

Attachment - Socialization

Socio-emotional development level equivalent to 6-18 months of age

Adapting Therapeutic Approaches and Environments

Interacting with Clients

- Actively approach clients and determine the appropriate frequency, duration and form of one-on-one contact to create a bond with them
- Provide security by assigning each client a specific staff member who acts as their primary caregiver and can serve as an attachment figure, i.e. who is reliably available and actively reaches out to them
- Assign a specific staff member as the client's main contact in each shift (patient-centred approach)
- When clients are tense or upset, actively reach out to them and give them individual attention for limited periods of time as needed
- When clients want more attention, set limits and refer to the next opportunity to spend one-on-one time together
- Clients generally need rituals and at least peripheral physical contact (e.g. holding their hand, touching their arm etc.)

Adjusting Settings and Demands to the Needs of Clients

- Ensure that clients are not repeatedly faced with stressful situations to avoid building tension
- Provide assistance with personal hygiene as required
- It generally works best to allow clients to eat meals on their own, to pre-portion and cut food into bite-sized pieces and keep serving platters and bowls out of their direct line of sight
- Clients need a structured daily routine and constant supervision and support throughout the day
- Provide opportunities for clients to have quiet time by themselves and unwind (Snoezelen, baths, etc.) to avoid sensory overload and overstimulation/building of tension
- Announce shifts between settings and accompany clients during transitions (e. g. bus rides) to help them adjust
- Clients at this developmental level require constant attention and supervision, so employment in so-called sheltered workshops or social enterprises is usually not suitable and occupational therapy is only possible if the group is very small
- Assisted living in non-institutional settings is only possible if staff is available to provide one-on-one attention and care 24 hours a day

Therapeutic Approaches

- Reinforce desired behaviour immediately
- Clients' verbal comprehension is usually limited, so use short, clear sentences combined with unambiguous gestures ("stop!") when setting limits
- Validate clients' emotions
- Use ball blankets, weighted vests and other touch/pressure techniques to provide a sense of security and well-being

Avoid

- Sending clients to their room for a time-out unless they need to calm down; time-outs should generally last no longer than 30 minutes and clients should be able to contact a caregiver if they feel the need to do so
- Moralizing/value judgements and assigning clients too much responsibility
- Events with the potential for sensory overload, i.e. events of extended duration and/or involving larger groups of people, such as concerts
- Unsupervised, potentially confusing group situations