

Level 6: “Organize the Therapy Hour”

Level 6 is the beginning of the “Executive Functioning” phase of rehabilitation. People in this situation are becoming more independent as they progress from following routines to developing self awareness of their cognitive deficits as they perform higher level activities. They are typically seen in at the end of inpatient stays, outpatient settings. Frequently those at this level are ambulatory although wheelchair may still be necessary due to balance or endurance deficits.

Executive functioning is a complex topic – but the goal for the activities at Level 6 is to set up practice situations where people can demonstrate that their executive functioning skills are intact.

Up until now in the progression of functional cognitive activity levels, the people have be told what to do and when to do it. When people are performing executive functioning – they are participating in activities which are ill-structured - meaning they have to figure more things on their own. They must be able to not only plan, but also carry out their plan to completion. They need to exhibit complex goal directed behaviour and be able to adapt to novel situations.

The activities at Level 6 are similar to those of Multiple Errands Test – a performance based assessment

Overall goal: Efficiently schedule a series of complex tasks to carry out a specific role in life

Level 6 performance characteristics according to 3 global elements:

- Interpersonal: cues to correct errors, clarifies assignment before starting, recognizes/admits errors,
- Environmental: navigates multi-level building, needs cues to plan route, seeks help when navigating
- Time: plans ahead by estimating time, completes tasks in reasonable_time

Treatment activities for this level:

- “Organize the Therapy Session”: plan , then carry out a list of tasks or exercise to accomplish in session

Level 6 Goals:

- Interpersonal: keeps notes organized, cues to create charts for organization, self corrects errors
- Environmental: avoids backtracking when navigating in buildings, navigates backwards to return to start
- Time: prioritizes tasks according to time limits, outlines plan before starting, numbers tasks to sequence

Conducting Sessions at Level 6

- This is a very interesting group of activities because it allows the patient to show he on the path to independent functioning
- The idea is to give him a list of assorted tasks and see how he carries them out over the entire therapy session
- He must understand the goals for the activity and show how he approaches a problem
- It differs from the previous activities because there is no schedule to follow
- There are time limits and time points to which he must attend and manage independently.
- The person must prioritize and be able to estimate the time needed for tasks to complete the activity by the end of the session
- At the beginning level the person usually goes straight down the list of without considering any alternative approach.
- At first it may be necessary to limit the number of activities so the patient is not overwhelmed.
- The tasks can be graded according to complexity and the number of tasks can be adjusted
- Time constraints can be placed within each activity to make it harder.
- At the highest level the therapist can interweave individual activities so that success in one is dependent on completing another. This forces the patient to read the whole list of assignments.

Addressing the Development of Self Awareness of Cognitive Deficits

- Have the patient estimate how long it will take to do tasks before he starts
- At the outset of the session, have the patient “highlight” time points to be sure when he is required to stop and start
- Ask him if there are things he can do in the same places to avoid wasting time/energy
- Put numbers in front of each task to plan ahead
- Have him go to a specific place and “check-in” by writing down on the Job Chart Sheet what he has accomplished

When the person is not acknowledging his deficits:

- Provide positive supports to build self esteem
- If providing verbal instructions– record him agreeing to understanding so less arguing
- Play back the recorder to prove it to him
- Video tape performance to highlight deficits