

Benefits of Therapeutic Recreation in Pediatric Care

Participation in leisure and recreational activities plays a key role in a child's development.¹⁻² Experiences in childhood and adolescence form foundational skills and build resiliency to prepare for adulthood.³ Children and youth with disabilities, however, are often more restricted in their participation than their typically developing peers.⁴⁻⁶

1. Skills for the Future

It is argued that perhaps the most compelling reason for children to develop leisure skills in their early years is the eventual need for these skills as they grow older.²⁰

2. Physical

Sport, recreation and exercise programs have positive impacts on mobility and gross motor functioning,⁸⁻¹⁰ strength, cardiovascular endurance⁹⁻¹¹ and pain management.¹²

3. Social

Recreation participation creates opportunities to meet others and form friendships around mutual interests and shared activities¹³ while facilitating social skill development through activities.¹⁴



“ THE ROLE OF A RECREATION THERAPIST INCLUDES OBLIGATION TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOR CLIENTS IN A VARIETY OF SERVICE DELIVERY SETTINGS. THIS IS ACHIEVED NOT ONLY THROUGH PROVISION OF INTERVENTIONS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS BUT IN DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES. ”

—THERAPEUTIC RECREATION ONTARIO, 2012

USING A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH, THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PROFESSIONALS:

- Support opportunities for meaningful recreation participation
 - Provide leisure education
 - Support recreation and life skill development
- Build community capacity through partnership, advocacy and integration

4. Enjoyment & Overall Quality of Life

Enjoyable and interest-eliciting activities are associated with cognitive, emotional, and biological responses.²¹

Youth with disabilities view engaging in activities they enjoy as important to being happy and achieving success in life.²²



5. Emotional

Recreation and wellness-based interventions support self-confidence, self-worth, and self-competence in children and youth with disabilities.¹⁵⁻¹⁶



6. Functional Skills

A child's functional ability (i.e., cognitive, communicative, and physical functioning) is one of the direct predictors of intensity of their recreation and leisure participation.¹⁹



7. Family

Family leisure involvement among families with children with developmental disabilities has been shown to positively impact family functioning.¹⁷⁻¹⁸



8. Community Capacity Building

Participation in community activities enables children to become self-determined, learn skills, form friendships, express creativity, and determine meaning and purpose in life.²³⁻²⁴

Enhancing the environment and/or modifying the activity demands is an important approach for improving function and participation in community settings.²⁵⁻²⁷



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COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING MEANS ENHANCING THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF GROUPS OR AGENCIES WITHIN THE LARGER COMMUNITY TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION FOR OUR CLIENTS. THIS MAY INCLUDE TRAINING, RESOURCE SHARING, AND PARTNERSHIP, COACHING AND CONSULTING TO SUPPORT CHANGE.

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—EKO (FORMALLY OACRS) THERAPEUTIC RECREATION TASKFORCE, 2017

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