The Case for Crafts
Justification for Use in Occupational Therapy

Objectives

The student should be able to:

- Explain crafts and creative activities as occupation and their unique advantages in treatment
- Articulate both restorative and productive benefits of crafts
- Describe how crafts are both client centered and occupation based
- Describe how crafts can be used in assessment
- Cite numerous examples of current therapeutic use of crafts
- Cite examples of research supporting the therapeutic efficacy of creative media
- Understand how crafts can be incorporated into various occupational therapy treatment approaches or models

There seems no better time than now for a resurgence of crafts and creative media in occupational therapy. Craft fairs are common and well attended; hobby stores, knitting shops, and other suppliers are springing up everywhere; and home decorating and craft shows on television are hugely popular. High-end stores and magazines offer works of fine craftsmanship for sale and fair-trade craft programs are becoming increasingly common as a way of garnering income for individuals in developing countries (see Appendix II). The Internet has allowed crafters all over the world to share ideas and sell their wares (Breines, 2010; See Appendix II for a listing of craft idea websites). In spite of the proliferation of technology in every other aspect of life, crafting appears to be back in the mainstream.

In occupational therapy, the focal viewpoint is shifting back to occupation, and in healthcare in general, the trend is toward a client-centered practice. As a society, we are embracing diversity, and respect for cultural meaning and context is an expected component of treatment planning (Crowe & Hong, 2009). Although the value placed on scientific evidence and technology is still prominent, there is an emerging emphasis on holism, occupational engagement, cultural relevance, and quality of life. This chapter will discuss the applicability of crafts and other creative media within occupation-based, client-centered practice; provide examples and evidence of the benefits of craft use; and describe how creative endeavors blend with prevailing occupational therapy models of practice.