Meaningful activity as a health promoting factor: Occupational therapy’s potential for clients and their families

Ursula M. Costa, MA (OT), PhD (PH)
University of Applied Sciences Tyrol (fhg), Austria
ENOTHE meeting - HAN/Nijmegen, October 24th, 2014
My work for and with families related to meaningful occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My background</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policies, legal foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• occupation-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• transactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• salutogenetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ecological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• integrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• client-centred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• family-oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Overview

• The context of the European Year 2014
• Meaningful activity as a health promoting factor – KRAH®-based intervention
• Education, practice and research in transaction and dialogue
Reconciling work and family life

“Good work-life balance promotes the well-being of workers. It can also contribute to achieving major EU policy goals: stimulating employment (especially among women and older workers); promoting child and youth development; and encouraging gender equality.”

Library of the European Parliament, 05/2013

http://ey2014.eu/

Coface: Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union
“(...) the national wealth is the brain health. We want to encourage the youth, who are our future, to develop their brains, nurture their brains and above all protect their brains. (...) We would like to see childhood brain diseases receive more attention than that received at the moment. (...) neuropediatric illnesses benefit from very little research and funding. “
Public Health Context

http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/

- need of effective care and therapies
- providing a standard of health care that enables people to lead a good life

“Brain diseases (...) cause terrible distress if poorly managed, and can represent a considerable and expensive burden for the health care systems.“ (Baker, 2013)
Reconsidering OT’s potential

„Is occupational therapy a sufficiently vital and unique service for medicine to support and society to reward?“

„A critical appraisal of the essential worth of occupational therapy“

Mary Reilly, 1961
Practice
“(…) includes all the things that people do, the relationship of what they do with who they are as humans and that through occupation they are in constant state of becoming different”

Wilcock, 1998
Transformative Model

belonging

becoming

doing

being

Wilcock, 1998
Agency/Self-Efficacy/Identity/Volition

Past

Present

Future
Agency, Self-efficacy, Identity in Time

Costa, 2013
Engagement in occupation as a resource for health and well-being

• Occupational history
• Occupational identity
• Occupational role
• Positive experiences of self-efficacy

…linked to a salutogenetic approach…

(picture: boy playing a music instrument in an unfamiliar context, with a flute)
Inspiration & Questions

• What is meaningful?
• What „happens“ during a treatment/assessment/consultation/evaluation session?
• What is really helpful for the people we work with?
• (Who defines this?)
• (Why) is it worth that they/we make all the efforts to come to get/offer OT?
Human occupation & health: concepts from occupational science, occupational therapy and other disciplines

- Freedom and Occupation (Costa, 2013)
- OT and the Capability Approach (A. Sen) (Costa, 2013)
- Resilience and Unemployment (Costa, 2011b)

Current best practice in OT – KRAH® (Costa, 2011a)

Effects of meaningful occupation as therapeutic means and aim on health and well-being in daily life as perceived by clients and professionals
To **explore** the effects of meaningful occupation as provided through client-centred, resource-, occupation- and day-to-day-oriented/ -relevant occupational therapy (KRAH®) **on children’s health** (ICF-CY*) as perceived by children, parents, teachers and occupational therapists.


*)ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health – Child/Youth Version (WHO, 2007)
What mattered for this study

• participation of children, caregivers, and fieldwork educators in therapeutic and research process
• perspectives of clients / participants (Wright, 2010)
• to give children a voice (UN, 1998)
• to understand reasons for clients‘ goals
• to explore effects of meaningful occupation on health as perceived by clients and their proxies
Meaningful Occupation

what makes sense and matters to me
exciting
enjoyable
interesting
relevant & important for everyday life
adequate for the current developmental themes
in line with the set of values of the child’s family and the sociocultural context
promoting healthy child development
potentially fulfilling

Children’s views & focus group discussions (Costa, 2009; 2014)
- client-centredness (*Klientenzentrierung*)
- resource-orientation (*Ressourcenorientierung*)
- orientation and relevance to daily life (*Alltagsorientierung und Alltagsrelevanz*)
- orientation to meaningful occupation / occupation- & participation-based (*Handlungsorientierung*)

occupation-based * systemic * transactive * salutogenetic * ecological * participatory * integrative * client-centred * family-oriented

(Costa, 2009; 2011)
KRAH® Clientcentredness

- clients are active participants/partners
- telling their stories
- sharing their perception of competences
- hopes, dreams, priorities,…
  - client, relatives, others involved.
  - communities
  - stakeholders
- WHO is the client? „Clarifying who wants what“
KRAH® Resource Orientation

- Person, occupation & environment
- Look at the possible!
- enablement & empowerment
- Name what is working well!
- Creating a ground for healthy growth and development

Costa, 2009; 2011
Daily life – daily context – daily concerns throughout the therapeutic process

• assessment
• goal setting
• intervention
• transfer to and from treatment session
• documentation
• evaluation

Costa, 2009; 2011
KRAH® : Occupation-based

• throughout the therapeutic process
  (Creek, 2010)

• positive experiences of agency (Gergely, 2004) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Gage & Polatajko, 1994)

• **Meaning-dimension** (Hammell, 2004; Persson et al.; 2001)

• Top-down **AND** bottom-up

Costa, 2009; 2011
Exploratory, mixed-method study, pre-post design (10 times of KRAH®-based intervention, 10-12 weeks), triangulation

Austria, Italy, [South Germany]

Participants:
- children (n = 42) with occupational performance difficulties, developmental cognitive age of at least five years, referred to OT because of **occupational performance difficulties**
- their parents (n= 33), educators (n= 17) and occupational therapists (n=16)

Children‘s age: 5;1 – 9;2 yrs.
Perceived competence
Searching for understanding clients in/and their context

Perceived Competence

Perceived Competence

Family-oriented, client-centred, effective service provision:

Collaborative goal setting with and for children as part of therapeutic intervention

(Costa, Brauchle & Kennedy-Behr, under review)
Children’s reasons for their goals

• **Social motives**

  “I want to belong to the others”
  “I don’t want to be laughed at”
  “so that I can play with the other kids”
  “to be a good child”
  “so that they [adults] don’t scold at me so often”
  “so that there is more peace at home”
  “then the teacher draws stars in my exercise book”
  “that mum and dad are happy”

• **Independence (autonomy):** self-care & mobility

  „I want to do it myself“
  “so that mum does not have to do it for me”
Children’s reasons for their goals

- **Ease, competence & joy through occupation**
  
  “because *I want to be able* to do this”
  
  “because *I like* doing this”
  
  “because *it feels good* to do nice things”
  
  “because *I cannot yet do it* [tie my shoes] by myself”
  
  “because *it feels great being able to do things by myself!*”

  …for realizing a longtime wish or dream…

  “*being good at it is more enjoyable*”

  “so that *I am as good* [in running] *as the others*”

  “because *it feels good to be good at it – I like it better to be good at doing things than not*”

  “*to be faster in doing* the homework *so that I have more leisure time*”.
Children’s reasons for their goals

- autonomy,
- relatedness,
- competence (self-efficacy)
- meaningful personal orientation
  
  (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Mende, 2006)

- growing, belonging, performing  (Hüther, 2009)

- independence, participation, occupational performance
  (OT & OS literature)
Body functions: \[ \uparrow \text{strength}, \uparrow \text{coordination}, \uparrow \text{spatial perception} \]

Activities: \[ \uparrow \text{spectrum}, \uparrow \text{performance} \]

Participation: \[ \uparrow \text{engagement in leisure-, kindergarten- and school related activities (alone and with others)} \]

Personal context factors: \[ \uparrow \text{self-confidence}; \uparrow \text{volition} \]

Environmental context factors: \[ \uparrow \text{understanding and support for children and parents} \]

Evaluation after 10-12 weeks of intervention for 19 children
Evaluation - Children

Health Condition (Disorder or Disease)

Body Structure & Functions

Activity

Participation

Environmental Factors

Personal Factors

Evaluation by 19 children: 11 boys, 8 girls; age: 5;1 – 9;2

„I just enjoy now so many things…“
„I feel more confident trying out new things“
„I feel less anxious“
„I dare going to the woods and play there – by myself and with the others“
„I now get my tasks done in time“
„yes, it helps“
Parents’ Evaluation: Personal Factors

„happier“ • „more satisfied“ • „more balanced“ • „searches and finds solutions to problems“ • „more ambitious“ • „enjoys to learn new things“ • „better strategies and ideas how to start and perform an occupation“ • „finishes/completes what he has started“ • „is more creative“ • „open to new things“ • „more self-confidence and self-esteem“
better understanding for the child and his/her behaviour, difficulties & competencies
(parents & teachers)

more ideas how to support the child in his/her development

coping strategies for daily life

ideas how to prepare and shape the physical and occupational environment for the child
Volition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volition</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Mostly achieved</th>
<th>Partly achieved</th>
<th>Not achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child's joy about performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>45,5%</td>
<td>45,5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>44,4%</td>
<td>55,6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child shows joy when engaging in occupations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>33,3%</td>
<td>60,6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>45,5%</td>
<td>36,4%</td>
<td>18,2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>38,9%</td>
<td>55,6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child explores new things</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>26,7%</td>
<td>53,3%</td>
<td>13,3%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
<td>18,2%</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33,3%</td>
<td>11,1%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More interests in occupations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>93,3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6,7%* )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>81,8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18,2%* )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44,4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5,6%* )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *) showed interest for engagement in occupations from the very beginning.
Occupational Performance

- **Child finishes tasks**
- **Child tries to problem solve**
- **Child's attention improved**
- **Child brings up ideas**
- **Improved gross motor skills**
- **Improved fine-motricity**

Percentage of participating children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Occupational Therapists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Participation & Self-confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation / Self-confidence</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Mostly achieved</th>
<th>Partly achieved</th>
<th>Not achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child plays/works more with other children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>13,3%</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
<td>26,7%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>9,0%</td>
<td>36,4%</td>
<td>18,2%</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>38,9%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
<td>22,2%</td>
<td>33,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child demonstrates positive behavioural changes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>13,3%</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
<td>26,7%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>45,5%</td>
<td>36,4%</td>
<td>18,2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>38,9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
<td>5,6%*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child shows more self-confidence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>40,0%</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
<td>6,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>45,5%</td>
<td>36,4%</td>
<td>18,2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>50,0%</td>
<td>44,4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5,6%*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *) showed positive behaviour and self-confidence from the very beginning.*
Education
KRAH®-based intervention

- Importance of **defining and operationalizing what we are offering along an intervention process**
- Clinical reasoning- KRAH®-approach
- Intervention protocols (fieldwork)
- Example: Obstacles to goal achievement
Teaching how to intervene

- **offering and supporting a social environment:** encouragement, recognition, appreciation, valuing perspectives and experiences, understanding, attention, supporting as a professional in a respectful partnership
- opening **achievable perspectives** which are „worth to engage for“ / have or bring **meaning (daily life & life course)***
- pacing and adapting **activities** (activity analysis)
- **listening** to „what they really want“
- taking and investing time to gather different and shared perspectives, concerns, goals & clarify what matters („needs assessment“)
- Working with clients in and with their **context**
Meaningful activities for clients and their families

- Who is considered being part of „the family“?
- Who is a „significant other“?
- Who is involved in which way in caring?
- Who should be included? For what reasons?
- Who is to decide whom to include?
- Matters of migration and cultural background
- Multitude of context and shaping daily life
Meaningful activities for clients and their families

Family-oriented services need adequate time and financial resources for efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability of intervention.

(see WHO, 2013)
understanding occupational roles
working with clients' and their proxies' occupational profiles
*collaborative* assessment and goal setting
time invested in clarifying goals and counselling (stakeholders, insurances) as part of professional intervention
transfer of intervention to daily life
searching for and strengthening resources for supporting clients/families
reconsidering our role and our main tasks (coaching, designing, enabling,...)
Health through meaningful occupation

OTs` substantial contribution to society

creating opportunities

strengthening capabilities

contributing to a meaning-dimension to health to quality in life
„Is occupational therapy a sufficiently vital and unique service for medicine to support and society to reward?"

„A critical appraisal of the essential worth of occupational therapy“

Mary Reilly, 1961
What we *do* matters!
Contact

ursula.costa@fhg-tirol.ac.at
References


Costa, U., Brauchle, G., & Kennedy-Behr, A. (under review). Collaborative goal setting with and for children as part of therapeutic intervention.


References


"That man, through the use if his hands as they are energized by mind and will, can influence the state of his own health."

Reilly, p. 81, 1961

"…engagement in meaningful occupation as the primary goal for achieving better health and regaining active participation in life"

Law et al., 1996

"(…) focus on value and meaning as perceived by the unique person"

Persson et al., 2001