

Contributing Factors to Poor Psychological Health in OTs: Part A

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Psychological Health and Safety in the Occupational Therapy Workplace

An initiative of the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT) with funding from Alberta Human Services, Occupational Health and Safety Program, Development and Research



There are many influences that the psychological health of an occupational therapist is subject to. While some are positive supports, others can have a negative impact and the person may not even be aware that the factor is present. The following paper and accompanying presentation explores the relationship that role diffusion, and the environment, have with an occupational therapist's psychological wellbeing.

Role diffusion is when a task is shared by different professions in an interdisciplinary team. As Astramovich states, this not only takes away from the specialized identity of the professions involved but it can also put a strain on team relations by making the division of referrals for that task difficult to accomplish in a manner that satisfies each person affected (2013). Since isolating certain therapeutic tasks can be difficult, it is important for the team to have a thorough understanding of the roles of one another to mitigate the occurrence of events that can weaken the team relationship.

The sensory system is constantly sorting through information received from **the environment**. Khamisa explains that the danger of the environment on psychological health is when the "demands [are greater than] individual resources" (2013, p 2215). Some of the factors can be hard to identify and do not concern how we interact with other people but still affect a person's psychological health, such as the amount of **lighting, airflow and temperature** in the environment.

Other factors can be rather obvious, such as the presence of loud and perhaps unexpected **noises**. They may make it difficult to maintain a positive attitude towards working in such an environment, while quiet noises and sounds that a person is accustomed to can add the benefits of familiarity (Applebaum, Fowler, Fiedler, Osinubi, & Robson, 2010).

The environment in which occupational therapists work inevitably results in one person interacting with another, but having sufficient space and even the availability of a private room where one can work independently is very important. These spaces help the occupational therapist to concentrate on tasks and be more productive, helping the person to feel satisfied with the work that has been accomplished and decreased stress resulting from high productivity. By contrast, a person unable to focus in the environment due to social and other distractions can feel "overloaded" by work deadlines and the idea of being watched by colleagues, exacerbated by an environment demanding the person's attention (May, 2005; Young, 2005). Occupational therapists are also privy to sensitive information about clients or patients and having an environment that supports confidentiality is needed so that the additional **stress of keeping this information private** can be kept to a minimum (Shragai, 2015; Smith, 2013).

RESOURCES

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/11/18/how-to-create-a-stress-free-workplace-environment/>

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/31843f0e-e383-11e4-9a82-00144feab7de.html#axzz3rhNU3NQY>

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272494405000538>

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