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More than just fun and games:

What is Therapeutic Recreation  
and  
Why is it important in LTC?

What is  
Therapeutic  
Recreation (TR)?

**“The purposeful use and enhancement of leisure as a way to maximize a person’s overall health, well-being, and quality of life”**

**(Robertson & Long, 2020, p. 4)**

## Characteristics of TR

- **Purposeful** use of recreation and leisure
- Enhancement of **functioning** through recreation and leisure
- Focus on the **whole person**
- Long term **improvements** in health, well-being and quality of life

(Kunstler & Daly, 2010)

What does a TR  
professional  
do?

- A TR Professional systematically plans, implements, and evaluates **meaningful leisure** programs designed to meet residents' strengths, interests, and dreams.

# What is leisure?

- Leisure is characterized by:
  - Intrinsic motivation (something done for its own sake, without external reward)
  - Personal choice

## What makes leisure meaningful?

- **Helps to reduce stress**
- **Leads to positive emotions**
- **Increases physical well-being**
- **Enhances social support and social connections**
- **Contributes to identity**
- **Helps build and practice skills**
- **Contributes to feelings of accomplishment and purpose**

## Misperceptions of TR

- **TR is NOT:**
  - A diversion or distraction
  - Entertainment
  - “Activities”
- **TR professionals are NOT:**
  - The babysitters
  - The party planners
- **Not all activities are appropriate for all residents**

## Facts about TR

- It is evidence-based
- It is strengths-based
- Programs are planned and implemented to meet residents' needs, skills, abilities and interests
- It takes time and effort to plan successful, meaningful, and effective TR programs



Why is TR  
important in  
LTC?

**Recreation activities in LTC homes “are one of the most important determinants of a resident’s quality of life and well-being”**

**(Van Haitsma et al., 2016, para. 3)**

**“Carefully tailored activities can provide a needed source of meaning, competence, social connection and pleasure for residents”**

**(Van Haitsma et al., 2016, para. 3)**

## Why is TR important in LTC?

- Individualized activity, social and emotional needs, and the need for independence and choice are often unmet in LTC (Cadieux et al., 2013)
- TR can address these unmet needs by promoting physical, social, and cognitive well-being... (Dupuis, 2008)
- Therapeutic Recreation is a non-pharmacological intervention (Kong, Evans, & Guevara, 2009)

## Why is TR important in LTC?

- Opportunities to nurture relationships and experience meaning (Lopez & Dupuis, 2014)
- Reduces depression (Duncan et al., 2017; Lam et al., 2017)
- Leisure engagement contributes to coping with negative life events (Kleiber & Hutchinson, 2010, Genoe, 2013)
- Address responsive behaviours (Kolanowski et al., 2009)
- Meaningful participation and enjoyable activities foster experiences of dignity (Slettebo et al., 2017)
- Stimulate memory
- Promote learning and skill development
- Empowering residents to achieve their leisure aspirations



## Benefits of TR

- **Enhances physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual well-being**
- **Improves quality of life**
- **Creates opportunities to experience joy, meaning, and hope**
- **Respects choice and independence**



What knowledge, skills,  
and abilities does a TR  
professional have?

## Knowledge

- Leisure theory and the benefits and outcomes of a wide range of leisure activities
- A wide range of illnesses and disabilities and their implications
- How to adapt activities to meet abilities
- Community leisure resources
- Interests, skills and abilities of each resident

## Skills

- Relationship building and people skills
- Partnership development with community agencies, groups, and volunteers
- Program planning skills, including structure and format
- Flexibility, creativity and problem solving

## Abilities

- Coordinate program schedules, volunteers
- Balance a tight budget while prioritizing residents' needs
- Effectively document residents' progress and evaluate program's effectiveness

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## What do TR professionals say about TR?

**“TR helps people believe in themselves and find joy, a little bit of joy in their life, no matter how small or how large that is, everyday”**

**“TR is supporting people in what they choose to do and helping them carry through their wishes as opposed to just telling them what they are going to do. It’s trying to get to the root of the passions that they have inside and helping them live those things and carry them out with them”**

# TR program examples

## Reminiscing

- Reflecting on the past
- Enables connection to memories and self

## Intergenerational programs

- Foster meaningful relationships and build community capacity
- Create lifelong learners
- Opportunity to learn new skills
- Create a sense of belonging and feelings of contribution

## Creative programs

- Self-expression
- Expression of emotions
- Creative outlet
- Social engagement
- Stimulating senses

## Physical and cognitive games

- "Use it or lose it"
- Build/maintain strength and physical fitness
- Build or maintain memory and problem solving skills



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For more information:

Contact your Recreation Therapist or  
Recreation Coordinator

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