

Appendix B: The “What Now?” Workbook: Guidance for the Occupational Therapist.
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***Guidance for the occupational therapist*. Salford, UK: Author.**

The ‘What Now?’ Workbook

Guidance for the occupational therapist

1. When is this workbook appropriate to use?

- a. This is a workbook which has been designed to help people to understand how they might re-establish a satisfactory sense of identity, after experiencing a life-changing trauma such as:
 - A serious illness (such as cancer)
 - A bereavement
 - The loss of a key role such as in job loss
 - Migration
- b. Events such as these can result in what has been called ‘biographical disruption’ (Hubbard, Kidd, & Kearney, 2010). The individual’s sense of self, or identity, can be damaged or changed. For many people, this damage heals on its own or through the individual’s usual support mechanisms, but for others there is an ongoing sense that they have been fundamentally changed and it may be difficult to move forward with a sense of well-being.
- c. Therapists sometimes encounter people who say, for example:
 - *‘I don’t know who I am anymore’*
 - *‘It feels like life has stopped and I can’t get started again’*
 - *‘I’m not the person I was’*
 - *‘How can I move forward?’*
 - *‘How can I make sense of things?’*
 - *‘What now, for me?’*

These are the people who may find this workbook useful.

2. A tool for occupational therapists

- a. The workbook is designed to be congruent with the theoretical basis of occupational therapy and should therefore be administered by, or under the supervision of, an occupational therapist. The occupations that people engage in, throughout the lifespan, impact generally on well-being and health, and, specific to this workbook, ***occupational engagement helps to shape identity and give life meaning.***

- b. The workbook content is based on research (Taylor & Kay, 2013) which examined how the meanings of occupations are very specific to each individual, thus helping them to construct identity and a sense of self over time.
- c. The workbook enables the individual to give detailed thought to a particularly important occupation, exploring all of its unique special meanings. The occupational therapist will help the individual to explore and understand the answers and how these relate to other aspects of life, health and well-being. The individual is enabled to gain insights about what has been / is important for them in life, in terms of who they are and who they can become. This is a tool which builds on the idea that occupation is about 'doing, being, belonging and becoming' (Hammell, 2004).
- d. The workbook is not an assessment which results in a score. It is designed to be a client-centred tool, providing the basis for a therapeutic conversation. Superficially, the workbook can look as if it is performing an activity analysis, but rather than focusing on the occupation, the focus is on the unique meaningful relationship that a particular individual has with a particular occupation.

3. How should the workbook be used?

- a. Whilst the workbook can be filled in by the individual on his or her own, it is recommended that the therapist also contributes and assists. So:
 - i. The individual can fill it in on his / her own, then bring it for discussion with the therapist
Or
 - ii. The therapist can sit with the individual and talk through each question with them as the individual fills it in
Or
 - iii. The therapist can administer the workbook like an interview, filling it in the answers for the client.

In ii and iii above the occupational therapist may choose to modify the questions to make them accessible to the individual, according to need. If this is done, care should be taken not to change the gist or overall meaning of the question. Further help might be given by using concrete examples such as "Did you think that the activity helped you give something to the town?"

- b. The appropriateness of use, and the method of administration will depend on the therapist's professional judgement, taking into account the individual client's circumstances, attributes and issues. The process of completing the workbook takes some time, and so this should also be factored into the professional judgement. It is recommended that it is used when the individual's trauma has reached some stability, but where life is not being picked up again in a satisfactory way.
- c. Most people will find it easier to complete the workbook one section at a time, with a break between sections. If desired the therapist might suggest completing one section each week, for example. There is no one way to complete the workbook. The therapist and client can approach it with flexibility.

- d. The individual should not be handed the workbook to complete without a pre-arranged follow-up discussion. The workbook is fairly self-explanatory, but remind the individual that it is normal for some sections to prompt more thoughts and longer answers than others. There are no right or wrong answers. Each person will answer the questions in different ways. It should be emphasised that the individual should not worry too much about each individual question – it's the overall workbook that matters.
- e. Some sections may appear a bit repetitive and it's fine to ignore sections that don't feel relevant to the occupation.
- f. It is possible that the individual may have an emotional reaction as they fill in, and discuss, the workbook, accessing memories and insights. The therapist must be skilled in acknowledging the presence and validity of such emotions, using them as a healthy basis from which to move forward. Emotional reactions tend to arise when personal meaning, in relation to an occupation, is recognised. Previously valued occupations, if lost, may need a legitimate mourning period. They need to be acknowledged. This might cause sadness, but the acknowledgement might be enough to help. If not, then a referral on to a counsellor may be appropriate. *Valued occupations are also, of course, a cause for celebration.* Emotions may not necessarily be about sadness and loss.

4. How are the results of the workbook used?

- a. The workbook provides a basis and a structure for further occupational therapy intervention aiming to help the individual to move towards rebuilding a satisfactory sense of self, through occupational engagement. As the workbook is filled in and discussed, new ways forward, in terms of 'doing' and becoming', will emerge.
- b. The grid overleaf can be used to help highlight and summarise which are the areas of meaningfulness for the individual.
- c. After completing the workbook for one occupation, the individual is then in a position to think fully and in a structured way, about other occupations, and their relative importance and meaning in his or her life. In this way, planning for the future is enabled.
- d. The workbook will enable the client and therapist to plan and prioritise occupational therapy intervention based, perhaps, on adapted occupations or new ones which reflect the meanings attached to those that are no longer possible.
- e. It may be that the workbook has its sole therapeutic value in enabling the individual to mourn for lost occupations, or to celebrate the special meanings that a certain occupation has had. The workbook could form the basis for scrap-book activities, journal writing, or life history work.

This grid can be used to summarise discussions, helping the client to understand which are the areas of importance and meaning that might influence future activities. Put a star or a tick in each box that had the fullest answers in the workbook. This is not a numerical process, it's a set of judgements!

The changing self	Self is changed	Occupation is changed		
The active self	Values	Competence	Control	
The located self	Time	Place	Body & Mind	Society/relationships

This grid should now offer you scope for thinking and discussion about the meanings that favourite and valued occupations have had. It is also worth giving attention to the boxes that have not been ticked. These are indicators of those aspects that have little value to the individual in this case.

References

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