

Tips for Occupational Therapists using HealthChange® Methodology



Explain your Role

How often are clients confused about who we are and what we do? Explaining your role at the outset will lay a good foundation for the rest of the consultation. Sample script: "Have you seen an OT before? Do you know what we do? What was the experience like? My role is to help you to manage effectively at home. I can look at the environment and how you do things to see if there are any ways to make things easier for you. However, deciding what changes to make is ultimately up to you. How do you feel about that?"

Assess the client before you assess their environment

Ask the client what they think the main issues might be before launching into an assessment. Spending quality time listening to the client before assessing the home will build rapport. Doing this will allow you to spend more time on the main issues they see as impacting on their function rather than conducting an assessment on areas they are unwilling to change (which can build resistance). Try using decisional balance questions if the client is unsure about making a particular modification. These questions can help to increase a client's perception of the importance of staying independent by using an aid.

Pen Ownership

Inviting the client to write down any of the ideas that are discussed in a consultation can increase the client's success rate by up to ten times! Sample script: "That pen and paper is there for your own use if you come up with some good ideas. It is just a matter of remembering what we discussed." Keeping lists on fridges or in bedside tables can be useful for clients with memory problems or complex action plans.

Messy head syndrome!

How often do clients (and even ourselves) feel overwhelmed with the many changes that might be needed to stay at home? Outlining general categories or areas to work on will help the client to prioritise and focus on one item at a time. Sample Script: "Making changes to all of these areas is too much to consider in one go. Which ones do you think would make the biggest difference to you?"

Assume unsteady until proven ready!

Make no assumption that the client is willing to make any modifications! Try to discover your client's why? – it may not be what you think it is! Ask the client about benefits and consequences of making any changes rather than simply telling them. This allows you to assess their knowledge and also increase rapport and trust. Sample script: "Many people are concerned for your safety and might have made suggestions about what could be altered in your home. But I'd prefer to ask you, what do you think needs to happen for you to be safe at home?" Remember to tap into the client's intrinsic motivators such as: not going into a nursing home; staying president of the bowls club; being around to look after a pet etc. Use these motivators to inform the client's decision making!

Offer a Menu of Options

We all like to feel that we have choice. Being able to choose from a menu of options reduces resistance and increases client readiness. Rather than giving clients one option at a time, offer a menu of strategies or suggestions. Sample script: "Here is a list of common alterations people find help them manage more easily at home. Would any of these options suit you?"

Trial and Error

Encourage a trial and error philosophy. Encourage clients to consider a trial of equipment or strategies if possible. Present equipment use as a 'trial' which can be removed if need be!

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