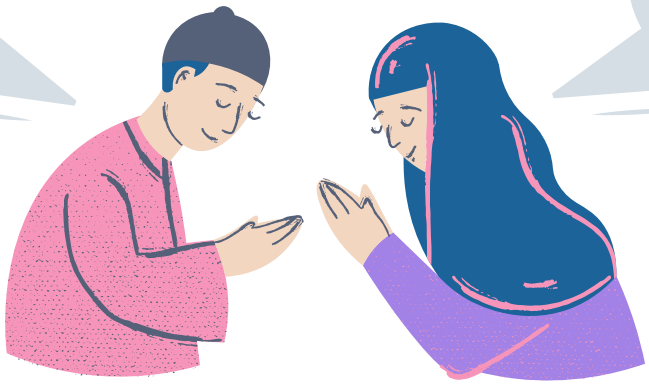
SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION IMPACTING PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES GUIDE

THERAPIST HANDOUT GUIDE

Spirituality and religion are important client factors contributing to meaning and quality of life. Increasing awareness of these factors is essential to the holistic, client-centered profession. The lack of understanding of diverse spiritual and religious beliefs leads to increased challenges in delivering healthcare services and barriers to culturally competent client care. Therefore, it is vital to be culturally sensitive to maximize the client's quality of life.

Spirituality has a unique meaning to each client, where it influences one's motivation to interact in environmental contexts and engage in daily activities.

Religion is the collection of cultural and belief systems that links humanity to spirituality, which may intend to give meaning to life.



Pediatric Population

Children with disabilities often experience difficulty with inclusion and participate less in various activities than typically developing children. Their participation in religious activities is even lower than in academic activities, where many have expressed a desire to be involved. As a result, this population and their families are at risk for less participation in religious occupations.

The research says...

- Ault et al. (2013) completed a study with over 400 participants who were parents with special needs children. They found:
  - 46% reported refraining from participating in religious activities
  - 32% reported leaving at least one church due to their child not being included
- Religion and spiritual beliefs are shaped by various factors, such as gender, which may impact provider-client interactions. Gender-related issues may influence:
  - Perception of illnesses
  - Follow through with medical interventions
  - Choice of preferred gender for the healthcare provider
  - Formality of interactions

Examples of Accommodations

- The following are examples of accommodations to assist children and their families in engaging in religious activities and support inclusion in faith communities:
  - A 'breakout' room or area may be used as a space for a child to regulate when feeling overwhelmed.
  - Sensory tools and a visual schedule may help the child to regulate and feel included in religious events.
  - With the families, practice non-judgmental listening regarding their concerns, respect their own and children's needs, and openly collaborate to ensure client-centered strategies.

For more information on how spirituality and religion influences occupational therapy practice, you may refer to www.aota.org.

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