


Volunteerism & Leisure

Alternative Paths to Competitive Employment
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Objectives

- ▶ Describe why some persons with chronic illness might not be appropriate for traditional work related services
- ▶ Appreciate the value of using volunteerism and leisure activities as strategies to support involvement in work roles
- ▶ Describe strategies for using volunteer and leisure occupations to explore return to work
- ▶ Describe the application of the Model of Human Occupation to a case illustration



Traditional Work Services

- ▶ Focus explicitly on return-to-work and require openness to imagining future narratives that may be dramatically different
- ▶ Typically focus on paid employment which may be perceived as a threat to receipt of public or private disability income/insurance
- ▶ Focus assessment/evaluation and intervention on work related skills and occupations
- ▶ Use return to paid employment as a primary outcome measure

Why some persons do not prosper in traditional work related service

- ▶ Chronic illness or disability **may** have negative impact on sense of identity and competence
- ▶ Chronic illness or disability that includes symptoms such as pain, fatigue, or GI complications may limit flexibility in occupational participation outside the home
- ▶ With long term decreases in participation persons may experience a decrease in social networks and an increased sense of isolation
- ▶ Fear and stigma are complicating factors that can make return to work more complicated
- ▶ Policies of public/private agencies may limit options for involvement in paid employment

Jerry

- ▶ 46 year old unemployed Black male diagnosed as HIV positive in 1989
- ▶ Receiving private disability payments and health insurance for the past four years.
- ▶ Resides in a small condominium which he and his partner bought.
- ▶ Jerry paid off the remainder of his mortgage using the life insurance benefits he received when his partner died of AIDS eight years ago.



Jerry

- ▶ Jerry had a stable work history as an information technology expert for a large local company until his partner died.
- ▶ He worked full time for the same employer for 14 years and enjoyed his work.
- ▶ When his partner died, Jerry became depressed and the depression began to impact his job performance and he began to miss work.
- ▶ In addition, he reports that several symptoms related to his AIDS and its treatment became markedly worse the last few years of work.
- ▶ These symptoms include significant fatigue and severe lower extremity neuropathy. The symptoms persist currently and interfere with many daily activities.



Jerry

- ▶ Left work 4 years ago when he applied and was approved for disability at his doctor's suggestion.
- ▶ Spends most of his time at home leaving only to visit the doctor, walk his dog or to go out with his family.
- ▶ Walking or standing for long periods of time aggravates his neuropathy symptoms (e.g. severe burning and tingling in feet and legs).
- ▶ He has groceries delivered, and barbers with other residents in his building to get other needs met.
 - Recently spent two days installing software on new computers for a woman who owns a cleaning service and in return she sent people to clean Jerry's apartment.



Occupational Therapy Assessment

- ▶ **The Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI-II)** and the **Worker Role Interview (WRI)**.
- ▶ Provided Jerry with forms to take home to complete the **Occupational Self-Assessment OSA**
- ▶ **Home visit** to complete a **functional assessment** to assess level of endurance and performance in IADL (i.e. cleaning, meal preparation, laundry).
- ▶ Discussed strategies for assessing his readiness for return to work and the process of seeking employment including review of his resume, his interview skills and his level of competency in work tasks specific to his field of information technology.



OPHI-II

- ▶ Reasonably strong identity as a worker despite his 4 year period of unemployment
- ▶ Numerous areas of occupational dysfunction in occupational competence.
 - identifies interests, goals and a desired lifestyle but does not pursue these areas and identifies that he is unable to make progress toward his goals.
- ▶ Through the life history narrative process, Jerry shared his story and the occupational therapist learned that Jerry stills has hope for an optimistic future.



WRI

- ▶ WRI format for persons with longstanding disability.
- ▶ Negatives or disadvantages for return to work outweigh the positives or advantages:
 - personal causation (lowered knowledge of capacity resulted in difficulty assessing his capacities and limitations)
 - values (lowered work goals)
 - habits (poor or diminished habits, disrupted and insufficient routines, limited ability to adapt and change his routines)
 - environment (worries over reaction and relationships with coworkers and boss, worries about making requests for reasonable accommodations and being perceived as a "weak link")

OSA

- ▶ Some difficulty with all volition items
 - doing activities I like, working towards my goals, making decisions based on what I think is important, accomplishing what I set out to do, and effectively using my abilities
- ▶ Some difficulty with three of the skill and performance items but also identified strengths in this area.
 - difficulty with physically doing what he needs to do, taking care of his condo and getting to where he needed to go
 - marked the following well (concentrating on tasks and managing his finances) and several that he did very well (taking care of himself, managing his basic needs, expressing himself to others, getting along with others, and identifying and solving problems)



Functional Assessment

- ▶ Observed Jerry prepare a small meal, perform some household tasks including vacuuming and putting a load of laundry in the washing machine and walk his dog.
- ▶ No evidence of any difficulty with performance of the tasks although Jerry noted that he typically would not have done much more without taking a significant rest period during which he would have watched television.
- ▶ Jerry explained that standing or walking for longer durations sometime resulted in flare ups of pain and tingling in his feet or experience significant fatigue. When asked, "How much more would it take to cause these symptoms?" Jerry replied, "I'm not exactly sure, I have learned to stop way short of that."
- ▶ No cognitive or perceptual difficulties were reported or observed at any point of the assessment process.



Planning Intervention

- ▶ Jerry had serious doubts about his capacity and his competence to reenter paid employment.
- ▶ Essentially paralyzed by fear of the possibility of losing the steady income from his disability insurance and the associated health care.
- ▶ Due to Jerry's fear and poor knowledge of capacity for occupational involvement, Brent suggested exploring volunteer and leisure occupations to assess capacity, improve skills and begin to reestablish social connections.



Planning Intervention

- ▶ Primary goal of simultaneously increasing the accuracy of Jerry's knowledge of his capacity and increasing his physical and psychological tolerance and his ability to persist in the performance of work, leisure, and IADL occupations.
- ▶ Jerry had maintained a relatively strong identity as a worker despite his 4 years of unemployment.
- ▶ Expressed a strong work ethic that included the feeling that he had the responsibility to financially care for and provide for himself.
- ▶ Goal: get off private disability, earn a regular income, and dependable health care.



Intervention-Step One (3 months)

- ▶ Volunteer opportunities where he could use his IT skills and leisure opportunities that would allow exploration of tolerance
- ▶ Jerry completed his homework and identified three activities that he had dropped.
 - Reported that he enjoyed going to church and set a goal of attending church again on a weekly basis.
 - He also reported that he used to belong to two different book clubs and so invited several neighbors and a friend from one of his old book clubs to begin a new club altering the location for another impetus to get out of the house
 - Joined "Take A Hike" club



Intervention Step Two-Volunteering (6 months)

- ▶ Jerry found several volunteer opportunities that served the multiple purposes of 1) updating his IT skills, 2) re-establishing daily routines and the habits that support them, 3) increasing Jerry's level of socialization, 4) creating current contacts who could act as references, and 5) provide a mechanism to accurately establish Jerry's tolerance level for sustained activity.
- ▶ Developed a daily schedule that allowed sufficient rest and time for Jerry to take frequent breaks with the agreement that he would increase his time spent in productive activity each week.
- ▶ Special emphasis on developing a schedule that balanced IADL, leisure, social activities and activities related to work/productive activity.



Volunteerism and Leisure

Intervention–Step Three (3 months)

- ▶ Reassessment including update of OSA and review of narrative slope
- ▶ Educational sessions on topics related to disability and employment.
- ▶ Meeting with IT expert to discuss typical job demands, recent changes and advances in the field, the current job market and strategies for updating his skills.
- ▶ Continued volunteering and building tolerance
- ▶ Meeting with a volunteer career counselor who reviewed his resume and strategies to make himself marketable.
- ▶ Jerry and Brent learned more about the potential gap in skills that developed while Jerry was unemployed and they were able to develop a shared understanding of the activity demands associated with the various work occupations that Jerry would be required to complete.



Intervention–Step 4 (2 months)

- ▶ Began to prepare for initial exploration of paid employment
 - Mock interviews with Brent and volunteer HR professionals
 - Resume preparation and review by volunteers
- ▶ Meeting with ADA consultant to discuss reasonable accommodations
- ▶ Meeting with MD to review medications

Outcomes

- ▶ Jerry chose to attend an IT recruitment fair to learn about possible current options and practice talking about himself to potential employers
- ▶ While at the fair he talked with a company that had a management training program in IT who expressed interest in Jerry and offered some part-time, flex-time and work from home options
- ▶ Jerry arranged an interview and was hired half-time with benefits 4 weeks later