Educational Modules Promoting Neurodiversity-Affirming Sensory Interventions

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Eduational Modules Promoting Neurodiversity-Affirming Sensory Interventions

Deanna Bourgeois, OTS; Dr. Mary Smith, PhD, OTR/L; Dr. Gina Benavente, DHSc, MPH, OTR

BACKGROUND
Neurodivergent children often experience differences in sensory processing and self-regulation (Dallman et al., 2022). Traditional interventions used to address dysregulation:

- **Behavior-based interventions**
  - View autistic traits as pathological
  - Goal: the child is “no longer” or “less” autistic (Leadbitter et al., 2021)

- **Sensory-based interventions**
  - Strengths-based
  - Supports desire for self-regulation and self-advocacy (Miller et al., 2020)
  - Not always neurodiversity-affirming

The guiding principles of neurodiversity:

- Preservation of human dignity, autonomy, and self-determination (Dallman et al., 2022)

To apply to practice, OTP require additional educational resources in order to create neurodiversity-affirming sensory interventions.

PROBLEM
Occupational therapy practitioners lack educational resources for caregivers that promote self-regulation through neurodiversity-affirming sensory interventions.

PURPOSE
The purpose of this project was to generate a resource for OTP that promotes strategies for improving self-regulation through neurodiversity-affirming sensory interventions that can be utilized to educate caregivers of neurodivergent children.

METHODS
The project was completed over a 16-week period and organized in the following phases.

- **PRE-DEVELOPMENT**
  - Research
  - Clinical observation
  - Informal interviews

- **DEVELOPMENT**
  - SWOT analysis
  - Outline module content & mixed-methods pre-/post-surveys
  - IRB approval

- **IMPLEMENTATION**
  - Participant recruitment: TCOB, RSA, & ACHE
  - Inclusion: OTP, OT students, caregivers
  - Dates: 2/1/23 – 3/31/23
  - Completion of pre-survey, modules, & post-survey

- **EVALUATION & REVISION**
  - Application of informal & survey feedback after surveys closed

SUSTAINABILITY & DISSEMINATION
- Presentation for ACHE OTD students
- CEU presentation for ACHE OTP
- Conference presentation applications
- Prepare phase 2 of research

RESULTS

Survey Results

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Caregiver</th>
<th>OTP</th>
<th>OT student</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Post-Survey n=15</td>
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I feel confident in my ability to explain:

- Neurodiversity principles
- Sensory processing differences
- Self-regulation
- Neurodivergent sensory experiences

Module Outline

- **Module I: Neurodiversity**
  - Introducing Sam: A Case-Study
  - What is Neurodiversity
  - Principles of Neurodiversity
  - Views of Disability
  - The Double Empathy Problem

- **Module II: Sensory Processing & Self-Regulation**
  - Basic overview of Sensory Systems
  - Interoception & Alexithymia
  - Monotropism
  - Identifying Regulation vs. Dysregulation
  - Meltdowns, Shutdowns, & Burnout

- **Module III: Neurodiversity-Affirming Interventions**
  - Traditional Recommendations
  - Effects of Behavior Interventions
  - Neurodivergent Perspectives
  - Neurodiversity-Affirming Interventions
  - Neurodiversity-Affirming Sensory Intervention Starting Blocks

REFERENCES

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