

Narratives about occupations

You'll find here different versions of text (narrative) about occupations that you can use to help people understand more about what it means in the context of occupational therapy. You might adapt it, depending on who you are speaking with, but using this as a basis will help to build a consistent understanding.

The narrative is available in several formats:

1. text for posts on social media
2. script to introduce occupations in 30 seconds
3. prompts for conversations
4. stories to bring occupations to life
5. content for bulletins, newsletters and webpages

1. Social media posts

We've provided four different options of text you can use alongside the social media graphics. You can, of course, create your own posts and use them with the graphics.

Option 1

We do occupations from the moment we're born – they're essential to living. They give our lives meaning and purpose, they shape who we are, and help us connect with others.

#OTWeek23

www.rcot.co.uk/occupation

Option 2

Occupations are any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health. They can be self-care, productive or leisure. #OTWeek23

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Option 3

What do you think occupations are? Occupations are any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health, and our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. #OTWeek23

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Option 4

What occupations would you hate to lose? As an occupational therapist I'd explore what they mean to you and then, together, we'd create a plan of goals and adjustments to get you back to doing it. Or explore alternatives. #OTWeek23

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2. 30 second script

How many times in OT Week can you use this text to introduce people to occupations in the context of occupational therapy? Try and weave it into every conversation you have and don't stop after OT Week!

If you can't remember it all, the first sentence will work on its own.

Occupations are any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health. They can be self-care, productive or leisure.

We do occupations from the moment we are born – they're essential to living. They give our lives meaning and purpose, they shape who we are, and help us connect with others.

3. Conversation prompts

Challenge yourself to have a conversation with at least one person about occupations every day. These conversation prompts are here to help you.

What do you think occupations are?

An occupation is any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health, and our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Occupation isn't just your job or activities of daily living. We do occupations from the moment we're born, on our own or with others.

What do you think are the different types of occupations?

An occupation can be:

- self-care, such as washing, eating or sleeping
- productive, such as work, study, caring or domestic activities, and
- leisure, such as playing sports, hobbies or socialising.

We're all different and so are the occupations that matter to us. They vary depending on our environment, interests and values, talents and skills. Our occupations also change throughout our lives. Occupations are the building blocks of life.

What occupation or occupations would you be devastated to lose?

As an occupational therapist I'd explore what that occupation means to you and then together we'd create a plan of goals and adjustments to get you back to doing it. If that is not possible, we can explore alternatives that could have the same meaning to you.

By doing this we can give people a renewed sense of purpose and open up new opportunities to change the way they feel about the future.

Occupational therapy helps you live your best life at home, at work – and everywhere else.

Have you thought about why occupations are essential to living?

They give our lives meaning, purpose and structure. They help shape who we are, connect us with others and help create our identity and sense of belonging. Through occupation we enhance our health and quality of life.

Focusing on occupation leads to improvements in our ability to do the things we need and want to do, our social relationships, communication and connections, as well as our mood, rest and sleep.

Occupations are particularly important when we're going through times of change. When we can't do an occupation anymore, or we need to adjust the way we do it, because of ill health or other barriers, our sense of self and purpose may change. This is where occupational therapy comes in: to put quality into life.

4. Story examples

Storytelling really helps to bring things to life. We've shared a few stories here about the value of occupations that you can use. No doubt you have your own! Use them when you're talking to be about occupations.

- **Disrupting occupations has consequences.**
Lockdown meant children couldn't go to school and families adapted as best as they could. But we're now seeing the highest levels of persistent absences from school – more than double in England compared to pre-COVID. Going to school is a key occupation for children. Some families can support their children to get back to school but others need additional support from an occupational therapist to return.
- **Environment impacts on occupations. Focusing on occupations reduces pressure on the health and social care systems and saves money.**
People are living longer and in just under half (45%) of all older households, someone is living with a long-term illness or disability. Living independently for longer improves quality of life, but homes need to support daily occupations. An occupational therapist can help adapt a house for as little as £450 for minor adaptations and £16,600 for major adaptations – as opposed to around £39,500 a year in residential care.
- **Occupation is key to successful rehabilitation.**
Rehabilitation is more effective when focused on goals based on what the person wants and needs to do and interventions that build the person's ability to participate in those occupations again.

Reference: NICE Intermediate care including reablement

5. Content for bulletins, newsletters and webpages

Is there a newsletter or bulletin that you can ask to feature OT Week and occupations? Could you review your service description about occupations?

Here are three versions of the narrative about occupations in the context of occupational therapy. There is a long, medium and short version - pick the one that works best for you.

Long version

OT Week 2023 is all about explaining what occupations are in the context of occupational therapy.

In the context of occupational therapy, what are occupations?

An occupation is any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health, and our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We do occupations from the moment we are born, on our own or with others.

Occupation isn't just your job or activities of daily living. An occupation can be self-care, such as washing, eating or sleeping; productive, such as work, study, caring or domestic activities; and leisure, such as playing sports, hobbies or socialising.

We're all different and so are the occupations that matter to us. They vary depending on our environment, interests and values, talents and skills. Our occupations also change throughout our lives.

Occupations are the building blocks of life. But why do they matter?

Occupations are essential to living. They give our lives meaning, purpose and structure. They help shape who we are, connect us with others and help create our identity and sense of belonging. Through occupation we enhance our health and quality of life.

Focusing on occupation leads to improvements in our ability to do the things we need and want to do, our social relationships, communication and connections as well as our mood, rest and sleep.

Occupations are particularly important when we're going through times of change. When we can't do an occupation anymore or we need to adjust the way we do it, because of ill health or other barriers, our sense of self and purpose may change. This is where occupational therapy comes in.

Occupational therapy puts quality into your life.

Occupational therapists see beyond diagnoses and limitations to hopes and aspirations. They look at relationships between your occupations, the challenges you face and your environment.

Then, they create a plan of goals and adjustments targeted at achieving a specific set of activities. The plan is practical, realistic and personal to you as an individual, to help you achieve the breakthroughs you need to elevate your everyday life.

This support can give people a renewed sense of purpose and open up new opportunities and change the way people feel about the future.

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Medium version

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Occupation isn't just your job or activities of daily living. An occupation can be self-care, such as washing, eating or sleeping; productive, such as work, study, caring or domestic activities; and leisure, such as playing sports, hobbies or socialising.

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Short version**OT Week 2023 is all about explaining what occupations are in the context of occupational therapy.**

In the context of occupational therapy occupations are any activity that we need, want or like to do to live and to look after our physical and mental health, and our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We do occupations from the moment we are born, on our own or with others.

Occupations are essential to living. They give our lives meaning, purpose and structure. They help shape who we are, connect us with others and help create our identity and sense of belonging. Through occupation we enhance our health and quality of life.

Occupational therapists see beyond diagnoses and limitations to hopes and aspirations. They look at relationships between your occupations, the challenges you face and your environment.

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These are the references that were used to help create this narrative:

Laverdure P, Beisbier S (2021) Occupation- and activity-based interventions to improve performance of activities of daily living, play, and leisure for children and youth ages 5 to 21: A systematic review, American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 75(1). <https://research.aota.org/ajot/article-abstract/75/1/7501205050p1/8396/Occupation-and-Activity-Based-Interventions-to?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Ng L, Oliver E, Laver K (2023) Beyond garden design: A review of outdoor occupation in hospital and residential care settings for people with dementia, Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, 70(1), 97- 118. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1440-1630.12826>

Beisbier S, Laverdure P (2020) Occupation- and activity-based interventions to improve performance of instrumental activities of daily living and rest and sleep for children and youth ages 5--21: A systematic review, American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 74(2). <https://research.aota.org/ajot/article-abstract/74/2/7402180040p1/6668/Occupation-and-Activity-Based-Interventions-to?redirectedFrom=fulltext>