

FORMAT FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITY PLANS IN CHILD CARE WORK

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"If used skillfully, activities can be prescriptive, that is, they can be used to promote growth and specifically to shape behavior"

(Klein, 1975).

Child and youth care professionals are keenly aware of the value of activities that are carefully designed to pursue their treatment goals. Often, however, their best intentions are undermined by the lack of a systematic plan for integrating these activities into the daily program. As a student in child care at Vanier College in Montreal, I was taught to use the following planning format. I have found it to be very helpful in my practice.

Therapeutic Activity Plan Description

1. Purpose
2. Rationale
3. Long-Term Goals
4. Short-Term Goals
5. Methodology
6. Materials
7. Evaluation
8. Activity Sessions

Purpose

This section is a brief description of what you are trying to do and how you are trying to do it: a very general statement of what the plan is about.

Rationale

A research section explaining why this plan would be beneficial to the clients in question, how it coincides directly with the client's needs, and a general statement of what it will help the clients to do.

Long-Term Goals

A general outline of what you hope the clients will achieve through involvement with this plan.

Short-Term Goals

Objective, measurable steps outlining the learning involved in each session.

Methodology

This section is used to outline your teaching methods; what techniques you will use to help promote understanding for the clients, what behavioral strategies you will have in place and what you will use as a motivational tool to maintain the client's interest throughout.

Materials

A list of all materials needed to complete this plan.

Evaluation

A section to outline the means with which you will determine if your plan has been successful in teaching what it set out to teach.

Activity Sessions

A detailed description of each activity to be completed outlining the Child Care Worker's role and the client's role in each session.

Therapeutic Activity Plan: A Sample

The purpose of this plan is to help the client become aware of some of the emotions people feel. This goal is to be accomplished with the use of multimedia techniques: arts and crafts, phototherapy, role playing, and language arts.

Rationale

Expressing one's feelings is an important communication tool. Through expressing various emotions, children build relationships with both peers and adults.

It is apparent that these clients cannot perform this task. They have trouble developing consistent friendships and have few, if any, close bonds. This is a problem that can affect their social lives in the future. The youths cannot function appropriately for any reasonable

amount of time in a peer group on a regular basis or form a strong attachment with one individual.

Due to the clients' inability to express their feelings appropriately, (because they do not know how they are feeling or why they are feeling a certain way), they will be confused and this will cause a conflict in determining their individual sense of identity. In expressing their feelings they learn more about themselves.

A program centered on this topic will help clients to become aware of feelings and recognize some feelings they experience in themselves and in others, therefore, aiding in their social interactions.

Long-Term Goals

Using multimedia techniques throughout the sessions, the clients will:

1. Gain a better understanding of the concept of sad, happy, angry, and scared;
2. become aware of the feelings of sad, happy, angry, and scared within themselves and in others;
3. improve their self-esteem;
4. gain a better understanding of themselves.

Short-Term Goals

Given that the clients participate, they will:

1. Divide various feelings into four basic groups: happy, sad, angry, and scared;
2. draw a picture of and discuss what led to how they are feeling today;
3. complete feeling sentences (see activity);
4. be given information about how their bodies are indicators of the feelings inside them and experience the bodily changes;
5. act out various feelings in the form of role play;
6. practice watching and recognizing feelings in others through role playing game;
7. express feelings using only their eyes;
8. make a silent movie covering the four basic feelings, then make a tape with music to match the feelings.

Methodology

The general teaching method throughout the plan will be verbal instruction and the use of multimedia techniques. The Child Care Worker is responsible for clarifying what the clients have said and for

transferring their “acting out” behaviors into verbal feelings, to make them aware of what they are feeling.

The Child Care Worker will use verbal cues and verbal prompts, physical cues and physical prompts, role modeling and role playing whenever convenient or necessary. Praise will be used intermittently throughout the sessions.

Materials

- chalkboard
- chalk
- crayons, felt pens
- blank paper
- magazines
- large, relatively sound-proof room with light switch
- radio/tape
- movie camera/film
- tape recorder

Activity Sessions

Each session is drawn up in such a way so that the client has to use what he has learned in the previous sessions to complete the following session:

1. **Activity:** Four Basic Feelings (Hendricks, 1981)

- Child Care Worker will ask clients to think of as many different feelings as they can.
- Child Care Worker and clients will organize these feelings under four basic headings: sad, happy, angry, scared.
- Child Care Worker will discuss with the clients how feelings are a natural part of us and they are not to be judged good/bad, right/wrong. It is normal to have feelings.

2. **Activity:** I Feel (Hendricks, 1981)

- Child Care Worker will put “I feel” sentences on the board for clients to complete verbally and/or through art, i.e., I feel *angry* when (sad, happy, scared, unloved excited, important, lonely, needed, ugly, left out, glad).
- I feel like *crying* when . . . (screaming, laughing, running).
- I feel *afraid* when . . . (jealous, anxious, depressed, guilty, bored, loved).

3. Activity: How We Express Feelings

- Child Care Worker will do guided fantasy (stories about feelings) while children lie down and relax on floor.
- Child Care Worker and clients will discuss how the body feels (what parts tighten up, relax, change) as our emotions change.
- Child Care Worker and clients will discuss alternatives to handling feelings.

4. Activity: Awareness of Other's Feelings

- Child Care Worker will instruct clients to act out various feelings in small groups.
- Child Care Worker and clients will play a form of charades: acting out feelings and guessing what they are.
- Child Care Worker will tell stories and clients will need to guess what the person in the story must be feeling.

5. Activity: The Eyes Have It, The Body Has It (Hendricks, 1981)

- Child Care Worker and clients will practice showing feelings by using only eyes, then mouth, shoulders, arms, hands, legs.

6. Activity: Movie Making

- Child Care Worker and clients will fabricate and practice a script for a silent play demonstrating their understanding of the basic feelings (sad, happy, angry, scared).

7. Activity: Movie "Feelings"

- Child Care Worker and clients will have popcorn and watch their production of "Feelings." Clients may invite others to watch.

