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## A Product To Aid Adolescents In Re-Integration To In-Person Education And Social Activities During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Kristin Nicole Thompson

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A PRODUCT TO AID ADOLESCENTS IN RE-INTEGRATION TO IN-PERSON  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2019  
Occupational Therapy Doctorate, University of North Dakota, 2022

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

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for the degree of

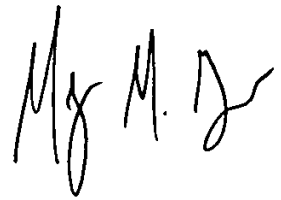
Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May  
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This scholarly project, submitted by Kristin Nicole Thompson, OTDS in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Occupational Therapy Doctorate from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mandy M. Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mandy" being the most prominent.

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Dr. Mandy M. Meyer, PhD

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April 13, 2022

Date

## PERMISSION

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Title Department: Occupational Therapy

Degree: Occupational Therapy Doctorate

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Kristin Nicole Thompson

4/12/2022

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted individuals in several ways. “Home confinement can have negative effects on mental health and lifestyle behaviors including social participation and life satisfaction” (Ammar et al., 2020). Unfortunately, adolescents are more vulnerable than adults in regard to mental health problems during a lockdown because of the transitional life phase they are going through (Waters et al., 2021). Additionally, transitioning back to in-person education and social activities can become difficult for the adolescent population due to the mental health challenges and other various effects brought about by mandated isolation.

A needs assessment and comprehensive literature review were conducted before the doctoral experiential placement began to determine the effects mandated isolation has on the adolescent population related to transitioning back to in-person education and social activities. Common themes were synthesized and identified from the literature review and skilled observations to assist with the development and creation of the product.

The informal needs assessment and comprehensive literature review at the identified agency were used to determine themes to include within the development of the product. The Ecology of Human Performance model was used to guide the creation of the product. The completed product includes interventions honing in on common themes including intervention groups focusing on various coping skills, social skills, habit/routine building, and sensory tools. These intervention groups will provide the adolescents with the tools necessary to help with transitioning back to in-person education and social settings by being able to use the skills they learned from the group within their daily lives.

Through the use of occupation-based strategies, occupational therapy practice can address the common themes that were found from the literature review and needs assessment by addressing improvement of social skills, demonstrating effective use of coping skills to assist with the mental health effects from mandated isolation, and establishing habits and routines to support a successful transition. The chosen group interventions within the product will address these theme areas and will assist adolescents who are addressing the transition back to in-person education and social activities during the COVID-19 global pandemic and far more.





## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Problem Statement**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected individuals in different ways. A large problem associated with the global pandemic is the associated mental health effects when a mandated isolation is put into place. “Home confinement can have negative effects on mental health and lifestyle behaviors including social participation and life satisfaction” (Ammar et al., 2020). When individuals are no longer engaging in their meaningful occupations that include social participation and leisure this can have an overall negative effect on their mental health. Past and present evidence has shown that prolonged social isolation during the developmental years of one’s life can be hindering to the individual (Raballo et al., 2020). Being a part of a community and participating in social activities is shown to have a positive increase on social well-being (Ammar et al., 2020). When thinking about the adolescent population, putting a halt to in-person school can mean they are no longer engaging in various programs and social activities that may occur in and outside of school. School and associated social activities provide a sense of structure in an adolescent’s life that can aid in building a routine to assist in maintaining normalcy during a period of time that is quite unpredictable (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). Due to the prolonged timeframe that the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered in-person education and associated after-school programs and social activities, adolescents may experience a difficult time transitioning back and fully engaging in these past occupations.

## **Significance to Practice**

Around 93% of homes in the USA transitioned to distanced or virtual learning at some point throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). Due to this, various adolescents did not have access to school programs that supported engagement in meaningful occupations (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). Once the mandated lockdown isolation periods were lifted, symptoms related to depression and anxiety of adolescents were observed (Sama et al., 2020). Parents demonstrated concern related to the impacts the mandated isolation could have on child's social developmental impact (Sama et al., 2020). Due to the social developmental impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on adolescents, social interaction, social participation and other various mental health concerns arise. "Historical research shows that the mental health implications of society-level disasters, such as a pandemic often extend far beyond the catastrophic event" (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). The adolescent and youth populations are more likely to develop posttraumatic symptoms after disasters when compared to the adult population (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). "Leading researchers anticipate substantial long-term mental health consequences for many children and adolescents after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended" (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). To assist in the repair of this potential damage, the use of activity- and occupation-based interventions have been shown to aid mental health and social participation among adolescents and youth (Cahill et al., 2020).

A way to respond to this need to address the mental health concerns that are related to mandated isolation is to aid in the re-integration of transitioning to in-person education and other social activities adolescents engage in. Occupational therapists' scope of practice is crucial to

address this need by incorporating various occupation-based interventions to assist in supporting an increase of the adolescent population's performance range.

### **Purpose of Product**

The purpose of this product is to address and aid in the transition and reintegration to in-person education and social activities among the adolescent population during and beyond the COVID-19 global pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, in-person education and various social activities adolescents engage in have been transitioned to virtual platforms or have been put on hold. Since the activities adolescents engage in have been put onto virtual platforms, the use of social skills and interpersonal communication skills with peers and others have significantly decreased. Due to this, the group and individual interventions within the product will include foundational aspects of re-implementing social skills, interpersonal communication skills, and coping skills to ease in the re-engagement of social activities and in-person education. The product will also include interventions to assist in adolescents' overall mental health that may hinder them in engaging in meaningful occupations due to the mental health effects isolation has had from the global pandemic.

### **Product Objectives**

In order for the product to be developed there are several objectives that are essential to consider. Prior to the experiential placement, research on evidence-based interventions that contribute to the literature review will be implemented. Once on-site at the experiential placement, determining needs from the identified agency in regards to re-integrating to in-person education and social activities of the adolescent population will be completed. This will occur

through skilled observation of clients that fit the product's target population and through ongoing research. The product will then be developed based on the needs of the identified agency, evidence through skilled observation, and evidence-based research. Once the product is developed, the product will be disseminated to the identified agency for future use with individuals that fit the target population.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used to guide the creation of this product is the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) model (Dunn, 2017). This model was chosen due to the various intervention strategies that can be used and implemented to increase the adolescent population's overall performance range. The various intervention types can be described as adapt/modify, establish/restore, create, alter, and prevent (Dunn, 2017). The intervention strategies can be used to increase or decrease aspects of the person, context, and task to increase the individual's overall performance range when engaging in the task. The person includes various sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychological skills and abilities. The context includes the environment that surrounds the person; this includes the temporal, physical, social, and cultural contexts. Within the person's environment there are tasks that encompass their day. The way these tasks interact with the person and their context is how their performance range can be supported or hindered. By using the various intervention strategies, the individual can increase their performance range to support overall occupational performance. Related to this, the COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted various person and contextual factors that have decreased task performance which then decreases the individual's overall occupational performance. Using the theoretical framework of

the Ecology of Human Performance and the supporting intervention strategies the therapist can support an increase in the overall occupational performance of the adolescents.

The product will include three intervention groups focusing on different topic areas with various activities implemented. The groups have been developed to be given in-person or through a virtual platform due to the ongoing nature of the global pandemic. The topics of the three groups include coping skills education and implementation, social skill building through occupation as a means, habit/routine building through various apps and websites. In addition, a supplemental sensory handout is included that can be used within the adolescents' school without the need of an IEP or 504 plan. The groups can be given in any order determined by the facilitator of the group and based on the needs of the adolescents at that time. The group facilitator can also determine the frequency to which the groups will meet. These groups will aid the returning adolescents in the facilitation of engaging with other peers their age going through similar experiences due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. This will occur as these groups will have the adolescents engage with other peers through the use of socializing, playing games, and getting to know one another.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

The novel COVID-19 virus entered everyone's lives beginning in March of 2020. Since then, many lives have been changed due to this global pandemic. A pandemic can be defined as an epidemic that is occurring worldwide or over a large area crossing international boundaries while affecting many individuals (Kelly, 2011). Innumerable individuals have had numerous aspects of their lives change during this time. All over the world there have been mandated lockdowns to reduce the spread of the virus and the amount of in-person social interaction. Many adults had to transition to remote work locations to reduce in-person interactions. School-aged children and adolescents had to transition to online and remote learning to reduce the amount of in-person social interaction they were engaging in. Activities that school-aged children and adolescents engaged in that occurred during and/or after school were canceled or transitioned to a virtual platform. Individuals' habits and routines were forced to change.

Many questions have been raised related to the life interruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. One such relates to mandated lockdowns and transitions to remote and virtual working, learning, and social experiences; how are individuals' occupational performances hindered or supported during such times? Another is how will an individual's occupational performance be affected after the mandated lockdowns took place?

The COVID-19 global pandemic for children and adolescents is one of the first natural disasters and or crises most have experienced in their lifetime. There are various forms of disasters that can occur. "Definitions of disaster vary, although most definitions include the core

idea of circumstances that cause large-scale disruption threatening the lives of many people” (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). When living through a natural disaster multiple factors can be affected in a negative way. “Due to developmentally related biological, emotional, and psychosocial changes, disaster exposure may be particularly salient in certain facets of emotional development and emotional health for adolescents” (Weems & Overstreet, 2009). In order to understand adolescents on a deeper level, there has to be an understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect on them. Looking at adolescents through an occupational therapy theoretical model will aid breaking down various person, context, and task factors. The occupational theoretical model that will guide the lens throughout this product is the Ecological Human Performance model. This model views person, context, and task factors in order to determine what is hindering and supporting the individual’s overall occupational performance.

The person can be defined as adolescents that are demonstrating deficits when re-integrating to in-person education and social activities during the COVID-19 global pandemic. An adolescent is an individual going through the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood typically occurring during the ages of 13 to 19 years of age (Adolescence | Psychology Today, 2019). Adolescents are going through a large transition period involving cognitive, psychological, and sensorimotor changes. They go through an egocentric thinking perspective which can result in individuals this age thinking all in their lives are focused and thinking of them. Adolescents are also often going through many different physical and emotional changes during this time due to puberty. The time of adolescence during a global pandemic can increase the challenges. After the lockdown period several children were observed to have disturbances to

their mental health such as psychological symptoms related to depression and anxiety (Sama et al., 2020).

Adolescents have many varying factors within their environmental context. From the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) perspective each person's environmental context includes temporal, physical, social, and cultural contexts. Dependent on the individual, each person's physical context will vary. Most adolescents' physical contexts include their home, school, and other physical places they spend time. Adolescents' social context can include the individuals they spend their time with. This may include family, peers, educators, mentors, coaches, and more. The COVID-19 global pandemic impacted adolescents' social context the most due to the mandated lockdowns happening around the globe.

Adolescents are more vulnerable than adults in regard to mental health problems during a lockdown because of the transitional phase they are going through (Waters et al., 2021). This is related to adolescents setting an increasing importance on peer relationships throughout this time due to struggling with their self-esteem (Waters et al., 2021). Adolescents' cultural context can vary on the person's cultural values and beliefs. A typical cultural phenomenon that occurs during the adolescent period is to attend school and school-related events and activities.

The primary occupations most adolescents engage in throughout this time in their lives are related to their education and social context. Typical adolescents spend most of their day at school interacting with educators, peers, and other faculty. Schools provide a sense of structure, safety and normalcy that can help with upkeeping a routine during a time that is unpredictable (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). Due to the mandated lockdown, in-person education was put to a halt.



“Almost 93% of homes engaged in distance learning throughout the pandemic, which resulted in most of these homes not having access to school programs that help adolescents engage in meaningful occupations” (Mckim & Weaver, 2021).

Additionally, adolescents engage in other tasks throughout this period in their lives primarily focused on their social contexts. These can include social activities and events that are associated with their school or interest areas. Many school programs meet a variety of needs that go beyond basic academics. Most adolescents are lacking physical and social engagement in non-school-based organized activities and community supports due to the limited opportunities to fully engage in organized activities that occur outside of the school setting (Mckim & Weaver, 2021).

Within the Ecology of Human Performance, to increase an individual’s performance range one must look at how the person interacts with their environment to complete their individual tasks. Consideration of the person’s sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial skills and abilities within their temporal, physical, social, and cultural contexts must be done to determine what is supporting and what is hindering their overall occupational performance. To increase an individual’s performance range therapists can adapt/modify, establish/restore, alter, prevent, and create varying interventions to the person’s skills and abilities within their environment. Interventions can help promote social-emotional learning and promote social competence (Arbesman et al., 2013). Related to this, occupational therapists are in a position to provide a client-centered evaluation to determine an adolescent’s main occupations and find out what is inhibiting their occupational performance in their roles (Arbesman et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, a group of individuals that has often gone overlooked throughout this pandemic is adolescents. Most adolescents are not greatly affected by the physical challenges of the COVID-19 virus but rather the related lockdowns, mandates, and precautions associated with the virus. Research has shown that mental health impacts from society-level disasters like a pandemic can often affect beyond the event itself (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). What is known is that many short-term effects are believed to have impacted the adolescent age group. In a qualitative study, the main themes of short-term challenges found include less in-person interaction, not getting out, too much family time, COVID-related angst, and being in a funk (Rogers et al., 2021). When looking at the impacts on adolescents and youth compared to adults, the effects of emotional and social development are far more compromised (Singh et al., 2020). Adolescents are going through a transitional period within their lives involving critical emotional and social development. “Young people in particular are more susceptible to developing posttraumatic symptoms after disasters compared with adult populations, leading researchers to anticipate substantial long-term mental health consequences for many children and adolescents after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended” (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). Adolescents experience varying emotions in relation to the mandated lockdowns happening across the globe. When comparing the emotional impact the pandemic has had on adolescents compared to adults, adolescents experience more intense emotions. This can have an impact on the elevated risk of associated mental health problems an individual may experience during the same time frame (Rogers et al., 2021). “Loneliness can have a lasting impact on a child’s mental health up to 9 years after the social isolation period” (Hertz & Barrios, 2020). The long term effects of these

mandated lockdowns are still unknown when looking at the adolescents' social participation during in-person education and associated social activities. .

### **Effects on Social Participation**

The COVID-19 pandemic included mass shutdowns and mandated isolations across the globe. This put a halt to in-person socialization for all age groups. When mandated isolation happens during peak developmental years, there may be effects on adolescents' social skills when engaging in social participation with peers. "Social participation has a wide variety of definitions, and it is difficult to understand what exactly social participation can encompass" (Silva & Oliver, 2019). According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), social participation is activities that involve social interaction with others including family, friends, peers, and community members and that support independence (2020). Social participation is one of the main occupations occupational therapists treat. Due to the varying definitions of social participation, the associated interventions to support social participation can be vastly different (Silva & Oliver, 2019).

Social participation and engagement with peers are integral parts of adolescent development. Social participation is an important role in an adolescent's life to support personal and social well-being (Ammar et al., 2020). The feelings social participation can promote include identity, value, and belonging to one's community (Ammar et al., 2020).

Social participation with integration into the community has shown an increase in adolescent psychological and social well-being which in turn gives them a sense of belonging (Ammar et al., 2020).

Where there is a decrease in social participation including in-person social interaction these skills can be compromised. When home confinement is implemented, an overwhelming negative effect on mental health and associated lifestyle behaviors such as social participation and satisfaction with one's life may occur (Ammar et al., 2020). "Parents reported that due to the circumstances created due to lockdown they are concerned about the social developmental impact it will have on their children" (Sama et al., 2020). When there is a halt put into this developmentally important occupation, adolescents could have resistance to returning to activities that involve social participation. The adolescent population has shown lower levels of affect due to not being able to engage with peers during in-person and after school activities (Singh et al., 2020). Due to this, post-pandemic, adolescents may experience a difficult time transitioning back to school, one of their other main occupations. "It is presumed that children might resist going to school after lockdown gets over and may face difficulty in establishing rapport with their mentors after the schools reopen" (Singh et al., 2020). It is noted that due to the resistance of transitioning back to in-person school and social activities this may have an impact on adolescents' overall mental health.

### **Effects on Mental health**

Throughout the global pandemic there have been various instances that could affect adolescent's mental health. Due to the mandated isolations and lack of peer in-person support, adolescents may express feelings of being isolated. How does this isolation effect their overall mental health after the lockdown periods are over? Statistics show before the global pandemic adolescent-aged individuals were already at high risk for developing mental health disorders with

20-25% meeting the diagnosable mental health criteria (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). With the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents aged 11 to 17 years were more likely to express moderate to severe symptoms of mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). The length of initial mandated lockdowns and distanced learning periods varied from state to state. Even though the length of the lockdowns was varied, the effects of them has shown an impact on the overall mental health of adolescents. Once the mandated lockdown periods were lifted, several adolescents were noted to have symptoms relation to depression and anxiety (Sama et al., 2020). When the COVID-19 pandemic began and school systems switched to distance learning and many in-school and after-school programs and services that adolescents attended and relied on for social connections and health were put to a stop. “Around 70-80% of children rely on school-based mental health services. With distance learning these children have had reduced access to these services” (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). With the transition to distance learning and school closures due to the pandemic many students have not had access to the affordable mental health services they had previously been receiving (Hertz & Barrios, 2020). When mental health programs and services are not able to be offered this can hinder this population’s occupational performance and thus reduce the individuals’ performance ranges. Halting mental health-related services can have a negative impact on the development the individual is making when receiving these services.

When mental health problems are present in an individual’s life it can hinder their overall performance range, thus decreasing their overall occupational performance in meaningful occupations. This may have a lasting impact on adolescents’ overall engagement in social

relationships and social participation. Associated mental health symptoms can shape the individual's perceptions of their own social supports and the overall quality of their interpersonal interactions (Rogers et al., 2021). Research has shown that adolescents who are diagnosed with depression often perceive their own relationships in a negative way; this can create an increase in the individual's depressive symptoms (Rogers et al., 2020). Due to removal of access to mental health services and mandated lockdowns adolescents may have trouble with returning to in-person school and social activities. Additionally, adolescents may experience altered social relationships with peers and mentors due to their escalated mental health challenges.

### **Interventions and Contexts**

To increase the performance ranges of individuals transitioning and re-engaging in in-person school and social activities, there are various contextual and person factors one can address through interventions. Multiple providers can have varying roles to assist adolescents in improve their overall mental health and well-being during and after the effects of COVID-19 (Singh et al., 2020). When looking at the various occupations adolescents engage in, occupational therapists have a unique lens through which to view individuals in order to increase engagement in these occupations through a variety of different ways. Occupational therapy practitioners can play a role in addressing adolescents societal mental health by supporting re-engagement and promoting self-efficacy (AOTA, 2016).

The interventions that have been shown to best improve overall mental health challenges in relation to social participation include the use of occupation-based interventions. Occupation- and activity-based interventions were shown to support behaviors to re-engage in social

participation related activities (Cahill et al., 2020). These interventions should be both meaningful and engaging for the population but unique enough for each individual. Occupation-based interventions have been shown to work on the adolescent population to increase social participation and overall mental health in relation to their engagement in social activities.

These interventions can be designed and created to increase this population's overall performance range. In order to promote an individual's overall participation, the practitioner must evaluate and address the adolescent's skills and abilities to have interpersonal communication with others (Griswold, 2021). Once the occupational therapist has determined what is engaging and what will promote participation, the context of the environment should be considered. Creating a natural context that supports social participation will help when creating interventions (Anaby et al., 2021). Natural contexts facilitate a more natural response when communicating. These adolescents have had a period where there was an altered context to their natural environment. Social interactions were happening online versus in-person or even not at all. Due to this, it has been shown that adolescents have become more comfortable with the use of interventions being delivered virtually since the start of the pandemic (Rauschenberg et al., 2021). Thus, use of digital interventions can be used as a transition to in-person interventions if that is more meaningful and comfortable to the client. This can help increase the individual's performance range by adapting the interventions and making them more occupation based.

When considering the effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the adolescent population there is a need for services to address the associated mental health aspects when transitioning back to in-person learning and social activities. "Supporting psychological and

social aspects of human functioning, occupational therapy practitioners have the capacity to enable greater emotional regulation and social participation for those affected by the pandemic by using occupation as a change agent to increase health and well-being” (Lannigan & Tyminski, 2021)” Adolescents within the community have had their performance range hindered due to various factors in their contexts. Occupational therapy practitioners have a unique set of skills to apply to adolescents re-integrating into their everyday occupations of education and social participation after the COVID-19 pandemic.

When looking at the overwhelming needs among the adolescent population related to the effects the mandated isolation has had on transitioning back to in-person education and social activities, many things can be done from an occupational therapy perspective; these include the use of developing various interpersonal skills to increase psychological, emotional, and behavioral adjustments to the everlasting effects from the global pandemic (Waters et al., 2021). These approaches can include ways to help students maneuver thoughts and emotions to properly express the related feelings they are experiencing with transitioning back to in-person education and other social activities (Waters et al., 2021). “Students may experience separation anxiety, others may be afraid of contracting the virus, and others may find the pace and noise of school unsettling” (Waters et al., 2021). The teaching of various coping skills has been shown to have a positive impact on the stress adolescents experience when returning back to school (Waters et al., 2021). Implementing these foundational coping and social skills can increase the ease to which the adolescents can re-engage in their meaningful occupations during the global pandemic.



To address the mental health effects the global pandemic has had on the adolescent population, occupational therapy practitioners can implement both group and individual interventions to help. Evidence-based interventions that have strong evidence to support adolescent mental health and social participation include yoga, sports, use of play, and creative arts (Cahill et al., 2020). These interventions can be implemented through a variety of group or individual intervention types within the product in order to increase the adolescents performance range when re-engaging in social activities and in-person education. Occupational therapy's scope of practice uses a distinct way in incorporating client-centered and evidence-based interventions in order to implement positive outcomes to assist with this transition. Occupational therapy's scope of using occupation based interventions as both an outcome and a means can have a significant impact on assisting with this significant transition and reintegration for adolescents.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

A need at an identified agency was presented to the student. The identified agency's needs included isolation and lack of socialization among the adolescent population in relation to COVID-19 and a fear of returning back to school in-person after engaging in school online. Once this need was presented by the identified agency, an in-depth literature review was completed. The literature review focused on topics related to the effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the adolescent population in regard to engaging in social participation, the effects of mental health due to isolation, and transitioning back to in-person education. The literature review examined articles, government websites, electronic databases, and professional organizations. The general topics that were examined in these resources included social participation, occupational therapy, mental health, and COVID-19. The informal needs assessment was done through skilled observation and engagement with clients to understand and determine how COVID-19 and isolation has affected their overall daily lives such as social skills, habit/routines, sensory needs, and coping. Skilled observation and engagement with clients was also used to understand and determine client-centered interventions that related to the common themes found within the literature.

#### **Databases**

The electronic databases that were utilized in the literature review were CINHAL, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Professional organizations and government websites that were employed in the literature review search included the Centers for Disease Control (CDC),

American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT), and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

### **Keywords and Search Phrases**

Key words and phrases that were used within the literature review included social participation, COVID-19, adolescents, youth, and mental health. Search phrases that were included were: social participation AND adolescents, social participation AND COVID-19, COVID-19 AND mental health, COVID-19 AND adolescents, adolescents AND mental health, youth AND mental health, and youth AND COVID-19.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The inclusion criteria for the related articles and other resources included COVID-19, social participation, youth, adolescents, and mental health. Exclusion criteria utilized throughout the literature review included excluding the adult/older adult population, previous natural disasters, college student population, and the healthcare worker population.

Twenty articles were included in the in-depth literature review that focuses on how the COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted the adolescent/youth population's ability to engage in social participation and their overall mental health.

The interventions that were chosen to be in the product were based on what was seen as being effective in the literature as well as through skilled observations at the identified site. From these sources, various interventions were chosen with assistance from the site mentor on what the population at her site enjoys to engage in. The interventions that were selected included those from foundational information from the literature as well as those specifically identified by the

site and site mentor. Thus, the interventions included within the product are both evidence-based and client-centered.

### **Product Formation**

The Ecology of Human Performance Model (EHP) was used to guide the formation of this product. This model assisted with the creation by using the foundational aspects of the intervention types to help increase the clients' overall performance ranges within various contexts. The intervention groups involved within the product show the use of the intervention types by adapting, modifying, establishing, and restoring various skills and tools that the adolescents can implement within their daily lives. EHP was used to understanding how person, context, task, and intervention types interact with each other to develop the adolescents' performance range. By understanding the various person factors, tasks, and contexts adolescents engage in, this assisted with determining how the identified themes from the literature review and needs assessment needed to be addressed in order to increase the adolescents' overall performance ranges.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Product**

This product was made to assist with the transition of returning back to in-person education and other social activities after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is designed to be lead by a trained occupational therapist. The product is encouraged to be used in an in-person group format to facilitate social skills and build interpersonal relationships between the individual group members and facilitator. This product includes three intervention groups that can be held in virtual or in-person formats. These groups can also be adapted to be used as individual interventions when needed. The specific three groups were created to be used at the identified agency at a frequency of one time each month. These groups highlight three different focus areas that have been affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The groups can be given in an order that best suits what the individuals who are attending the group need at that particular time.

The appropriate population for this product is adolescents who are challenged as they transition back to in-person education and other social activities.. Various mental health and social isolation concerns have risen from the mandated lockdowns throughout the pandemic. The intervention groups are meant to highlight key areas to help assist the adolescents' transition to these activities with ease.

The Ecology of Human Performance was used as a guiding theory throughout the production of this product. This theory was used for its various intervention types that have been used throughout the creation of the groups. The main intervention types that are highlighted are

establish/restore and adapt/modify. These were used to carefully look at how the individual, task, and context interact to increase the performance range of the individuals who attend the group.

**Groups to Aid Adolescents in Re-Integration to In-Person Education and Social Activities  
During the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Contents:

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  - Virtual group
- Sensory Strategies Supplemental Handout
  - Sensory Strategies for Successful Transition to the Classroom

## **Coping Skills Group**

### **In-Person**

- **Purpose:**
  - To educate and work through various coping skills to be used when feelings of distress and other emotions arise in relation to fear of returning to in-person education and other various social activities/settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Materials Needed:**
  - Handouts
  - Writing utensils
- **Introduction:**
  - The facilitator introduces themselves to the attendees and thanks them for coming. Have the attendees also introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose and expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others. The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
  - Intro activity: The introductory activity will be a game called Rose, Thorn, Bud. Each member of the group will share a rose (something they are grateful for), a thorn (something that is challenging in their life at the moment), and a bud (something they are grateful for)
- **Activity:**



- The facilitator of the group will hand out a worksheet (Coping Skills Handout) explaining the three coping skills, which include positive reappraisal, emotional processing, and strengths used. The facilitator will then educate and explain the three coping skills by reading what is provided on the handout. The facilitator will then hand out a worksheet (labeled Coping Skills Example Worksheet) with each coping skill and a provided example. The examples on the handout will be general examples. Once the facilitator has read and explained the coping skills with the examples provided, the facilitator will ask if anyone has any questions.
- The facilitator will then hand out the activity worksheet (labeled Coping Skills Worksheet) that will give the attendees a chance to apply the coping skills they have just learned to thoughts and emotions they have towards the emotions and/or emotional events they are feeling or have felt due to transitioning back to school and other social activities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Examples could include:
    - “I am uncomfortable socializing with my peers.”
    - “I am feeling anxious about going into public with so many other people.”

**Sharing:**

- Encourage each client to share one of their examples of using the coping skills.
- Ask for volunteers first, then have each individual share.

- Make sure to give vocal praise and thank each individual for sharing their examples.
- **Processing:**
  - How did each of you feel coming up with your own experiences and examples?
    - Encourage everyone to share a positive and negative experience in relation to coming up with their examples
  - After hearing other individuals' experiences, could you think of other emotions/emotional events related to transitioning back to in-person activities (school, sports, etc.) that you could add to your worksheet?

**Generalizing:**

- How could you see yourself using these strategies when other emotions/emotional events happen throughout your life?
- Have each individual write down on the back of the handout other ways they could use these strategies.

**Application:**

- Encourage each individual to share an example of a hypothetical or real emotion/emotional event where they could use these strategies in their everyday life.

**Conclusion:**

- Encourage 1-2 individuals to summarize their key takeaways from attending the group.

- Facilitator will then say, “These coping skills will assist with any potential negative thoughts or emotions you may experience when transitioning back into school and other social environments. By being able to process through your emotions, you can take your individual strengths and turn them into positive outcomes.”
- Thank everyone for sharing and attending the group.

## **Coping Skills Group**

### **Virtual**

- **Purpose:**
  - To educate and work through various coping skills to be used when feelings of stress arise in relation to fear of returning to in-person education and other various social activities/settings.
- **Materials Needed** (should be sent out to the group before hand in word/pdf format along with a zoom link to attend the group):
  - Handout
  - Examples
  - Computer w/ wifi capability
- **Introduction:**
  - The facilitator introduces themselves to the attendees and thanks them for coming. Have the attendees introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose and expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others.
  - The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
    - Intro activity: The introductory activity will be a game called Rose, Thorn, Bud. Each member of the group will share a rose (something they are grateful for), a thorn (something that is challenging in their life at the moment), and a bud (something they are grateful for)

- **Activity:**
  - The facilitator of the group will tell the attendees of the group to open up the worksheet (Coping Skills Handout) from the email the facilitator sent prior to the group on explaining the three coping skills, which include positive reappraisal, emotional processing, and strengths used. The facilitator will then educate and explain the three coping skills by reading what is provided on the handout while sharing the handout on their screen. The facilitator will then have the attendees of the group open up the worksheet (labeled Coping Skills Example Worksheet) with each coping skill and a provided example. The examples on the handout will be general examples. Once the facilitator has read and explained the coping skills with the examples provided, the facilitator will ask if anyone has any questions.
  - The facilitator will then have the attendees of the group open up the activity worksheet (labeled Coping Skills Worksheet) that will give the attendees a chance to apply the coping skills they have just learned to thoughts and emotions they have towards the emotions and/or emotional events they are feeling or have felt due to transitioning back to school and other social activities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
    - Examples could include:
      - “I am uncomfortable socializing with my peers.”
      - “I am feeling anxious about going into public with so many other people.”

**Sharing:**

- Encourage each client to share one of their examples of using the coping skills.
- Ask for volunteers first, then have each individual share.
  - Make sure to give vocal praise and thank each individual for sharing their examples.
- **Processing:**
  - How did each of you feel coming up with your own experiences and examples?
    - Encourage everyone to share a positive and negative experience in relation to coming up with their examples
  - After hearing other individuals' experiences, could you think of other emotions/emotional events related to transitioning back to in-person activities (school, sports, etc.) that you could add to your worksheet?

**Generalizing:**

- How could you see yourself using these strategies when other emotions/emotional events happen throughout your life?
- Have each individual write down on the back of the handout other ways they could use these strategies.

**Application:**

- Encourage each individual to share an example of a hypothetical or real emotion/emotional event they could use these strategies for in their everyday life.

**Conclusion:**

- Encourage 1-2 individuals to summarize their key takeaways from attending the group.
- Facilitator will then say “These coping skills will assist with any potential negative thoughts or emotions you may experience when transitioning back into school and other social environments; by being able to process though your emotions you can take your individual strengths and turn them into positive outcomes.”
- Thank everyone for sharing and attending the group.

## **Coping Skills Handout**

- **Positive Reappraisal**

- “Meaning-based, adaptive cognitive process that motivates an individual to consider whether a good outcome can emerge from a stressful experience” (Waters et al., 2021)
- Taking a stressful experience and looking for ways to make the experience positive.
  - Example: looking for beneficial outcomes despite the stress of the event.
- Support thoughts of individuals becoming more aware of the values in their life and to use those values to create positive thoughts (Waters et al., 2021)

### **Emotional Processing**

- “Actively processing and expressing one’s emotions during times of stress instead of using avoidance” (Waters et al., 2021)
- Assists with coping and growing through times of adversity such as grief, identity conflict and natural disasters (Waters et al., 2021)
- The COVID-19 pandemic may bring times of grief from loss of a loved one
  - The COVID-19 pandemic can also be considered as a natural disaster

### **Strengths Used**

- “The extent to which individuals put their strengths into actions and draw upon their strengths in various settings” (Waters et al., 2021)



- By playing off of our strengths one can enhance the immunity to the stressors we are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating strong habits, routines, and actions (Waters et al., 2021)
  - Using our strengths can assist with protecting ourselves from the negative contexts and outcomes that may arise from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Coping Skills Examples Handout**

### **Positive Reappraisal**

- “I am feeling nervous about performing in the school play.”
- Reframe the stressful/adverse event and/or emotion to reflect a positive statement.
- “I was chosen to perform in the school play because of my talent and ability.”

### **Emotional Processing**

- Identify → Pause → Explore → Choose
- “I am feeling nervous about performing in the school play.”
  - Identify: Nervous
  - Pause: Reflect on feelings
  - Explore: Why am I feeling nervous about performing in the school play?
  - Choose: Explore the true feelings about why you are nervous about performing in the school play.
    - Speaking in front of crowds
    - Having the audience look directly at you
    - Fear of messing up the lines
      - Processing through the emotions instead of avoiding the emotions is shown to assist in coping through the adverse emotion and/or event (Waters et al., 2021)

## **Strengths Used**

- “I am nervous to perform in the school play.”
- Strengths: public speaking, talent, performing in front of crowds
  - Other contexts to use these strengths: class presentations, speaking in large groups of peers

## Coping Skills Worksheet

- **Positive Reappraisal:**

- Negative thought/event statement:
  -
- Reframe thought/event to reflect use of positive reappraisal
  -

- **Emotional Processing:**

- Emotion/emotional event:
  - Identify:
  - Pause:
  - Explore:
  - Choose:

- **Strengths Used**

- Emotion/emotional event:
- Strengths:
- Other contexts to use strength:

## **Social Skills Group**

### **In Person**

- **Purpose:**
  - To increase social skills among the attendees by using conversation-starting prompts on a bingo sheet to assist with initiating and maintaining reciprocal conversation with peers to further help with live social interactions adolescents will engage and participate in during school and other social settings.
- **Materials**
  - Bingo Sheets (enough for everyone to have one)
  - Pen/pencil
  - Colored markers
  - Ball
  - Enough room space to have the attendees throw a ball around comfortably
- **Introduction:**
  - Have the facilitator introduce themselves to the attendees and thank them for coming. Have the attendees introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others. The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
  - Intro activity: Throw a small ball to each other while standing in a circle in the group space. A group member can pick a category (ex. fruit, vegetables, animals, etc.) and

then each time they are thrown the ball they say something from the chosen category.

The key is to not repeat yourself or others. Repeat as many times as needed.

- This will help facilitate conversation among the individuals within the group and the facilitator is encouraged to join.

**Activity:**

- The facilitator will explain to the group the main activity of the group. The main activity is a BINGO-get-to-know-you game to further facilitate conversation among the attendees. The facilitator will hand out a blank BINGO sheet, pen/pencil, and a marker to everyone. The group members will then write their own questions/prompts on their BINGO card that they will then ask other members of the group. There is an example filled out BINGO sheet with prompts in case anyone gets stuck. Encourage each member to come up with all of their own prompts 😊. The facilitator is encouraged to fill out their own BINGO sheet with questions to ask as well.
- Once each member has filled out their BINGO sheet, the facilitator will explain to the group how to complete the activity:
  - “To mark off the prompt on the BINGO sheet, you must ask another individual in the group the prompt.”
  - “You must ask each individual in the group at least one prompt, once you have talked to each member at least once, you can go back and ask group members you have already chatted with.”

- “The game will conclude when each group member has completed two BINGOs on their sheet.”

Sharing:

- Encourage each member to share an interesting fact they learned about each member of the group.

Processing:

- Encourage each member of the group to share how interacting and socializing with others in the group went.

Generalizing:

- How else could you use these prompts and social skills to further get to know other individuals?

Application:

- In what other contexts/environments could you use these social skills and prompts to get to know others better?

Conclusion:

- Encourage 1-2 individuals to share and summarize key points from today’s group.
- The facilitator will then summarize the group by saying “By using these prompts you can initiate conversation with other peers within various settings such as school, after-school activities, and other social settings. Using these prompts will assist you in engaging in live communication with other individuals around you. You can hold

onto your bingo sheet with the prompts you created to use within your everyday life.”

- Thank everyone for their contributions to today’s group



Example:

# B I N G O

What shows are you into?	What city would you like to live in?	What kind of art do you enjoy most?	What's the best thing that happened to you last week?	What songs have you completely memorized?
What is the most annoying habit that other people have?	What are you most likely to become famous for?	Are you usually early or late?	What quirks do you have?	Where would you spend all your time if you could?
What popular show/movie do you refuse to watch?	What takes up too much of your time?	Free Space	Where is the most interesting place you've been?	What are you absolutely determined to do?
What game or movie universe would you most like to live in?	What is your favorite drink?	What fictional place would you like to go to?	What video games are you into?	What's your favorite genre of book/movie?
What do you hope never changes?	What are some small things that make your day better?	How different was your life one year ago?	What age do you wish you could permanently be?	What job do you think you'd be really good at?

## **Social Skills Group**

### **Virtual**

- **Purpose:**
  - To increase social skills among the attendees by using Pictionary as a team building activity to assist with initiating and maintaining reciprocal conversation with peers to further help with live social interactions adolescents will engage and participate in during school and other social settings.
- **Materials**
  - Computer
  - Zoom
  - Scratch paper w/ writing utensil
- **Introduction:**
  - The facilitator introduces themselves to the attendees and thanks them for coming. Have the attendees introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose of the group and the expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others. The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
  - Intro activity:
    - Individuals will create a list of questions to ask one another as an introductory icebreaker activity. The facilitator can provide a few examples of questions either through the Zoom Chat or by saying them to the group (or both).

Depending on the number of individuals attending the group, the facilitator can determine a way so that each individual asks at least 1-2 questions to each person.

**Activity:**

- The facilitator will explain the main activity to the group. The main activity is Pictionary on Zoom's Whiteboard (to access the Whiteboard, click share screen, then click Whiteboard from the provided options). The facilitator will split the attendees into two teams. The facilitator will choose which team goes first. The facilitator will use the provided link for the Pictionary Word Generator (see below). The facilitator will privately message the individual who is drawing for that round what their word is. Everyone within the team will have a turn to draw. The first team to reach 5 points wins. The facilitator will then remake the groups to encourage socialization with other individuals. The facilitator and the group will then repeat the process.
- <https://randomwordgenerator.com/pictionary.php>

**Sharing:**

- Encourage each member of the group to share something new they learned about someone in the group.
- Encourage each member of the group to share what their favorite picture to draw/guess was.

**Processing:**

- Encourage each member of the group to share how interacting and socializing with others in the group went.
- Were you able to notice a change in how you socialized with the group in the beginning towards the end of the group?

**Generalizing:**

- How else could you use these social skills to further get to know other individuals?

**Application:**

- In what other contexts/environments could you use these social skills and prompts to get to know others better?

**Conclusion:**

- Encourage 1-2 individuals to share and summarize key points from today's group.
- The facilitator will then summarize the group by saying "By using these prompts you can initiate conversation with other peers within various settings such as school, after-school activities, and other social settings. Using these prompts will assist you in engaging in live communication with other individuals around you. You can hold onto your bingo sheet with the prompts you created to use within your everyday life."
- Thank everyone for their contributions to today's group.

## **Habits and Routine Development Group**

### **In-person**

- **Purpose:**
  - To assist with the transition of developing habits/routines that have been compromised due to the shift in daily habits/routines due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Materials:**
  - Computer w/ wifi capability and/or smartphone w/ wifi capability
  - Paper
  - Writing utensil
- **Introduction:**
  - Have the facilitator introduce themselves to the attendees and thank them for coming. Have the attendees introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose of the group and the expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others. The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
  - Intro activity: The introductory activity will highlight the individuals' exploring habits/routines that have been difficult to maintain while transitioning back to in-person education and other various social activities. The facilitator will give a few loose examples of what a habit/routine could be (brushing teeth, working out, could be anything one does in their daily life, etc.) The facilitator will then have the

individuals write down habits/routines that have been difficult to maintain with transitioning back to school and other social activities. The facilitator will then have the individuals rank them from easiest to hardest to maintain. The facilitator will explain that we will come back to these later for the main activity.

- **Activity:**

- The facilitator will educate the individuals on various apps and websites to help assist them with following their habits and routines.

- Apps

- Habit Tracker

- Create your own habits and keep track of how often you are doing them through reminders from the app.

- Routines by Care/Of

- Create your own morning and evening routines. Over time you can see how these routines help reach your goals by tracking how these routines make you feel.

- Websites

- Habitica (quick video)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgdeJnSili0&t=48s>

- Superbetter (quick video)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4NNNkRMqYE>

- The facilitator will then ask if the group has any questions about the various apps and/or websites to help assist them in developing habits/routines. The facilitator will then instruct the attendees to explore the various apps and websites to see which option would work best for them. Once they have found an app and/or website they think would fit their lifestyle, encourage them to start filling in habits/routines they wrote down from the intro activity into the app/website. Give the individuals around 10 minutes to do this.
- The facilitator is encouraged to find an app/website to use as well.

**Sharing:**

- Encourage everyone to share what website or app they chose to use and why.
- Facilitator is encouraged to share with the group as well.

**Processing:**

- How do you think incorporating technology into your daily habits and routines will further assist in reaching and maintaining these habits/routines?

**Generalizing:**

- How could incorporating these habits/routines into your daily life assist in improving/maintaining your overall mental health?

**Application:**

- In what other areas of your life could you use the habit/routine tracker that you have chosen?

**Conclusion:**

- Encourage 1-2 members of the group to share key points from today's group session.
- Encourage each member to share their favorite part from today's session.
- Facilitator will then summarize the group by saying "Establishing and maintaining these habits/routines that are important yet challenging can assist with a successful transition back to in-person education and social activities by having the ability to establish and maintain the habits/routines so they can be implemented into your daily life to assist with having a more structured schedule."
- Facilitator will then thank everyone for attending the group and thank them for participating in the activities.



## **Habits and Routines Development Group**

### **Virtual**

- **Purpose:**
  - To assist with the transition of developing habits/routines that have been compromised due to the shift in daily habits/routines from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Materials:**
  - Computer w/ wifi capability
  - Smartphone w/ wifi capability
  - Paper
  - Writing utensil
- **Introduction:**
  - Have the facilitator introduce themselves to the attendees and thank them for coming. Have the attendees introduce themselves to the group. The facilitator will explain the purpose of the group and the expectations of the group. The facilitator will explain that what is shared in the group is private and will not be shared with others. The facilitator will then explain the intro activity to the group.
  - Intro activity: The introductory activity will highlight the individuals' exploring habits/routines that have been difficult to maintain while transitioning back to in-person education and other various social activities. The facilitator will give a few loose examples of what a habit/routine could be (brushing teeth, working out, could be anything one does in their daily life, etc.) The facilitator will then have the

individuals write down habits/routines that have been difficult to maintain with transitioning back to school and other activities. The facilitator will then have the individuals rank them from easiest to hardest to maintain. The facilitator will explain that we will come back to these later for the main activity.

- **Activity:**

- The facilitator will educate the individuals on various apps and websites to help assist them with following their habits and routines.
- Apps (both can be found in the app store)
  - Habit Tracker
    - Create your own habits and keep track of how often you are doing them through reminders from the app.
  - Routines By Care/Of
    - Creates your own morning and evening routines. Over time you can see how these routines help reach your goals by tracking how these routines make you feel.
- Websites- share each video by sharing your screen through Zoom:
  - Habitica (quick video)
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgdeJnSili0&t=48s>
  - Superbetter (quick video)
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4NNNkRMqYE>

- The facilitator will then ask if the group has any questions about the various apps and/or websites to help assist them in developing habits/routines. The facilitator will then instruct the individuals in the group to explore the various apps and websites to see which option would work best for them. Once they have found an app and/or website they think would fit their lifestyle, encourage them to start filling in habits/routines they wrote down from the intro activity into the app/website. Give the individuals around 10 minutes to do this. (NOTE: if they are choosing to do one of the websites while on zoom encourage the individual to mute themselves so there is not background noise).
- The facilitator is encouraged to find an app/website to use as well.

**Sharing:**

- Encourage everyone to share what website or app they chose to use and why.
- Facilitator is encouraged to share with the group as well.

**Processing:**

- How do you think incorporating technology into your daily habits and routines will further assist in reaching and maintaining these habits/routines?

**Generalizing:**

- How could incorporating these habits/routines into your daily life assist in improving/maintaining your overall mental health?

**Application:**

- In what other areas of your life could you use the habit/routine tracker that you have chosen?

**Conclusion:**

- Encourage 1-2 members of the group to share key points from today's group session.
- Encourage each member to share their favorite part from today's session.
- "Establishing and maintaining these habits/routines that are important yet challenging can assist with a successful transition back into in-person education and social activities by having the ability to establish and maintain the habits/routines so they can be implemented into your daily life to assist with having a more structured schedule."
- Facilitator will then thank everyone for attending the group and thank them for participating in the activities.

Attendance of all three groups will give the adolescents overall support when transitioning back into in-person education and other social activities by addressing various coping skills to assist with the overall mental health effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the initiation and continuation of social interaction skills to increase live peer to peer reciprocal communication, and developing habits and routines to support the transition of returning to school and other daily activities. The purpose of focusing the groups on these three themes is to ensure an increase in the adolescents overall performance range by addressing various person, task, and contextual factors. The hopeful outcomes the adolescents will experience from attending the groups will be an increase in demonstrating effective use of coping skills to assist with mental health effects, increase peer interaction social skills, and developing and maintaining habits and routines to support their daily lives.

Each individual has various sensory needs in order to help regulate their overall sensory system. When individuals were at home throughout the mandated isolation period they were able to act upon their own sensory needs independently. With the transition back to in-person education, individuals are now set to a stricter schedule without free range to implement the various sensory strategies they may or may not have been seeking or avoiding. In order to ensure a more successful transition back to in-person education, a supplemental sensory handout has been provided to support the transition of going back into the classroom. Implementation of these strategies should only be done after consulting a trained occupational therapist. This supplemental handout can be used by the site mentor for adolescents who require some form of a sensory diet. These strategies can be implemented without the use of a formal IEP or 504 plan.

This handout can be used by the site mentor for adolescents they see. The site mentor can use the handout as a supplemental resource to give out to adolescent clients who are having a challenging time maintaining sensory regulation while transitioning back into the classroom. The site mentor can individualize the sensory strategies on the handout below to ensure the sensory diet is unique to the individual.

## Sensory Strategies for Successful Transition to the Classroom

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taste/Oral Motor               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mints</li> <li>○ Hard candies</li> <li>○ Gum</li> <li>○ Sour candy</li> <li>○ Chewy/crunchy snacks</li> <li>○ Singing/humming</li> <li>○ Sipping through straw</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sight               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Arts/crafts</li> <li>○ Puzzles</li> <li>○ Board games</li> <li>○ Crosswords</li> <li>○ Sudoku</li> <li>○ Coloring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smell               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Essential oils</li> <li>○ Calming (lavender, rose)</li> <li>○ Alerting (citrus, peppermint, eucalyptus)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Squats</li> <li>○ Wall push ups</li> <li>○ Jumping jacks</li> <li>○ Stretching</li> <li>○ Chair yoga poses</li> <li>○ Yoga poses</li> <li>○ Sit on “stay ball”</li> <li>○ Walk w/ heavy backpack</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touch               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fidget ring</li> <li>○ Heavy book on lap</li> <li>○ Stress ball</li> <li>○ Hand lotion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music (calming and alerting)</li> <li>○ Tapping</li> <li>○ Humming</li> <li>○ White noise</li> <li>○ Noise canceling headphones</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## **Chapter IV**

### **Summary**

#### **Implications on Future Practice of Occupational Therapy**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has been ongoing since early 2020; due to this many individuals' lives have changed. Some feel safer in their home environments due to the potential physical and mental effects of the virus. Since these individuals feel safer at home, many have found comfort in the confinement that mandated isolation orders and self-inflicted isolation have created. Such isolation can have many effects on an individual's overall mental health and well-being. This is especially true with adolescents, statistics have shown, even before the global pandemic adolescent-aged individuals were already at high risk for developing mental health disorders with 20-25% meeting the diagnosable mental health criteria (Mckim & Weaver, 2021). With this, everyday activities and routines can become difficult to engage in. Using the product can assist adolescents who are struggling with the transition back to in-person education and other social activities after the prolonged isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic. With the use of the product, adolescents who are struggling with the transition back to in-person education and other social activities can find support by engaging in this program with peers working toward a similar outcome. The adolescents will be encouraged to apply the skills and tools they have learned within the groups in their natural contexts with peers, family members, etc.

Due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic this product can be used for years to come. The basis of the product is on the foundational aspects of incorporating a successful transition from isolation. The product includes groups focusing on building social skills, coping



skills, and habits/routines. These abilities are foundational aspects used within the occupational therapy profession's scope of practice. While the activities created for the groups are geared towards the adolescent population, the interventions included within the product can be adapted and modified to best suit any population that is also having a difficult time transitioning back to their daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

A strength of the product is the feasibility of the groups being facilitated either in-person or through virtual means. The product having the ability to be held in two versions is beneficial to increase the number of individuals who could attend the groups. Whether the individuals live out of state or in a rural part of the state, the option to have the virtual option will increase the amount of individuals it can reach. Another strength of the product is how client-centered the interventions are for the adolescent groups. The included interventions are based on the population type specific to the site where the program was created for. The intended population for these groups is the adolescent population, however a strength is that these groups could be applied to other populations who are experiencing similar feelings of fear of returning back to their normal lives after a period of isolation.

The limitations of this product include not being able to fully implement the groups while being on the doctoral experiential placement to see the progress and outcomes of individuals who attend the group. By not being able to implement the group another limitation is not being able to adapt or modify various interventions as unforeseen circumstances arise. Another limitation is

that billing for mental health groups in an outpatient setting through a rehabilitative lens can be difficult related to coverage from insurance companies.

### **Recommendations**

When thinking long term about the sustainability of this product, one hopes that the COVID-19 pandemic eventually comes to an end. If and when the COVID-19 pandemic is eradicated, the foundational aspects of this product can still be useful for adolescents and/or other individuals who are struggling with social skills, coping skills, and habit/routine building. The basis of these groups can be geared to fit a number of populations that the occupational therapy profession will continue to assist. Another recommendation is to create a pre/post survey and/or satisfaction survey that can be used to determine the effectiveness and satisfaction of the product from the attendees perspective.

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