



# Oncology Emerging with Occupational Therapy

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oncology Emerging with Occupational Therapy.....	2
Pain Relief Techniques.....	3-8
Mirror Therapy.....	4
Music Therapy.....	5
Breathing/Meditation.....	6-7
Progressive Muscle Relaxation.....	8
Psychosocial Activities.....	9-19
Inspiration Mirror.....	10
Blackout Poetry.....	11
A Letter to Me.....	12
What My Sentence.....	13
Frustration Toss.....	14
Collages.....	15
Finish This Statement.....	16
Watercolor Masterpiece.....	17
Thankfulness Journal.....	18
Puzzle Pieces.....	19
References.....	21

## Oncology Emerging with Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is an area of practice that is dedicated to improving the quality of life of individuals by providing therapy that is functional and meaningful. Occupational therapy is in many areas of the health field, but oncology isn't one of them yet. Occupational therapy could help individuals during their process of chemo and to help fulfill a more meaningful life. I did this project to see what occupational therapy could look like within oncology. A lot of time and adjustments went into this project, in order to meet the needs of this population. I personally believe there is a spot for occupational therapy within this realm of practice. Individuals can benefit by physically doing activities, but also doing personal activities that make he or she reflect about their time with chemo. I think the psychosocial aspect isn't always addressed with this population and that is a disservice. I have combined psychosocial activities and also techniques to help to deal with pain and lack of energy. I hope this book will be used to help others and create a conversation about emerging occupational therapy into the practice area of oncology.

# Pain Relief Techniques

# Mirror Therapy

What is mirror therapy?

Mirror therapy is used to help trick the brain on what it is seeing and feeling.

How to use mirror therapy:

1. Get a mirror that is big enough to view the whole hand.
2. Place the mirror in the middle of the patient's legs, with the mirror facing the hand that isn't receiving medicine.
3. Have the patient block visual sight of their hand with the IV, by using a pillow
4. Have the patient stare at the mirror while the medicine enters their hand.
5. Remove mirror 5 minutes after medicine has been injected.

Why use mirror therapy with this population?

This will help trick the brain by watching the hand without the medicine in it. This will then trick the mind and not feel as much pain when the medicine enters their hand.

# Music Therapy

“Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music.”

— George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*

What is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is when an individual listens to music in order to help manage their pain.

How does music therapy work?

Music therapy works in chronic pain management by providing sensory stimulation that evokes a response in the patient. Research has found that music used as a clinical intervention can help patients by:

- Reducing the amount of pain they perceive
- Promoting relaxation, rhythmic breathing, and rest
- Alleviating anxiety and stress
- Giving their mood a positive boost (Thompson Jr., D, 2010).

Why use Music therapy with this population?

This a unique technique that could be implemented at anytime. The individuals could listen and sing while they receive their medicine, to help alleviate pain. It can also be used at anytime by singing or just listening, in order to set a relaxing rhythm that can help alleviate tension and pain.

Variations:

1. Listen to music while receiving chemo
2. Sing along with the song multiple times while receiving chemo.
3. Listen and write about how the song makes you feel (distraction technique)
4. Use music to help relax an individual by focusing on the soothing rhythm
5. Physically have their hands or upper body move with the rhythm, especially while they are sitting down. This will help promote movement.

# Breathing/Meditation

“Breath is the finest gift of nature. Be grateful for this wonderful gift.”

— Amit Ray, Beautify your Breath - Beautify your Life

How does breathing and meditation relate to pain relief?

A study done concluded that regular breathing, using deep breaths can significantly reduce the pain of the injection in leukemic children, especially in those aged above 10 years. This has provided options to help with the pain, especially with the injection (Pourmovahed, Dehghani, & Sherafat, 2013). Breathing is also good to reduce anxiety or stress, which can play a factor for individuals receiving chemo.

\*\*\*\*\* This techniques can be used for anyone at anytime

## **Specific variations:**

1. Deep breathing
  - a. Take a big breath in through the nose for at least 3 seconds
  - b. Hold for 3 seconds
  - c. Then exhale through the mouth slowly, for 6 seconds
  - d. Repeat multiple times
2. Bee Breathing
  - a. Take a deep breath in through the nose for at least 3 seconds
  - b. Hold for 3 seconds
  - c. Then exhale through mouth for 6 seconds make the “Zzzzzzzz” sound like a bee
  - d. The breaths can be loud, but if the individual is trying to rest then slow and quiet Zzzzz sounds will be more relaxing.
  - e. Repeat this multiple times
3. Snake Breathing
  - a. Take a deep breath in through the nose for at least 3 seconds
  - b. Hold for 3 seconds
  - c. Then exhale through mouth for 6 seconds make the “hissssss” sound like a snake
  - d. Repeat this multiple times

4. Dragon breathing

- a. Take a deep breath in through the nose for at least 3 seconds
- b. Hold for 3 seconds
- c. Then exhale through mouth for 6 seconds make the loud dragon noise (this can be a frustrated yell or any sound the individual would like to make)
- d. This is meant to be loud, so do this one at home.
- e. Repeat multiple times

5. Relaxation Imagery

- a. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. Take deep, slow, full breaths
- b. Think of your favorite spot or somewhere you would like go. It can be real or a made up location--whatever is most relaxing
- c. Imagine yourself lying there in your own special spot. You feel completely at home there and relaxed
- d. As the individual is laying there the OT or caregiver can ask these questions to get the person really in their spot:
  - i. What do you see around you?
  - ii. What are the colors surrounding you?
  - iii. Is anyone there with you?
  - iv. Focus on something thing that makes it your favorite spot
- e. When the individual is ready have them focus in on their breathing and then open their eyes to gain their awareness back.

6. Mindfulness meditation

- a. Focus on your surroundings
- b. This example will use a hershey kiss, but can be substituted for anything
- c. Smell the hershey kiss
- d. Unwrap the kiss and place it in your mouth
- e. Take a couple minutes to let it sit in your mouth
- f. Think about the smell, taste, and feeling
- g. Then finish eating the hershey kiss
- h. After finishing it, sit there and focus on your breathing



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation(PMR)

What is Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is when you tense your muscles, so they feel tight and then release them. Do not do this with any muscles that are hurting (Suh, J. W., Chung, S. Y., et.al, 2015).

How does PMR work?

The OT or caregiver can give the instructions for the individual to do the muscle chosen. Each muscle will tighten for 3 seconds and then release. The individual needs to make sure they are breathing during the process. It will help with relieving tension and stress. This would be a great technique to do before going to bed.

Here's a sheet that the Australian Pain Management Association uses:

1. Sit or lie down quietly in a comfortable position
2. Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths. Breathe easily and naturally
3. Slowly tense each muscle in your body. Begin with your right hand. Squeeze your right hand into a tight fist. Feel the tension in your right hand. Hold this position for a few seconds. Now release the tension slowly. As the tension disappears, your hand feels relaxed.
4. Repeat this for your left hand.
5. Arms – tense both arms. Make your arms rigid and tense. Hold and release
6. Shoulders – lift your shoulders. Hold and release. Hunch your shoulders to touch your ears. Hold and release.
7. Toes – curl your toes up. Hold and release.
8. Feet – pull your toes up towards your face. Feel the muscles working in your shins. Hold and release. Then point your toes away from your face. Feel the muscles tensing in your calves. Hold and release.
9. Legs – clench your thighs. Hold and release. Clench both buttocks. Hold and release.
10. Eyebrows – raise your eyebrows as high as they can go. Hold and release.
11. Frown – pull your eyebrows together. Scrunch up your whole face. Hold and release.
12. Eyes – screw up your eyes tightly. Hold and release
13. Jaw – Open your mouth wide. Hold and release

Now your muscles are relaxed. You feel calm and still.

# Psychosocial Activities

# Inspiration Mirror

“Smile in the mirror. Do that every morning and you’ll start to see a big difference in your life” - Yoko Ono

An inspiration mirror is used to help others view his or her self in the way they want to see themselves. It can be used to encourage and provide a positive message everyday.

How to make an inspiration mirror:

1. Purchase a handheld mirror. Any mirror will work that has a handle
2. Get dry erase markers
3. The patient can decorate the handle and the back with materials like: magazines collages, pictures, or words they want on there.
4. After they decorate it however they like, then the patient will look in the mirror and tell the OT what they see in themselves.
5. The patient can also use a dry erase marker to write on the mirror words of encouragement or a quote they want to see when they look in mirror every time.

Discussion questions for the patient:

1. What do you see when you look into the mirror?
2. Why did you choose those designs to put on your mirror?
3. When do you think you will use your inspiration mirror? Why?
4. What inspires you?

# Blackout Poetry

“There is something about poetry beyond prose logic, there is mystery in it, not to be explained but admired” — Edward Young

Blackout Poetry is an activity where you take a page out of a magazine, book, or newspaper and create a design to black out the words you don't want to use for your poem. This design can be elaborate or simply just highlighting the words you want to use. It's a way to express one's self in words and pictures.

How to do blackout poetry:

1. Choose a page in a book, newspaper, or magazine.
2. Tear out the page.
3. Choose the words to make up the poem.
4. Decide the design to use – can be anything (See examples)
5. Choose markers or colored pencils
6. Draw and create the poem

Examples:

Discussion questions:

1. What's the title of your poem and why?
2. What were you thinking about when you created your poem?
3. How did it feel to blackout words?

# A Letter to Me

“The hardest challenge is to be yourself in a world where everyone is trying to make you be somebody else.” □~E. E. Cummings

A letter to me is a way to have the individual reflect on the past, present, and future. This helps with seeing what the individual wants and is feeling at this moment. It also allows the individual and OT to see what feelings or needs the individuals want in the future. The OT can work with the individual to reach those goals.

## Steps:

1. Choose a piece of paper: lined paper, calligraphy paper, or anything the individual would like to write on.
2. Choose a writing utensil
3. Have the individual write Dear Myself,
4. Then write anything that they could and want to tell themselves about the journey of their life and what they want to do and anything else they want to mention.
5. If the individual can't write, this can be done by typing or having someone else type or write.

## Discussion questions:

1. What are some feelings you had during this process? Why?
2. Who would you show this letter to? Why?
3. How has this process changed your insight on your life?
4. What is something you want to do, but haven't done yet? Why?

# What's My Sentence?

“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, what you believe shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish” - John Jakes

This is an activity than can be done at any time with anyone.

Steps:

1. Get a piece of paper and a writing utensil
2. Think about a sentence that would describe who you are
3. Then write it down by using third person language
  - a. Example: She works hard in teaching others
  - b. Example: He smiled and created an atmosphere that others wanted to be around
4. It helps to think about what you want others to say about you

Why do What's My Sentence?

This is an activity that helps someone look at themselves and write a sentence about who they are and what they want others to see.

This can change week to week or month to month. This is a great way to keep and compare over a period of time.

Discussion questions:

1. Why did you write this sentence?
2. Does this reflect who you want to be?
3. If you could change your sentence, what would it be? Why?
4. Do you think your closest friends would have anything to add? If so what?
5. How has your sentence changed over the past 5 years?

# Frustration Toss

“To conquer frustration, one must remain intensely focused on the outcome, not the obstacles.” - T.F. Hodge,

Frustration Toss is an activity where you write everything down that is frustrating you and you get rid of it by throwing the paper elsewhere.

Steps:

1. Get paper and a writing utensil
2. Rip paper into pieces that can be written on
3. Write down frustrations, individually on pieces of paper
4. After they all have been written down, wad up the pieces of paper
5. After they are all wadded up, the individual can throw them at a wall or aim for a trashcan.

Discussion questions:

1. What was the most frustrating thing you wrote down? Why?
2. How did throwing them make you feel?
3. What were you thinking about when you threw them?
4. How could others help relieve some of your frustrations?

# Collages

“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.” -Vincent Van Gogh

A collage can be done at anytime and requires just a few materials.

Materials needed:

1. Glue or tape
2. Magazines, construction paper, photos, and other materials that the individual would like to use
3. Regular paper
4. Scissors

Variations:

1. Free Collage
  - a. Have a selection of magazines
  - b. Let the individual go through and cut out images or words that they like
  - c. Then glue the pictures and words in any layout the individual that he or she wants
  - d. Give the collage a title
2. Topic Collage
  - a. Have a selection of magazines
  - b. Give the individual a topic to do a collage about (ex: seasons, feelings, a time in their life, or an emotion)
  - c. Give the individual time to go through and pick out pictures or words the like for their topic
  - d. Cut out the pictures
  - e. Glue them down in an arrangement the individual likes
  - f. Give the collage a title

Discussion questions:

1. What were you thinking about when you made this collage?
2. Why did you title your collage this?
3. What does this collage mean to you?
4. If you could change anything about your collage what would it be? Why?
5. What is your favorite picture or word on this collage? Why?



# Finish This Statement

“Life may not always fall into neat chapters, and you may not always get the satisfying ending you're looking for, but sometimes a good explanation is all the rewrite you need”  
- Harlan Coben

This is an activity that has endless variations and can be done quickly.

Materials needed:

1. Paper
2. Writing utensil
3. Topic

Steps:

1. Create a sentence to finish (examples below)
2. Have the individual write the beginning of the sentence at the top of the paper
3. The individual will then begin writing the ending of the sentence continuously with whatever pops into their head first
4. The individual will have a time limit - a couple of minutes or how ever long is needed
5. Then the individual will highlight their top 3 favorite sentences and then discuss them

Examples:

What if.....  
I want to.....  
I am.....  
I like.....

Discussion questions:

1. Why did your top three picks stand out to you?
2. How did it feel to not think about each statement, but to just write what you were thinking?
3. Tell me how you could expand on this sentence.
4. If you could choose the beginning of the sentence to finish what would it be?

# Watercolor Masterpiece

“Create with the heart; build with the mind.”  
— Criss Jami, Killosophy

Watercolor masterpiece is an activity that is meant to be relaxing and expressive. The individual can create anything.

Materials needed:

1. Watercolor paper
2. A watercolor paint pallet
3. A cup of water
4. A paper towel
5. Paint brushes

Steps:

1. Get the watercolor paper out
2. Get a cup of water
3. Set out the watercolor paint pallet
4. Lay brushes out
5. Free paint- create and paint anything the individual wants to.
6. Let the paint dry
7. Give painting a title

Discussion questions:

1. What do you see when you look at your painting?
2. Why did you choose your title?
3. How does your painting make you feel?
4. What were you thinking about while painting?

# Thankfulness Journal

“Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough”

— Oprah Winfrey

A thankfulness journal is a way to record everything that you are thankful for. It helps keep in perspective things that are still good. Thankful journals can also help relieve stress.

Materials needed:

1. A piece a paper or journal depending on preference
2. Writing utensil

Steps:

1. Get paper out
2. Get a writing utensil
3. Write down everything that you are thankful for
4. This can be a timed activity by giving 5 mins or it can be done daily or weekly

Discussion questions:

1. What are you most thankful for?
2. How does this affect you, by writing it all down?
3. Is there someone you would like to share your thankfulness with? If so, who?
4. How does this change your perspective?

# Puzzle Pieces

“Much like life, you don't complete a puzzle by throwing away the pieces.”

— Craig D. Lounsborough

## Materials:

1. A puzzle of the individual's preference
2. A sharpie
3. Tape (optional)
4. Frame (optional)

## Steps:

1. Put together the puzzle
2. Flip over the completed side, so the blank side is showing
3. Have the individual pick a quote, verse, or saying they love
4. Use a sharpie and write the quote, verse, or saying down covering the whole blank side of the puzzle
5. The individual has two options: 1. Tape the puzzle and frame it with the quote showing or 2. Tear up the puzzle and keep it and recreate the puzzle with the quote or puzzle side.

## Discussion questions:

1. How did it feel to complete the puzzle?
2. Why did you choose the quote or verse you did?
3. How does this puzzle represent your life?
4. If you were a piece of this puzzle, which piece would be? Why?

# THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to read through these activities and techniques. If you have any questions please feel free to email Savannah Benton at [Snbenton@my.milligan.edu](mailto:Snbenton@my.milligan.edu).

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