

So, how are you managing your life?: Occupational Therapy techniques in the ESL classroom

Volunteer Management Conference
November 7, 2014

Rachel Johnson, Education Program Manager, MORE
Stephanie Meyer, St. Catherine University



ST. CATHERINE
UNIVERSITY

Accomplishing our mission:

- MORE's programs offer immigrant/refugee adults support to:
 - Stabilize themselves financially and emotionally
 - Empower them to increase their capacity to meet the needs of their families and to take an active role in our community



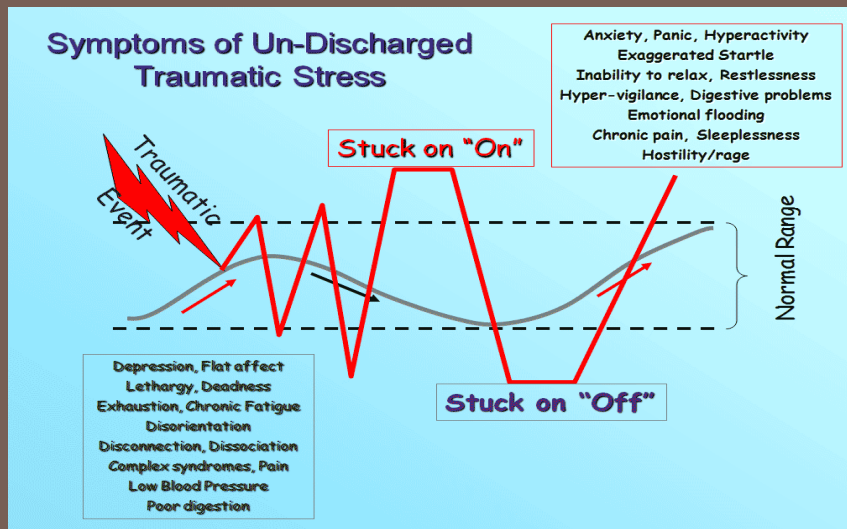
Accomplishing our mission:

Three major component program areas support meeting our mission:

- Basic Needs/Social Services
- Education
- Mental Health



Organizational principle: Trauma-Informed Care



Somatic Experiencing Institute

- An appreciation for the high prevalence of traumatic experiences in particular populations (i.e. refugees)
- A thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on the individual (Jennings, 2004)
- A new perspective where those providing the support shift from asking “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”
- A collaborative approach where healing is led by the program participant and supported by the service provider. CHOICE is key.
- At MORE we strive not only to address the impact of past trauma, but also to prevent future traumatic events through education and experiences.

Setting up the experiential-learning relationship

- 2005: St. Kate's contacted MORE to create a relationship between OT students, teachers and participants at MORE
- Goal: to assist students at MORE with their transition to MN through daily life living skills
- Goal: to provide teachers at MORE with ideas on how to incorporate daily living skills into lesson plans consistently
- Goal: to provide students at St. Kate's with an opportunity to learn about the significant life transitions a refugee experiences

Occupational Therapy: Living life to the fullest

- What is OT?
- How does it relate to the transition to living in MN?
- How does it relate to easing the effects of trauma?
- How does it help to keep further trauma from impacting the lives of newcomers?
- How is OT used in this context?



Components of the partnership



- Orientation to MORE
- MORE mentor/OT student cultural partners
- Classroom observation
- Classroom facilitation
- Feedback and Reflection

Sample Topics

- Safety (natural disasters, strangers, etc.)
 - Walking on the ice in Minnesota
- Family (cooking, leisure, celebrations, etc.)
 - Healthy, cost-effective snacks for kids
- Life Skills (money management, cooking, etc.)
 - Using the oven/stove/dishwasher
 - Practicing using money at the store



Sample Topics



- Mental Health (stress management, physical activity, etc.)
 - Creating and using stress balls, meditating, exercise
- Food (baking, gardening, ethnic foods, etc.)
 - Gardening in Minnesota
 - Reading ingredients on packages
 - Expiration dates
- Acculturation (holding on to important cultural traditions and integrating new ones)
 - Birthday parties
 - Holidays
 - Food

Sample Lesson

Session # and Date			
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 		
Session key words:			
Time	Section	Content	Supplies and room set up
5 minutes	Introduction	Active learning:	
5-10 minutes	Ice breaker	Active learning:	
10 minutes	Topic	Description/information/questions: Active learning: Measurement:	
10 min	Exercise	Description/information/questions: Active learning: Measurement:	
10 min	Break		
10 min	Snack	Information/questions: Active learning:	
20 min	Activity	Information/questions: Active learning: Measurement:	
5 min	Summary	Measurement:	
	Next session	Questions/plan:	
Backup plan			

An OT Lesson Experience: Thinking about Rituals

Try out an OT strategy used with low beginning level ESL students.



Outcomes for Learners



- Raised comfort with daily interactions in the community (shopping, transportation, etc.)
- Increased awareness of home safety needs (kitchen, garage)
- Higher level of attention to coursework after physical activity in the classroom
- Larger sense of community at school, persistence and resilience in ESL classes

Outcomes for teachers at MORE

- Ideas for physical activity breaks during lengthy class sessions
- Framework for holding difficult conversations in the classroom (talking about home country)
- Learn techniques for incorporating even more life information into the classroom



Outcomes for St. Kate's Students



- Appreciation for significant life transitions
- Opportunity to work with people from significantly different backgrounds
- Experience working with people whose first language is not English
- Opportunity to lead groups of learners

Steps for setting up your own OT relationship

- Determine what your program needs and goals are
- Explore potential partners
- Identify benefits and goals for partner organizations
- Think sustainability!
- Work out the logistics
- Area colleges with an OT/OTA program
 - Twin Cities: St Kate's, Anoka Technical College, Herzing
 - Southern MN: UMN - Rochester
 - Northern MN: St. Scholastica (Duluth), Northland Community and Technical College (Grand Forks)

Relationship Details

- At St. Kate's:

- How students choose MORE
- Prep work before visiting MORE
- Classroom assignments

- At MORE:

- Teachers' meeting to determine which classrooms are available for OT
- Choosing days and times
- Offering input on topics for their classroom, involving students in advance where possible



ST. CATHERINE
UNIVERSITY

Roles and Responsibilities

• Representative at St Kate's:

- Expectations for and from students
- Schedule for pre- and post-work as well as sessions
- Participating in the design of course and sessions
- Evaluation of students during class sessions

• Representative at MORE:

- Expectations for teachers and program
- Information on class language ability (oral and written), including potential need for interpreters
- Information on available materials
- Schedule for pre-session observations and meetings, sessions, post-session evaluation
- Evaluation from teachers, discussions with students

Roles and Responsibilities

• St Kate's Students

- Potential topics for classes found in literature of the field
- Design session plan for each classroom experience and facilitate
- Create or purchase any materials needed prior to sessions
- Evaluate engagement of learners during sessions

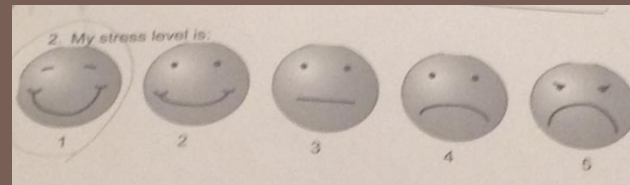
• Teachers

- Provide feedback on potential topics (perhaps even selecting after class discussion)
- Supported OT students with language strategies during each session
- Completed evaluation of OT student

Lessons Learned

Meaningful evolution of project required:

- Meeting students where they are at
 - Using literature, but being flexible to adapt plans and information to meet learner needs
- Holding the needs of all the partners as valuable
 - Prioritizing MORE learner needs (the reason they are in programming must still be met)
 - Recognizing the presence of English Language learning as an objective of each session
 - Acknowledging the expertise of the ESL teacher in providing feedback on language use and classroom facilitation
 - Shaping the long-term impact that OT providers will have on the field
- Timely Communication



QUESTIONS?

rjohnson@more-empowerment.org
sameyer3@stkate.edu



ST. CATHERINE
UNIVERSITY