



Sensory Modulation & Environment:
Essential Elements of Occupation (3rd Edition Revised)
By Tina Champagne

I volunteered to review a book. I couldn't help myself. It just caught my eye and shouted. The title: "Sensory Modulation & Environment: Essential Elements of Occupation (3rd Edition Revised)". The author: Tina Champagne. This... before an Occupational Therapist seeking to expand her knowledge of sensory-oriented approaches to therapy for use in practice in an acute mental health unit environment. The email sent itself.

My first response upon receiving my copy of "Sensory Modulation & Environment: Essential Elements of Occupation" in the mail was to thumb through it. The initial thought was: "There's a lot in here...", followed by "Looks useful...", and then "Ooh! Tools to use ... and a CD too!" I then sat down and looked through all of the checklists and questionnaires, the rating scales and worksheets like a child given a new toy box to explore.

Now a sensible therapist would never stop there before heading into action prior to delving further into the text, but I hesitate to say that I would have had I not been on leave at the time. I may resound endlessly about the need for clinical tools to be chosen carefully through sound clinical reasoning – but I am just as easily drawn to the eye-catching parts of a publication as the next person. I may add in the case of this book – that you will find yet more useful information and resourcing in various parts of the text. You will also find a great deal of clarification regarding the nature and purpose of tools that have caught your eye and their uses.

I found in the handbook detailed information about Tina Champagne's perspective of the goals of a Sensory Modulation Program, examples of group or individual sessions for populations according to global cognitive functional level and discussion regarding the nature and use of sensory rooms. This was simple and delivered with practical advice about getting started and built on the clinical rationale that she had developed clearly by this stage of the work.

Areas that Champagne interacts with in this book range from scientific philosophy to human systems theory, neurological information to evaluation of global cognitive functioning (using Allen's six cognitive levels), trauma informed care in mental health settings, various diagnostic groupings and strategies that have been used to successfully reduce rates of seclusion and restraint in mental health facilities. Champagne clarifies that question that sometimes raises confusion: what exactly is the difference between sensory modulation and sensory integration? She also goes on to discuss a range of approaches to sensory modulation in varying degrees of depth. Some of these are familiar to Occupational Therapists, Mental Health Workers and/or consumers, while others are newer territory e.g. therapeutic use of self, strategies for identifying and coping with triggers, mindfulness activities, sensory modulation checklists and self-rating tools, grounding activities, self-care activities, relaxation/calming activities, self-soothing activities. These, together with the outlined goals, intervention ideas and review of interventions studied more closely pull together to form a comprehensive handbook.

So in what way is this an Occupational Therapy approach to sensory modulation issues? In each instance activities used therapeutically are purposeful. They must be meaningful to the person. They are used to improve function through activity or modifications made to enable engagement in further activity within the context at each level of the spirit-mind-person-world, facilitating a sense of identity and self-awareness and ability to use self-regulating skills for de-escalation in crisis, for mood, anxiety or other symptom and life management.

I'm now back from leave and once more in the work place. Having read the entire book I am more able to appreciate the tools that drew my eye in the beginning. I'm not sure if they're where I'd start with someone now. I have some ideas about different entry points and ways that I might commence assessment now. I am also certain that I would have stuck a post-it note in the glossary page and used it a number of times in the more terminology-heavy sections of the manual rather than wrestling so much with the jargon had I realised it was there before reading them. I was disappointed that circumstances have also delayed my trialling this material in my workplace in a substantial way before the time came to write this review. I hope to be able to do this next time now that doors are open to put theory into practice. I'm looking forward to the journey.

Reviewed by
Jacqui Nettleton

World Conference on Lung Cancer 2011 Amsterdam

In July I was given the opportunity to present a poster on the specialist work I do at the Prince of Wales Hospital in the area of Lung Cancer at the World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC). After attending many conferences at a national level I was excited to attend and present at an international medical conference. I had no idea what to expect as I headed off on an adventure to midsummer Europe.

I found Amsterdam to be a beautiful and vibrant city. Just as amazing was the size of the WCLC with a whopping 7000 attendees, 17 concurrent sessions & 1500 accepted abstracts from about 4000 submitted. The trams were jammed full of attendees as I headed to register for the conference – on a Sunday! I did not meet many other allied health professionals but had the opportunity to speak with lots of specialist lung cancer nurses and doctors from various specialities.

As an Occupational Therapist I found each day full of interesting and informative talks. Other specialists were also interested to learn more about OT and its relevance in providing services and treatment to people living with Lung Cancer. Taking advantage of this chance to promote our profession, I encouraged nurses and doctors to engage OTs in specialist areas by sharing information on the OT services provided at Prince of Wales Hospital.

My poster was well attended and created a lot of discussion, particularly with nurses who resonated with the client interventions I had outlined. This forum also allowed me to educate others on the important role OTs play in a multidisciplinary team to achieve more meaningful and successful client outcomes. To achieve patient focused goals I believe the real value of OT lies in our ability to work with people in their homes.

I enjoyed the conference and am grateful for the opportunity and support that the Oncology Unit at Prince of Wales Hospital provided in assisting me to attend. I encourage OTs to promote the incredible work you do on the international stage!!

Kahren White

