

Autism Occupational Therapy Guiding Principles



Strengths-based Neurodivergent-affirming Assessment and Support Planning for Autistic Children and Youth

1. OTs should use a strengths-based neurodivergent affirming approach, embracing complexity and individual differences during assessment and when providing recommendations/supports.
2. OTs should recognize and consider autistic children and youth's unique:
 - a. communication differences,
 - b. motor differences and
 - c. social communication differences
3. OTs should use an occupation lens in their practice.



Inclusive and Strengths Focused Language when Working with Autistic Children and Youth

4. Informative, empowering and strengths-based language should be used by OTs when communicating (spoken/written) information to or about an autistic child or youth.



Attending to Systems and Structures that Impact Accessibility to Care

5. Socio-environmental factors need to be considered when planning and delivering assessments and providing therapy supports.



Evidence Informed Practice

6. OTs should integrate clinical expertise, research (e.g. peer-reviewed journal articles, empirical research studies), and child/youth/family perspectives to inform assessment and service provision.
7. Progress toward goals (e.g., family or child/youth) should be monitored and measured on an ongoing basis (integrating qualitative and quantitative data).



Trauma-Sensitive Care for Autistic Children and Youth

8. OTs should use a trauma sensitive lens in their practice.



Partner with Clients and Families

9. Create an environment that enables a partnership that actively engages and includes children/youth and their families throughout the OT process(e.g., initial intake, assessment, goal co-creation, therapy sessions, etc.)



Collaborative and Coordinated Care (with other professionals)

10. It is ideal for assessments and therapy support plans to be informed by multiple perspectives.



Culturally Sensitive Care

11. Cultural sensitivity and respect for family values (e.g., understanding that different geographical regions and cultures have different perspectives on autism) is needed throughout the assessment and therapy support planning processes.



Personalized Assessment and Support Planning

12. Therapy support plans should be individualized to reflect each autistic child/youth and family goals, needs (e.g., biological, situational, environmental), and address barriers to occupational participation.

13. There should be awareness and consideration of gender differences within autism presentation and implications for how autistic children identify and express themselves during assessment and when receiving occupational therapy services.

Citation

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