

10 Guiding Principles to Promoting Meaningful Activities

Based on clinical expertise from an occupational therapy lens and recovery framework

1. Take a highly individualized, client-centred approach

- Every person has different interests and passions, so taking an individualized approach when helping clients explore activity goals is key.
- Whether in a one-to-one or a group setting, an individualized approach should be utilized. In a group setting, using client handouts can help facilitate the development of an individualized approach.

2. Explore past, current and future interests and skills

- Sometimes clients have difficulty identifying activity goals, so exploring past activities they engaged in as well as exploring new activity areas they may be interested in pursuing can be helpful.
 - Interest inventories, such as the [Interest Inventory-UK Adapted Version](#), can be an extremely helpful tool for exploring activity interests/goals.
- Highlighting strengths relevant to clients' activity goals can help increase motivation.

3. Try to ensure a good fit between clients, their activity goals and their environment

- Helping ensure a good fit between a client's abilities/skills, their current context and their activity goals can increase the likelihood that they find satisfying activities and increase their motivation.
 - For example, a client who is experiencing financial difficulties and wants to join a gym may not be able to afford joining a private gym but might be open to using a low-cost community centre or exploring home workouts.

4. Help clients assess their current activity patterns and daily structure

- Assessing activity patterns can help clients gain insight into where they are spending their time and which areas may be contributing to any imbalance or lack of structure.
- This can help shape activity-goal planning and can increase motivation to make changes in certain areas.

5. Explore clients' motivators and values

- Exploring motivators allows clients to identify what is driving them toward the activity and what they hope to gain from it. Exploring clients' core values can help them see how the activity goal is in line with their values, which can increase motivation.
- The more clients actively engage in discussions around the benefits of participating in the activity, the more likely they are to actually make the appropriate shifts toward meeting the activity goals.
 - For example, ask the client questions such as:
 - "What do you hope to gain from engaging in this activity?"
 - "What are you most excited about when thinking about this activity?"
 - "How do you think this activity will help support your gambling goal?"

6. Use a graded approach, adapting the activity or goal as needed

- If clients have not engaged in the activity for a long time, it can be helpful to break down the activity goal into a step-by-step process.

- For example, the first step to taking a dance class is to find out the schedule and registration process. The next step would then be to determine how to get there, and so on.
- If clients feel overwhelmed or start to experience barriers, the activity or goal could be modified accordingly.

7. Look into community resources relevant to the activity goal

- Sometimes clients have goals to engage in an activity but are not familiar with the resources that support this activity goal. As such, it can be helpful to explore relevant community resources.
 - For example, if a client wants to join a social group, you can point them to resources such as self-help groups, community centres, meet-up groups, faith groups, and so on.

8. Explore potential barriers, and problem solve ways to mitigate or navigate these barriers

- It can be helpful to acknowledge and normalize the fact that experiencing barriers is a common part of the process of engaging in meaningful activities.
- Work collaboratively with clients, and try to problem solve through their identified barriers.

9. Use motivational interviewing strategies

- Like navigating any type of behavioural change, motivational interviewing can help resolve clients' ambivalence around making changes toward their activity goals.
- This involves asking open-ended questions, affirming strengths/progress, offering reflections and summaries and helping clients engage in "change talk."

10. Use activity schedules

- Activity schedules can help clients monitor their moods when engaged in certain activities, which helps to identify the activities that bring them the highest level of pleasure and mastery.
- Activity schedules can also simply help clients keep track of when they are going to engage in specific activities during the week, which can help increase accountability.