



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
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Reflections on Two Years of Occupational Therapy in a Prison Setting

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Stockholm, ENOTHE 2010

How we came to work in the prison

Service-Learning course

Group Theories course

Peer Education

Emerging areas of practice.



The community partner



- Est. 1999
- Closed 'open' prison
- Part of bigger Victorian prison complex
- Capacity 105 (overcrowding issues)
- Educational centre



Group interventions with women in prison

- Women in prison often display dependence on structure, interpersonal distrust, hyper vigilance, alienation, social withdrawal, decreased sense of self worth and stress related reactions.
- Recommendations for comprehensive and holistic approaches that place the women within the context of their relationship with others and the environment

(Ferszt et al. 2009)



Group interventions with women in prison

- Programmes should attempt to address
 - Self-esteem
 - Abuse history
 - Life skills training
 - Coping skills
- Our beginnings – Self Advocacy
- Needs identified by prison staff – drama, problem solving, independent living skills



The characteristics of human occupation in the women's prison (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007).

Who



What



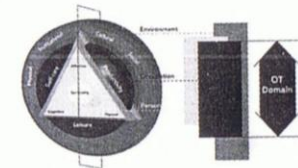
When



Where



How



Why

- Meaning
- Fulfillment
- Social connectedness
- Contribute rest
- Relaxation
- Challenge
- Achievement
- Success
- Satisfaction
- Purpose
- Self-expression
- Sustenance
- Relief of boredom
- Joy

The WHO of occupation

- Personal backgrounds
 - Literacy, varied socioeconomic classes, varied cultures, varied roles
- Type of problems they're living with
 - Drug addiction, abuse, kids & family
 - Guilt, court appearances
 - Bullying, sleeping, anxiety, depression, too many people around, anger, no control



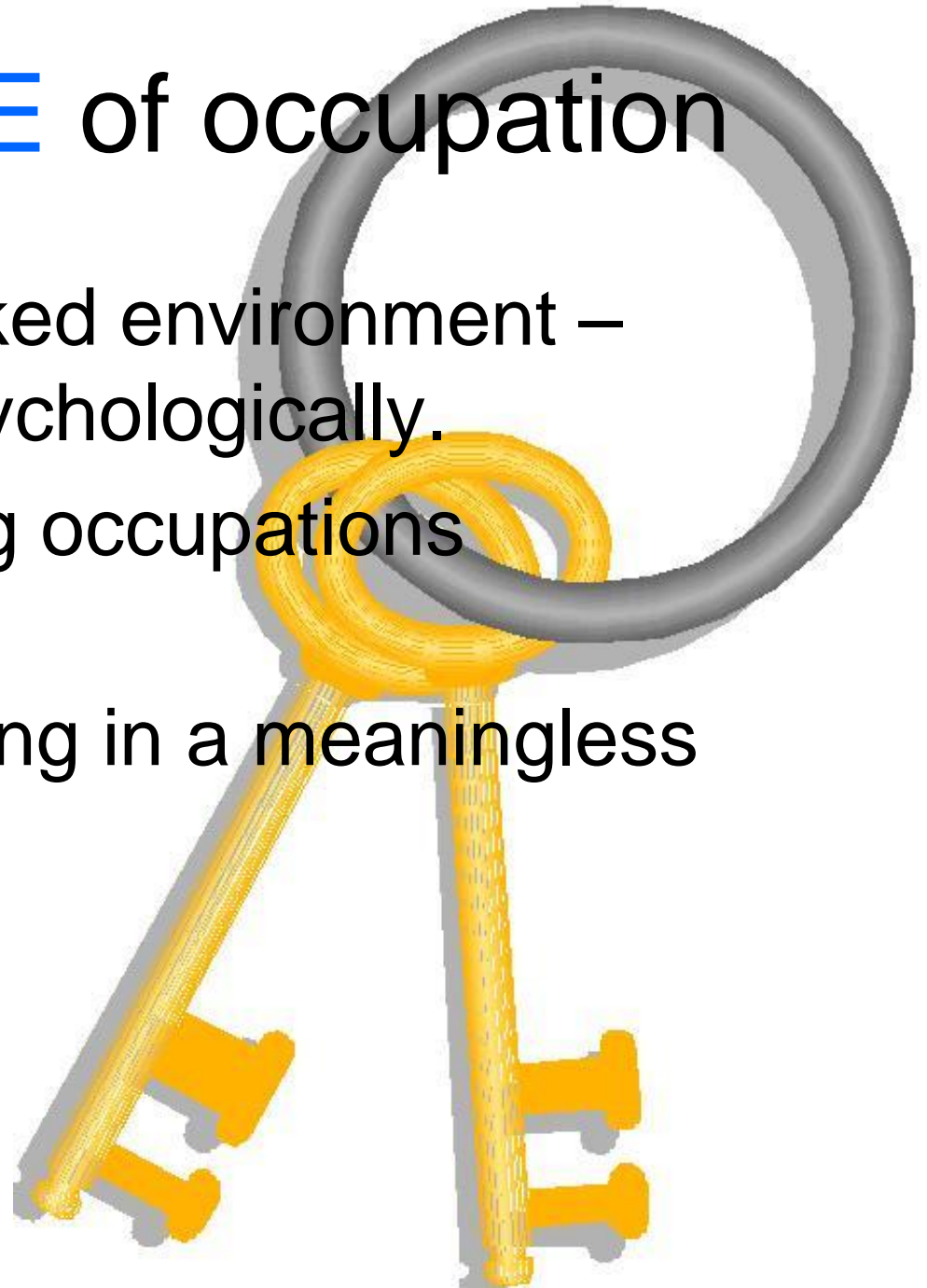
The **WHEN** of occupation

- **Before prison**
 - Established roles & routines that then change
- **Life in prison**
 - Routine of the institution
 - Little autonomy re scheduling
 - Time use – busy/ very immediate/ chaotic/ running late
- **Life after prison**
 - Only meaningful near release



The **WHERE** of occupation

- Constraints of locked environment – practicalities & psychologically.
- Difficulty in making occupations contextually real.
- How to find meaning in a meaningless place?



Pulling the WHO & WHERE together: **Factors impacting on women's occupational engagement**

- **Personal level**

- Not taking responsibility, peer pressure, lacking control over daily routine & personal choices, ...

- **Environmental level**

- Phone calls & visits, change of governance, over-crowding, overdoses, suicides, paranoia & gossiping, bullying, racism, ...



The **WHAT** of occupation

- Hanging out in houses – smoking, watching TV, socialising
- School – leisure & exams.
- Personal development courses.
- Self-care & grooming.
- Instrumental Activities of Daily Living.



The **HOW** of occupation

- How the women came to be these occupational beings...
- Occupational loss.
- Occupational replacement.
- Shift – focus on self.
- Having supports within environment (belonging) influences engagement.



The **WHY** of occupational engagement

- Skills for now or after prison.
- As a distraction; fill the day.
- Build up prisoner profile for Temporary Release.
- Through engagement process new motivators develop – e.g. connectedness, self-development, commitment.
- Occupation gains a reputation.





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This is to certify that:

Successfully completed a Problem Solving Course

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

DISCIPLINE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

The **WHAT** of occupation Projects to Date

STUDENT-LED

- Self-Advocacy
- Independent Living
- Drama

STAFF-LED

- Drama
- Problem Solving
- Drama





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DHA
LAMH
THEATRE



Discipline of Occupational Therapy

Dhá Lámh Theatre Company

Dóchas Centre, Mountjoy Prison

You are cordially invited to the screening of
'The Puppet Play of Don Cristobal'
by Federico Garcia Lorca

3.00pm
Sunday, 12th September, 2010
Phibsborough Tower

Performed by the women in the Dóchas Centre for Phizzfest
- Phibsborough Community Arts Festival



Feedback on Drama Group – women’s perspective

Why they engaged:

- Got into it by accident
- Good way to pass the time

Their experience:

- Better than expected. Great fun.
- This was something I could do well
- “Best thing I’ve done since coming in”
- Got to know each other – each took on roles

Skill development:

- How to work together, respect, confidence, patience
- More comfortable to express feelings
- Desire to learn more skills



Students' feedback on their group experience

Struggles:

- An unknown entity.
- Balancing differences in culture & interests.
- Selecting appropriate activities.

Learning:

- Importance of & difficulties in planning (being able to deviate from plan).
- Therapeutic use of selves (use of environment; understanding & managing group dynamics).
- Increased confidence in facilitating groups.

“Feel so lucky to have gotten in there.”



Prison staff & others' feedback

- See a big change in the women.
 - See a side to them that didn't know before – 'shining' and 'in the community'.
- Symbiotic relationship.

