

Goal Setting and Grading of Activities

Children's Occupational Therapy Service



What is goal setting and grading of activities?

Goal setting is the process of deciding what you want to accomplish and devising a plan to achieve the result you desire.

Grading is a method of modifying how an activity is performed to make it more manageable or achievable.

These strategies are important for all children but especially for those who are experiencing difficulties in the development of their skills.

Why use goal setting?

Knowing how to set and achieve goals is an important life skill. Goal setting helps children focus more on what they want to achieve by helping them to plan and prioritise.

It can be used for the development of everyday tasks or for learning a new skill.

Goal setting and achievement creates confidence and raises self esteem.

A popular method of setting goals is to use the SMART technique.

Example:

An overall aim may be for a child to dress themselves independently. To start this process it may be helpful to break it down into smaller goals e.g. the child is able to put on t-shirt the correct way round independently within 2 months from now to enable them to get ready for P.E. at school.

When would you use grading?

Grading can be used in conjunction with goal setting when approaching tasks. A helpful method to grade activities is the 'M.A.T.C.H strategy' Missiuna, Rivard, Pollock (2004).

Goal Setting: SMART

Specific- The goal should be short and simple

Measurable- It should be clear when the goal will be achieved, by making it not too big or too small.

Attainable- The goal should be realistic; within the child's capability

Relevant- Where does the goal fit in within the context of the child's daily life.

Timely- A goal should have a time limit.

Grading: M.A.T.C.H.

This strategy has been developed for the teaching environment but the principles can be adapted to a home situation:

Modify the task - the importance of modifying the task is that the child can still experience success within the activity e.g. with the example of a child getting dressed: instead of the child standing up when getting dressed, have them sit down. In this way they don't have to put effort into balancing as well as dressing.

Alter expectations - consider what the ultimate goal of an activity is and then think about what can be flexible, e.g. instead of expecting the child to fully dress themselves independently straightaway, only expect them to do their t-shirt to begin with and then increase the amount of clothes gradually.

You can also use 'backward chaining' i. e. when putting on trousers, the adult helps the child with this whole task except the last step: the child can do up the zip (adult has done the button).

When he can do this confidently you can work backwards like this, having the child complete more steps independently.

Always have the child **finish** the goal successfully.

Teach strategies - try a different approach that may work better for the child. e.g. teach the child a different way of tying their shoe laces, which they may find easier.

Change the environment - pay attention to what is going on around a child when she/he is experiencing difficulty, e.g. it will be easier for them to concentrate on a dressing task when possible distractions, such as television, are eliminated.

Help by understanding - understanding the nature of your child's difficulties will help you to support them and help them to achieve success.

For more information you may find the following websites useful:

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

http://dcd.canchild.ca/en/?_mid_=3276

www.sealsswimming.co.uk

www.outspokentraining.co.uk

Although these websites refer to particular conditions that may not relate to your child, the information they give can still be helpful.

For further information about this service contact:

Children's Therapy Services
The Peacock Centre
Brookfields Campus
351 Mill Road
Cambridge
CB1 3DF

Tel: 01223-218065

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.