Strategies for Success: Cognitive Orientation to Occupational Performance; The CO-OP Approach

What is CO-OP?

Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) is a therapeutic treatment approach for people who have difficulties performing motor-based skills. From children with DCD to adults recovering from stroke, CO-OP is designed to enable people to use metacognitive skills to reach their performance goals.

Internationally acclaimed by therapists and researchers, it is a therapy that uses cognitive problem solving strategies to enable the acquisitions of client chosen skills which often include such basic skills as writing, skipping, bicycling, typing, and other daily living skills.

Research with this new approach has shown that, given the right strategies, people with difficulty learning, or re-learning, motor-based skills can master a large variety of skills.

For whom is CO-OP designed?

Children

The CO-OP approach, designed originally for children with DCD, has benefited children with:

- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- Dyslexia
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Asperger’s syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Other performance disabilities.

Adults

The CO-OP approach has also been successful in enabling adults with ABI or stroke to re-acquire motor skills and adapt to life with different abilities.

Developed for Individuals, adapted for groups

Individuals learn and develop best when they succeed according to their own goals. CO-OP provides the means for people to do just that. With an emphasis on self-discovery, CO-OP enables people to develop an individualized approach to therapeutic treatment. New evidence is emerging on the application of CO-OP in group situations with children.

Contemporary Science

Current theories of motor learning and motor performance emphasize the interaction between the person, the environment, and the task for successful performance of an activity. The CO-OP approach draws upon and advances in contemporary scientific theory to rehabilitation and skill development treatment.
Objectives of the CO-OP Approach

The goal of the Cognitive Orientation to Daily Occupational Performance therapy is to enable individuals with motor-based performance difficulties to improve their performance in everyday tasks and activities through guided discovery and the use of problem-solving strategies to “talking themselves through” performance problems.

This approach to intervention is highly verbal and consists of four important objectives:

- skill acquisition
- development of cognitive strategies
- generalization
- transfer of learning

Therapists’ Requirements for Learning the Approach:

The CO-OP approach is designed by and for therapists working with children or adults with motor-based skill performance difficulties. As a professional therapeutic approach, CO-OP requires training in its concepts, background theory, and practical application.

Videotapes and experiential activities will be used in the course to help therapists learn how to assess a child’s performance, identify areas of difficulty, and plan strategies for success. The application of CO-OP to children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), and other populations, including Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Asperger’s Syndrome, will be discussed, as to adults with ABI and stroke.

It is also recommended that therapists interested in using the CO-OP approach and attending the course have:

- a person centred intervention philosophy
- an understanding of people with disabilities
- if working with the children, the ability to properly manage their behaviour
- effective communication skills
- skill in activity analysis
- a commitment to working with parents or significant others
- familiarity with administering the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM)

Importantly, where possible individuals interested in using the approach should read Enabling occupation in children: The Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) approach, available through the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT).

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