

Cognitive Rehabilitation: An Evidence-Based OT Approach to INTERVENTION

STAGE ONE: Prior to initiation of cognitive intervention:

- a. Key criteria prior to starting cognitive intervention:
 - Do goals of intervention focus on function/task (occupational performance & engagement)?
 - Are there client-centred goals & client motivation? (essential for performance & engagement)
- b. Consider results of cognitive assessment (see also Step 6 of the document “An OT Approach to Evaluation of Cognition/Perception”):
 - insight/awareness
 - specific cognitive impairment
 - task performance
 - impact of environment/context

STAGE TWO: General Health and Well-Being – ensure that these factors are being addressed:


- medical issues (including medication side effects)
- fatigue/poor sleep
- pain, headaches
- mood (e.g., anxiety, depressed mood)
- other health issues including adequate nutrition

STAGE THREE: Specific Cognitive Intervention Strategies:

****Strategies are rarely selected in isolation****

- **Remedial/Process Training**
 - drill-and-practice exercises: e.g. pen/paper, computer, auditory
 - emphasized in: Attention Process Training (APT); Neurocognitive Enhancement Therapy (NET); Neuropsychological Educational Approach to Rehabilitation (NEAR); etc.
 - not to be used in isolation of other strategies
- **Task-Specific Training**
 - learning or re-learning a task through practice of the task, within context
 - involves: consistency, structure/routine, repetition
- **External Strategies** (“compensatory strategies”)
 - e.g.: day timer, calendar, lists, alarms, cues/reminders from others, etc.
 - consider the task specific training that may be required to learn a new external strategy
- **Internal Strategies** (“metacognitive strategies”)
 - e.g.: self talk; anticipation; enhanced awareness of learning style; self-appraisal, processing & selecting relevant info; guided discovery; etc.
 - such as are emphasized in: CO-OP Approach; Toglia’s strategy training approach
- **Adapt the Environment**
 - e.g.: simplify; reduce distractions; provide cues and prompts; change others’ perceptions & attitudes; modify support from others (increase, reduce, change type of support); etc.
- **Social Skills Training**
 - e.g.: 1-1 or video feedback, peer input, role play, task-specific training of social skills in context
- **Education**
 - e.g.: education about brain function, cognition, cognitive strategies
 - formal or informal

Selecting Specific Cognitive Intervention Strategies: first determine where you client fits within the continuum

		
-severe cognitive deficits (including poor insight, memory) -low capacity for new learning	-mild cognitive deficits, (including good insight) -high capacity for new learning	
-remedial activities may promote attention & awareness	Remedial/Process Training	-focus on attention, working memory, & problem solving training -OT takes on role of coach -must be contextualized & personalized, provide the “just right” cognitive challenge, and link to function -not in isolation: must also utilize other strategies (including external & internal strategies)
-lots of repetition, consistency, structure -many repetitions, same manner -blocked practice (i.e., focus on one aspect of task) -errorless learning -aim for success within one task, same context (generalization may not be possible)	Task-Specific Training	-random: variety of tasks in one session -whole practice of task -vary the context (within natural tasks, environment) -may include trial & error learning -aim for transfer to other tasks and context
-high emphasis on external strategies (likely generated by OT & caregivers) -simplify -consider new learning (task specific training)	External Strategies	-aim for strategy generation (client coming up with their own external strategies)
-limited use of internal strategies -OT as primary problem-solver	Internal Strategies	-strong emphasis on internal & self-generated strategies -OT as coach; use of guided discovery
-environment adapted by OT or others	Adapt the Environment	-enable client to adapt own environment
-external feedback likely required	Social Skills Training	-aim for self-monitoring & self-discovery of social skills performance
-information, explanations provided by OT	Education	-enable self-discovery for example by providing resources