Organization and Time Management: Tools & Strategies for Successful Daily Living

Sarrah Yoder, M.S., CCC–SLP
Brie Georger, M.S., OTR/L
Role of Speech Therapy In Brain Injury

- Treatment includes deficits that affect communication, cognition, and social interaction
  - Attention (concentration)
  - Memory
    - Immediate, working, short-term, prospective, long term
    - Verbal, visual, episodic, procedural
  - Executive Functions
  - Communication
    - Comprehending & expressing language
Time Management & Organization

- **Task/Time Management** = Goal directed behavior
  - Planning
  - Sequencing
  - Self-monitoring
  - Selecting items/resources needed
  - Assessing accuracy upon completion & correcting errors
  - Concentration
  - Prospective and Working Memory

- **Organization**
  - Categorizing
  - Compartmentalizing
  - Sequencing
  - Concentration/Memory
Accurately estimating the passage of time plays an important role in helping to structure daily activities. Durations that exceed working memory, individuals with brain injury perceived less time as having passed than actually had passed and underestimated time. Due to episodic memory dysfunction, evidence suggests that individuals with brain injury can be significantly impaired on time and event-based prospective memory. Several self-report studies or other questionnaires indicate that prospective memory impairments were frequently reported by individuals living with brain injury.
How Impairments Affect: Organization

- Difficulty with vision/visual attention can increase errors
- Difficulty with self-monitoring, identifying and correcting errors as they occur
- Categorization and reasoning skills may affect ability to sort/match like items
- Impulsivity can increase errors and lead to frustration
- Irritability and lower stress tolerance may affect consistent use of organization techniques
Treatment Approaches

- Metacognitive strategy instruction
  - treatments using step-by-step training procedures to improve organization and problem solving (learn to think about how you will do something before doing it)

- Customizable memory aids

- Scripted tasks with massed practice

- Consistent, repeated, successful completion of specific daily life tasks
  - (errorless learning + practice = success!)

- Family support
Memory/organization aids

- Low tech
  - Notebook/calendar/planners
  - Post-its
  - Paper-clips, flags
  - Color coding
  - Watches/timers
Memory/organization aids

- High tech
  - Electronic notes, post-its, to-do lists
  - Electronic calendar
  - Apps specifically designed for memory/time management/organization
Limit yourself to one activity at a time until you've mastered that task. Once you feel confident, start adding a second task.

Start with simpler tasks that are fairly easy for you to complete and as you master them, try tasks that require more time or concentration.

Modified To-Do List—create a list of 3–5 projects that you want to do and write them on the dry marker board. Don’t add another project to the list until you completed one of the 5 items. As you add one, you have to subtract one.
Role of Occupational Therapy

- Occupational therapists assist patient’s/clients to return to their daily lives as safely and independently as possible
- Restore vs compensate for lost function
- BADLs (basic activities of daily living)
- IADLs (instrumental activities of daily living)
Morning Routine

- Focus on morning routine – important for getting ready for work, getting kids ready for school, getting to doctor’s appointments, etc.
- Make a list
  - I.e. shower, get dressed, get kids dressed, make breakfast/lunch
- Prioritize
- Keep it consistent
Getting out of the house on time

- Complete routines in timely manner
- Plan how long it takes to get to your destination the night before
  - give yourself approx 10 extra minutes for traffic, accidents, stoplights, etc.
  - If you need to arrange for a ride, do that 1–2 days in advance
- Set time lines for each activity
  - Even set timers for each activity
- Set a “warning timer”
  - Set a timer for 10 minutes before you have to be out of the house in order to tie loose ends.
- Keep everyone in the loop
Tips/strategies

- Make check lists and keep them visible.
- Be organized!
  - Lay out clothes the night before
  - Make lunches the night before
  - You may decide to seek help in beginning with this step
- Use timers or electronic reminders
- Reminders for off-routine tasks (ie. soccer games, doctor appointments, running errands, etc.) Write these things down!
- Weekly or monthly calendars for help
Medication Management

- Extremely important part of our daily routine
- Plan medications in advance
- Use pill boxes for organization and memory
- Talk to your pharmacy on a regular basis to check what medications you are taking
- Use caregivers/family members for support
- Home Health nursing/CNAs
MedMinder

- Electronic pill dispenser that sets reminders when to take medications.
- Compartment lights up when it is time to take those pills
- If pills are not taken within a certain time period, the light is accompanied by a beeping
- If those pills still are not taken, MedMinder calls the patient to remind them
  - Can also be set up to send text messages or emails to family members or caregivers
Questions?

“What you do with what you have is more important than what you have.”

– Mark Ylvisaker

