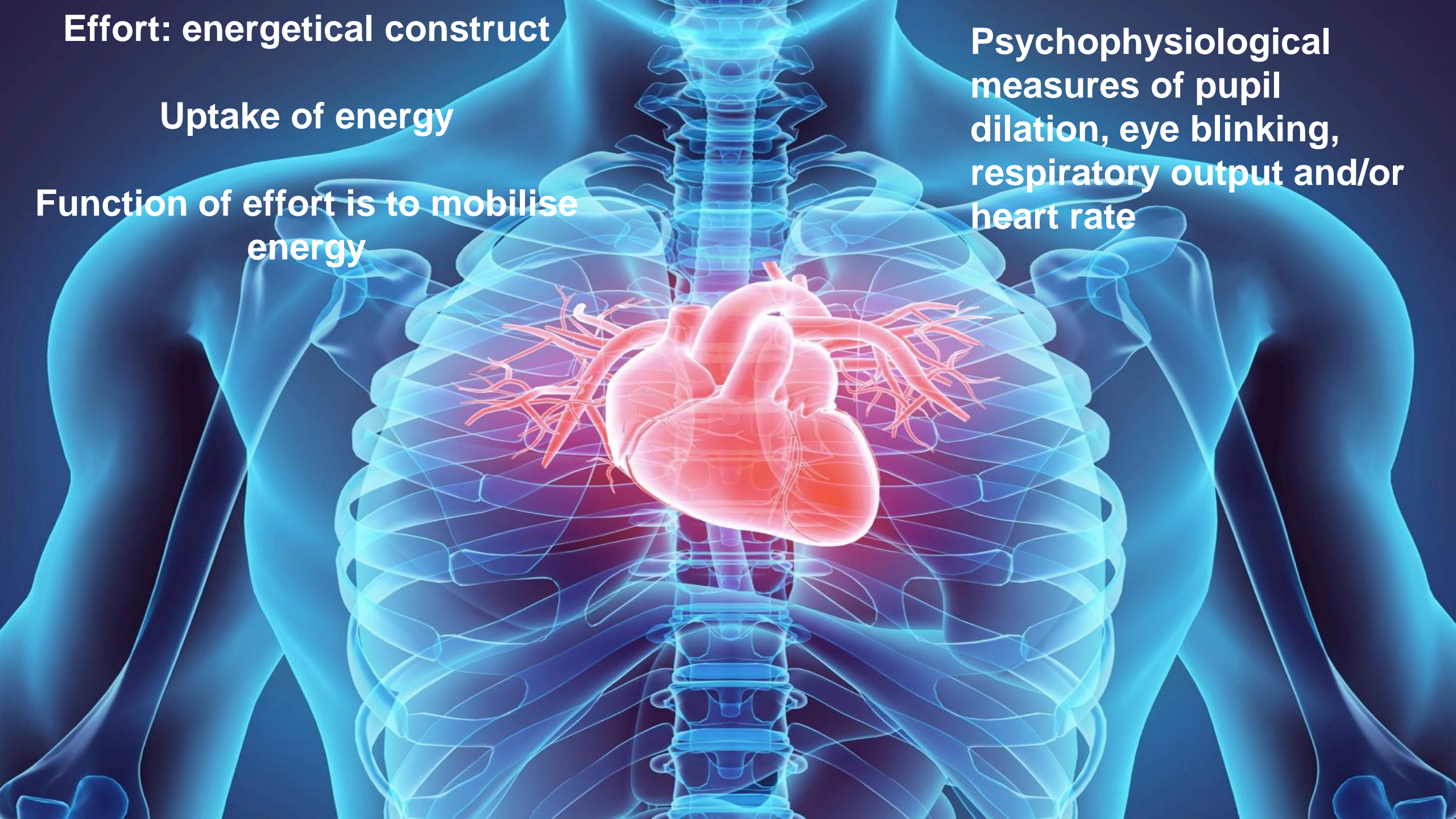
Focus group, literature on effort

**Effort: energetical construct**

**Uptake of energy**

**Function of effort is to mobilise energy**

**Psychophysiological measures of pupil dilation, eye blinking, respiratory output and/or heart rate**



**Putting-in** yourself as a resource for activity participation, included one's energy, mental and physical function, knowledge, abilities, skills.

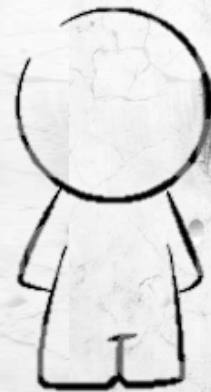
- **meeting the activity with the self**
- **giving yourself; connecting with, and to the activity**
- **trying, active engagement (mental, physical)** in pursuit of a goal
- **stretching, straining, pushing**
- **motivated exertion** of the self



The more effort you put in, the more you get out –  
the more you try, or the greater the effort,  
the bigger or greater the outcome

***Becoming***

A negative feeling of being drained by lack of satisfying activity participation.



**Effort**

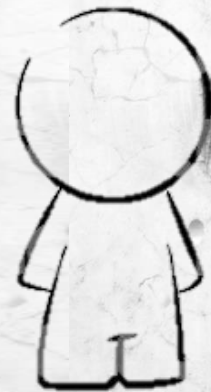
**CHALLENGING  
ACTIVITY  
PARTICIPATION**

***Dissatisfying being,  
not becoming***

## Function of effort

To satisfy wants, goals and needs, e.g. achieve a goal; bring about change in one's self; to be connected; gain satisfaction and enjoyment; regain roles, relationships and identity.

**Expression of motivation; of me.**



**Effort**

**CHALLENGING  
ACTIVITY  
PARTICIPATION**

Experience something of one's self - to know and experience one's self;  
show 'who I am', 'that I am', and that 'I can'

***Being -  
"I am"***



**Relating to one's self and to the external world; a fundamental aspect of living as a human**

**“Effort and will are inter-related within one's consciousness, and the feeling of effort is the fundamental criterion of the self”**

(Existentialist philosopher Maine de Biran, 1805)



**Effort**

**- Motivated exertion of myself, all that I am**

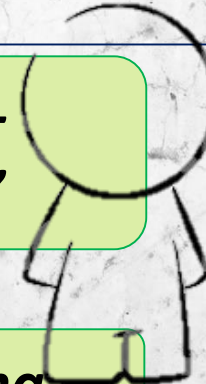
Uptake of energy, measured by pupil dilation, eye blinking, respiratory output and/or heart rate

**CHALLENGING  
ACTIVITY  
PARTICIPATION**

*Being -  
“I am”*

*Dissatisfying being,  
not becoming*

*Becoming*



For its own knowledge base, the occupational therapy profession needs concepts that explain occupational beings and how occupational therapy works as an applied profession to facilitate the process of change (Reed 2005).

Understanding effort and maximum effort  
– their vital importance to activity participation, being, becoming and occupational therapy

# WHAT IS EFFORT?

A subjective feeling of the motivated exertion of one's self in activity participation,

or a negative feeling of being drained by lack of satisfying activity participation.

A multi-dimensional construct influenced by a complex interplay of factors within and external to an individual.

Effort is situated within, or arises from the self, and is in the relation between the self and the world.

Has quantity and quality dimensions expressing quantity and quality of motivation and ability in action.

Observable referents (signs)

# WHAT IS EFFORT?

- Definitions of effort (minimal to maximum effort)
- Process leading to effort
- Signs of effort
- – assessment, intervention, measurement

The relation between attention, effort and motivation needs to be brought more clearly into the awareness of occupational therapists

Effort needs to be recognised as a key component of occupational performance

Understanding effort and maximum effort  
– their vital importance to activity participation, being, becoming and occupational therapy

Investigate the proposition that effortful activity participation can bring about change in occupational performance.

Develop observational measurement tools of effort; subjective experience of effort

Finally, I know what maximum effort is....

...it's doing a PhD!

Questions?

