

Processing Adventure Experiences: It's the Story that Counts

I found this article to be very practical, giving direct ways for a Rec Therapist to implement what the article is advocating. It's really important how it emphasizes the importance of processing in therapeutic recreation, specifically adventure programs, and how that is the greatest thing a person can gain from those experiences. The article gives suggestions and examples of questions the therapist should ask and then help the client construct their story from the experiences they are having. The article did not have studies to back up the effectiveness of this kind of processing, so it would be beneficial to conduct research and provide evidence of the positive impacts this type of processing has compared to other types.

It's the Story that Counts

Aimee Johansen

Brigham Young University

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“Processing Adventure Experiences: It’s the Story that Counts” is an article that emphasizes how important the processing segment of recreation therapy is. It provides valuable information and suggestions that could be implemented in all TR programs. I will summarize the article, address its strengths and weaknesses, explore possible applications, and discuss my personal reaction to it.

Article Summary

The article starts out by discussing how critical processing is to outdoor-adventure experiences. It highlights, “while every component of an outdoor-adventure experience is important, there are many writers and researchers who would argue that the processing/transfer elements is the most essential” (Luckner & Nadler, 1995, p. 176). After clearly defining processing, the article lays out an impressive list of different ways that processing could be beneficial to the client. Through all these examples, the first half of the article effectively converts the reader to the idea that processing is invaluable to the adventure experience.

Once the reader understands how important processing is, the article goes on to explain that the best kind of processing is narrative in style. The article asserts, “Efficient learning is predicted on individuals’ active involvement in the learning process” (Luckner et al., 1995, p. 177). To have the clients account for their experience in story form is to help them draw conclusions and interpretations for themselves. Our lives are composed of a long string of different stories—some good and some bad—and there is great potential in helping the client

make productive memories of their outdoor experience. The article finishes by providing lists of methods to help clients discover their own tales.

Article Strengths

This article did an effective job at logically convincing the reader of its viewpoint. The progression from the familiar concept of processing to the more unique concept of storytelling is powerful. It really draws the reader along and leads nicely into a call to action. Another strength is that the article provides a list of things the reader could actually go and do immediately in their programs. Instead of just talking about the benefits of storytelling, it becomes a usable tool for the reader.

Article Weaknesses

A weakness of the article is a lack of research backing. There are plenty of sources and quotes pulled from different research, but few scientifically backed studies. The article would have benefitted from a case example of some sort to boost credibility and provide a framework for how exactly storytelling could be beneficial. Another weakness is that the authors employ quite a bit of jargon that they fail to define exactly what is meant in their particular context.

Article Application

Every therapeutic recreation specialist knows that processing is important and will already have their own style that they find effective. Storytelling is perhaps a newer concept, but could be experimented with in any kind of program to improve processing style. Even days later, the clients could be asked to recount an experience, which would remind and solidify

lessons they already learned. Everybody likes a good tale, and recreation therapy programs could really capitalize on the potential behind storytelling.

Personal Reaction

I'm personally a huge fan of storytelling and this article rings true for me. I've taken storytelling courses here at BYU and we studied how people remember things much better when told in story form. I feel that the tool of a good tale could be used extremely effectively, especially when you help the client formulate the story for themselves. I will absolutely employ storytelling techniques in my future practices as I look for ways to help people increase their self-efficacy.

Conclusion

"Processing Adventure Experiences: It's the Story that Counts" is an article that lays out the importance of processing and storytelling in recreation therapy programs. It provides useful lists and suggestions for the reader to immediately start implementing. Strengths of the article are the logical flow of ideas and an engaging call to action. It would benefit from more scientific research backing and a case study. Recreation therapist specialists of all kinds could use these suggestions to improve their processing style. I personally agree wholeheartedly that storytelling has great potential to influence peoples' lives further. This article would leave readers of all kinds satisfied.

References

- Luckner, J., & Nadler, R. (1995). Processing adventure experiences: it's the story that counts. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 29(3). Retrieved from <http://js.sagamorepub.com/trj/article/view/1238>