

Occupational Therapy

Solutions that work!

October is National Occupational Therapy Month—a time when occupational therapists reflect on their roles with an emphasis on increasing awareness of their contributions to the health field.

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT, 2014) provides the following insight into the field of occupational therapy:

Life is made up of meaningful everyday activities and occupations, such as walking the dog, gardening, cooking a meal, painting, doing the laundry, and playing games.

Occupations are part of life; they describe who we are as parents, friends, breadwinners, and colleagues and how we feel about ourselves. These occupations help bring meaning to life.

When we can't participate, due to injury, illness or disabilities, occupational therapists help find solutions to bring back the meaningful everyday activities of life.

Occupational therapy also helps prevent disability and illness and enhance the way we participate in our communities and lives.

Occupational therapy helps us get back to the occupation of living.

ERGO-Wise is run by a registered occupational therapist and is grounded in occupational therapy principles.

We focus on the occupation of 'work' with emphasis on return-to-work (RTW) preparation. We have helped hundreds of individuals successfully return to the workforce through our well known cognitive work hardening (CWH) program. It was initially designed to help prepare disability claimants prepare to return to work following a mental health leave such as depression.

Our CWH program has evolved since its creation in 2000 and it is now recognized for its efficacy in also assisting with the RTW process for claimants who are dealing with cognitive sequelae to their conditions as well as fatigue/stamina issues. These include claimants who have completed cancer treatments as well as those with post concussion syndrome.

Although our focus is on work, we pay close attention to the balance of work-life demands and the importance of maintaining meaningful activity participation outside of the realm of the workplace. This can include engaging in more physical activity, joining

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Work Information Newsletter is developed by Adeena Wisenthal, registered occupational therapist and owner of ERGO-Wise, a centre in Ottawa that specializes in workplace mental health and return-to-work preparation.

This issue is in support of National Occupational Therapy Month and highlights the role that occupational therapists play in living.

Occupational therapy works!

(Reference: www.caot.ca/otmonth/what_is_OT.pdf; www.osot.on.ca)

Occupational therapists help with recovery and re-entry into life's activities after illness or injury.

Occupational therapists help people do what they need and want to do when health related issues create challenge.

Occupational therapists assess client's cognitive, functional and psychosocial needs.

Occupational therapists develop coping strategies for clients to overcome mental health issues.

Occupational therapists determine new requirements and coordinate graded return-to-work programs.

To find out more about occupational therapy visit: www.caot.ca or www.osot.on.ca

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a music or craft group, or setting aside designated time for activities such as reading, gardening, or seeing a movie.

Clients are assisted with their RTW needs through our adherence to occupational therapy principles such as:



- Client-centred approach
- Engagement in meaningful occupation
- Emphasis on strengths
- Focus on increasing function
- Goal of increasing independence

Through the individualized nature of our CWH program which includes uniquely designed work simulations, clients gain mastery through experiential completion of work tasks. This leads to an increase in their feelings of self-efficacy and contributes to increased self-

confidence in their abilities and readiness for RTW.



Feeling that one has the competence and ability to perform one's job can contribute to self-efficacy, which has been found to be an essential factor in the work rehabilitation process impacting RTW outcomes (Labriola et al., 2007; D'Amato & Zijlstra, 2010).

References

CAOT (2014). Retrieved from www.caot.ca/otmonth/what_is_OT.pdf

D'Amato A, Zijlstra F (2010). Toward a climate for work resumption: The nonmedical determinants of return to work. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 52:67-80.

Labriola M, Lund T, Christensen K, Albertson K, Bultmann U (2007). Does self-efficacy predict return-to-work after sickness absence? A prospective study among 930 employees with sickness absence for three weeks or more. *Work*, 29:233-238.

Through the efforts of individual occupational therapists and through our associations, we anticipate that more people will recognize our contributions and utilize our services to improve the job of living. It is through campaigns such as National Occupational Therapy Month that this can be achieved.



Occupational therapy is often the missing link between disability and functioning; between dependency and independence.

ERGO-Wise specializes in workplace mental health. Through our hallmark **cognitive work hardening program**, we focus on return-to-work preparation which assists clients to develop the cognitive skills they need to meet job demands. It also provides the structure and work routine needed to prepare for transitioning back to work. Specific skills such as assertiveness, time management, and organizational skills can be part of the program as well.

Clients who are not ready for return-to-work preparation benefit from **re-activation** through working with the occupational therapist. Setting goals to increase activity and functioning pave the way for life re-engagement which can lead to readiness for return-to-work preparation.

Services are provided within a non-clinical
simulated work setting

ergo-wise.com