

Meaningful Activity

LD MCN Support
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Meaningful activity

- Values
- What is activity?
- Why is meaningful activity important?
- Barriers and challenges
- Choosing activities
- Task analysis
- Planning activities

Values

- People with an LD are entitled to lives which are as full as anyone else's.
- It is important for most people to;
 - Be part of a community
 - Have good relationships with friends & family
 - Opportunities to develop experience and learn new skills
 - Choices and control over life
 - Given status & respect
 - Treated as an individual

Values

- These core elements define what it means to have a socially valued lifestyle.
- Engaging in a full range of typical activities is part and parcel of this lifestyle.
- Basic requirements for a full life are the opportunities to:
 - Participate in the full range of activities everyone else does
 - Share interests with other people.
 - Develop relationships, skills and experience.

What do we mean by activity?

Our life is generally made up of a balance of 3 types of activity.

- **Self – care** e.g. washing, dressing, eating & drinking, mobility.
- **Productivity** e.g. work, day service, education, home maintenance.
- **Leisure** e.g. ‘play’, relaxation, socialising, hobbies, spirituality.

Why is meaningful activity important?

- In groups discuss why meaningful activity is important to you?
- Discuss if you have a balance between self-care, leisure and productivity?
- Feedback.

Meaningful activity – why important?

- “inactivity withers the body and the mind”
(Tizard University of Kent)
- We need to see ourselves as purposeful, productive and achieving, in order to have a good quality of life.
- Activities describe who you are and how you feel about yourself. If you are unable to do the things you want, or need to do, to live and enjoy life, your health may be affected. Occupation is important for everyone.

Meaningful activity – why important?

- Establishes common interests with other people.
- Provides basis for friendships.
- Is the means by which we look after ourselves and daily needs.
- Demonstrates our independence and autonomy.
- Helps us keep fit and mentally alert.
- Gives us a sense of self worth.
- Provides us with meaningful roles e.g. mother, worker, student, artist, son.

Meaningful activity

- Evidence suggests many people with LD spend time doing little and can be considered 'spectators' in their own life.
- Can be an issue that support is given to do things 'for' rather than 'with' people.
- This is especially apparent in individuals with behaviours perceived as challenging or in clients with profound and multiple LD.

Barriers to activity

“but she’s too disabled”

- Every activity has some easier parts
- Everyone can contribute to some extent
- Support can bridge the gap between what people can do and what is needed
- Supporting participation is even more important for people with severe disabilities.
- Consider how can adapt the environment.

“but he likes doing nothing”

- A rest in a busy life is good; endless hours of inactivity and isolation isn't.
- Most people spend over 90% time engaged.
- Watching TV, listening to music, interaction, are engagement too. Does not always need to be a complex 'visible' activity.

“But its his choice”

- If doing nothing is a result of lack of experience, past failure and no support then it isn't a choice at all.
- Trying things out little and often helps people experience success.
- Real choices require experience of alternatives.
- Make the most of everyday activities that have to happen anyway. Does not always have to be timetable structured activity.

“but he’s too difficult...”

- Trying things out ‘little and often’ helps people experience some success.
- Slowly does it... set realistic targets to ensure success. May start by observing you doing the task, low demands.
- Find out what motivates the person.
- Ensure task pitched at right level – do they have skills required.
- Build in a reward e.g. end product, verbal praise.

Barriers to meaningful activity

- Discuss what challenges you face to engaging the individuals you support in meaningful activity? For example, staffing ratios, etc.
- Are there ways you could overcome these barriers?

Choosing activities

- Is it motivating? Use persons interests and what is important to them.
- Activity should provide the 'just right' challenge. Too difficult – anxiety, avoidance. Too easy – bored, unstimulating.
- Does the person have the skills required?
- Graded assistance – providing the right support for that person, at that time, and in that activity.

Choosing activities

- Find parts of the activity the person can do.
- Every activity has easier components.
- Everyone can contribute, even if not for long and not very much.
- Every moment has potential. Useful to think ‘how can I help involve them in this right now?’ not always ‘which activities can they be involved in?’

Building on people's strengths

- Katie likes to flick through shopping catalogues and watch birds in the garden. She has two sisters who can only visit occasionally as they live far away. She enjoys a cup of tea, particularly with a nice piece of cake!
- From this information what activities could you look at developing with Katie?

Task analysis – thinking in steps

- Most activities are a sequence of steps.
- Being aware of the steps within a task is useful in order to support the person to participate or learn a new skill.
- Used to teach a skill that is too challenging to teach all at once.
- Breaking down a task into small manageable steps.
- Each step should be small enough to be learned easily by the individual.
- Break down of task should reflect ability of the person.

Task analysis

- State the steps in terms of observable behaviour e.g. pour milk into cup.
- Write enough detail but describe only one behaviour per step.
 - Imagine task and write down steps.
 - Carry out task and write down steps.
 - Watch a colleague carry out task and write down steps.
- **Personalise** – how one person makes a cup of tea can be very different from another person. Essential for consistency.

Example: putting on trousers

1. Take trousers from wardrobe.
2. Hold trousers upright with front facing away from learner.
3. Put one leg in.
4. Put other leg in.
5. Pull up trousers.
6. Do up zip.
7. Do up button.

Task analysis

Example

Hand washing can be broken down into many smaller steps:



Task analysis – group activity

- Carry out the task.
- Write out a task analysis by listing steps.

Task analysis – what next?

1. Identify which steps person can do.
2. Identify what level of assistance they need for each step. Ensure this matches his/her need. For example, hand over hand, verbal prompt, show what to do?
3. Are you going to use specific techniques e.g. Chaining?
4. Review progress. Support can lessen and the number of steps reduce as person gets better at activity. If finding difficult ensure correct level of support given.
5. Let person know they are doing well – positive reinforcement. Look carefully at what the person likes to have or do in order to identify what is positively reinforcing for them.

Techniques - chaining

- Teaching the links in the chain identified in task analysis.

- Forward – steps taught in order they occur.

Once 1st step mastered, teach 2nd, then when 1st and 2nd mastered teach 3rd and so on.

- Backward – steps taught in reverse order. Final step taught then last two, then last three, etc.
- Global / total – involves performing whole task through with prompts where required.

Planning Activities

- Risk assessment e.g. new venues
- What materials and resources required?
- Do you need to set up activity beforehand?
- How will you introduce the activity? Do they know what they are expected to do?
- Where is the best environment? Consider noise levels, lighting, space, number of other people, likely distractions, proximity to person.
- When is the best time of day or week?

Planning Activities

- Is the activity structured e.g. Requires supervision of staff, direct support. Meal preparation, playing dominoes, hand massage, ten pin bowling.
- Is the activity unstructured e.g. Does not require constant staff supervision but requires environment to be set up for client to engage independently. Watching a film, music, sensory lights, drawing.
- Build a resource file of activities, accessible community facilities, etc

Planning Activities

- Communication – what are the individuals specific needs? Do they need symbols, use of sign, simplified language, written instructions, combination. Symbolised daily planners, weekly timetables, use of calendar, diary.
- What interaction style? Encouraging, non threatening, reassuring.
- Choice – specific to the individual. Use of specific tools e.g. Talking mats, interest checklists.

What next?

- Keep track, what has worked well? What do we need to change?
- Have a plan B. Can't avoid unexpected events.
- Discuss with colleagues, team. Essential for consistency of approach. Team meetings, reviews.