

Course Title: Healthy Bodies & Healthy Minds: Therapeutic Strategies for Promoting Wellness in Children

Course Description:

Experience an exciting and fun new course by Jenny L. Clark, OTR/L as she teaches therapists innovative ideas to integrate health and wellness strategies into the daily lives of children and youth who struggle with childhood disorders that impact emotional regulation, attention span, problem solving skills, social interactions, and physical health.

The American Occupational Therapy Association's 'Vision 2025' identifies health and wellness as a focused key practice area for therapists in the 21st century. Since health is an important component of physical, mental, and emotional well-being, there is an increased need for wellness-related interventions. Research studies examining health-related interventions indicate promising results for children's well-being. Implementing these interventions into daily life improves a child's neurophysiological symptoms resulting from SPD, ADHD, and ASD. As the number of children with SPD increases and the correlation between nature-deficit disorder and prevalent childhood disorders is established, it is imperative for therapists to incorporate wellness interventions into their therapeutic strategies.

This presentation identifies a decrease in physical activity as a key problem in children with sensory processing disorder (SPD), attention deficit disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Therapists will learn why lack of movement contributes to physical, emotional, and behavioral challenges in children with childhood disorders as they are introduced to a variety of wellness strategies focusing on meaningful occupations, including outdoor activities in nature, healthy foods, yoga, deep breathing, and mindfulness activities.

In this course therapists will learn about the evidence-based therapeutic value of yoga for children and youth. Yoga addresses a wide spectrum of a child's developmental needs, from emotional regulation and attention span to motor planning and coordination. Individual yoga poses are selected for discussion of sensory and musculoskeletal benefits. Therapists learn the assets of yoga as an effective approach to help children overcome deficits so that they can experience quality of life through meaningful and joyful activity.

This course will also examine the neuroscientific evidence about the benefits of exposure to nature. Therapists will learn to identify characteristics of 'Nature-Deficit Disorder', a term coined by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, and discover why getting outside in nature is important for the health and well-being of children and youth. Jenny will present evidence-based information about physical activity in nature, the benefits of 'blue space', and agricultural literature and its impact on a child's nutrition. Participants will develop a repertoire of fun and practical activities to connect children with nature, ideas on how to bring the outdoors inside to schools and clinics, therapeutic gardening for children, geocaching, animal-assisted therapy, and more. These pediatric health and wellness strategies and interventions include activities that parents, teachers, and therapists can implement in a variety of settings, and help children develop many important skills that can be applied to daily life experiences.

Course Objectives

1. Examine current evidence illustrating health and wellness needs in the pediatric population to substantiate application of therapeutic interventions.
2. Analyze health-related challenges in prevalent childhood disorders to correlate a common need across a diverse population of youth.
3. Develop a repertoire of occupation-based wellness interventions for youth that can be applied to home, school, and community settings.

Outline/Agenda:

Identifying Occupational Wellness Needs in the Pediatric Population through Evidence-Based Practices

- Complimentary health approaches & integrated health for OT, PT and ST
 - What can we ethically implement in our therapy practices?
- Health promotion & prevention in pediatric therapy
- Evidence to support wellness intervention for prevalent childhood disorders
 - Childhood obesity
 - Vitamin D deficiency
 - Maladaptive behavior
 - Anxiety
 - Social issues
 - ADHD, SPD, ASD
- Nature Deficit Disorder & Gaming Disorder: Disturbing revelations about the importance of getting kids unplugged, outside, and physically active

Yoga Poses as Therapeutic Intervention for Kids

- Research supporting the health benefits of yoga for kids
- Standing yoga poses, floor yoga poses, partner yoga poses
 - Kid video examples
 - Cat pose, bridge pose, tree pose, and many more
- Integrating themes into yoga poses
- Mini labs: Let's get on our yoga mats & practice yoga poses!

Occupation-Based Wellness Interventions for Children & Youth: Deep Breathing, Brain Breaks & Mindfulness

- The anatomy of deep relaxed breathing
- Creative ways to teach kids diaphragmatic breathing
 - Mini lab: Let's experience the sensory modulating benefits of deep, relaxed breathing
- Meditation/Brain Breaks for children & youth
- Mindfulness
 - Positive affirmations for kids mental health
- Interoception: How to help children tune-into their bodies for self-regulation

Occupation-Based Wellness Interventions for Children & Youth: Nature & Nutrition

- Sensory-rich therapeutic value of Nature Experiences
 - Animal-assisted therapy
 - Parks & trees
 - Insects & birds

- Physical activity in the great outdoors: What the research says about health benefits for children & youth
 - o Mini lab: Experiential video of nature
- Therapeutic benefit, creative activity ideas, and meaningful occupation for kids in nature
 - o Hiking, camping, fishing
 - o Playing in Local, State, & National Parks
 - o Scouts & 4-H
 - o Adventures with kids in Geocaching & Painted Rocks
- What is “Blue Space”? How does it impact the brain?
- Therapeutic Gardening: Benefits for childhood development
 - o Sensory skills, motor skills, emotional regulation, executive functioning
 - o Urban Farming & Community Gardens – Getting kids involved
- Bringing nature into the classroom & clinic
- “Agricultural Literacy” What is it and why is it important for the health of children?
- Simple solutions to get kids eating healthy food

Target Audience:

- Occupational Therapists
- Occupational Therapy Assistants
- Physical Therapists
- Physical Therapist Assistants
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants
- Music Therapists
- Case Managers
- Social Workers
- Psychologists
- Early Childhood Special Educators
- Special Education Teachers
- Educators
- Early Intervention Professionals

Educational Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Instructional Methods: Lecture, videos, labs, case studies

What to bring: Yoga mat, feathers, bubbles, streamers, small bean bag or bean bag animal, small stickers that can be placed on fingers