

H – Sensory Based

Protocol 6 – Water Therapy

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Goals: To reduce resistance to personal hygiene by desensitization to water by routinely providing water games and activities.

Staff Requirements: 1 CTRS, use a volunteer or CNA to assist if more than 3 clients.

Entrance Criteria: Displays physical or verbal aggression or resistance to personal hygiene especially to bathing. Also for those who attempt to wander away during personal hygiene. May also be used with clients with depression and apathy that affects personal hygiene. Clients with dirty hands and nails who are resistant to care. May be adapted to clients at all stages.

Exit Criteria: No longer displaying target behaviors, repeatedly refusing to participate in group, no improvement in behavior, or behavior repeatedly has negative impact on participation of others.

Group Size: Maximum of 6 clients

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Safety Considerations

Environmental Risks: Need to ensure adequate space for each client so that clients are not getting others wet. Keep towels and/or mops handy to keep floor dry. When using water for clients make certain that it is at tepid temperature.

Client Risks: No specific risks, client could get clothing wet. Remove any jewelry that might get ruined or slip off when hands get wet. If outdoors, make certain it is not too windy or chilling may occur.

Facility & Equipment Required

Facility: Preferably outdoors, room with table large enough to hold all clients and chairs. If weather does not permit being outdoors, find an area that it is safe in the event of water spilling.

Equipment: Varies depending upon activity. See below. Have a supply of clean dry towels. Use plastic rain parkas, or aprons to prevent client from getting excessively wet. Also have other summer items on hand such as blowing bubbles, pinwheels or beach balls.

Methods

There are numerous water activities that can be chosen from for your group. Before actually starting any water activities with new clients have at least one discussion session to determine their readiness to interact with water. Avoid topics concerning water that may cause fear or anxiety such as floods, hurricane, blizzards or drowning.

- *Discussion should first touch on factual information about water: What is water? What forms does it take? (Liquid, frozen, snow, clouds, rain, hail) Where do we find water? (Rivers, lakes, ocean, ponds, bays). What is the difference between water in the ocean and water in the lake? (salt) What kinds of animals live in water? (Fish, frog, crabs, starfish, alligators, otters). What do we do with water? (Drink, play, bath, clean with it, laundry, dishwasher, hydrate our plants), what do we make with it? (Coffee, tea, soup, mixed drinks, gravy etc). Have pictures of oceans, lakes, someone washing a car, snow and other water items. This part should take one full session.*
- *Discussion should then move to personal history and preferences concerning water. The questions should start with "safe water questions." Do not move on to the personal water topics until everyone in the group is participating and talking in this part of the program.*
Sample safe-water questions:
 - Do you know how to swim? Who taught you? Do you prefer swimming in the ocean, lake, pool or other? Did you ever swim in a race?
 - Did you ever ice skate? Did you use figure skates or hockey skates?
 - Did you ever go snow skiing? Water-skiing? Which do you prefer?
 - Did you ever go sled riding? Ride in a horse drawn sled?
 - Did you ever ride in a motorboat? Ferry? Cruise ship? Battleship? Which do you prefer?
 - Did you ever build a snowman? A snow fort? Did you ever get into a snowball fight?
 - Did you ever build a sandcastle at the beach?
 - Did you ever own a house with a pool? A pond? On a lake or river?
- *Discussion should move from safe water questions to personal water questions.*
 - Did you ever own a house with an outhouse?
 - Do you prefer taking a shower or a bath?
 - How do we teach children to wash their hands after using the toilet?
 - How can we get them to brush their teeth?
 - How often should they take a bath?
 - How often should adults bathe?
 - Do you prefer soap that is scented or non-scented?
 - Do you like to use a washcloth when you bathe?
 - Do you like to use conditioner when you wash your hair?
 - How often do you need to wash your hair?*Again you may want to use photographs, picture or other props such as scented soap.*
- *Once determined that the clients are comfortable talking about water the next step is to introduce water activities. Only do one activity per session and have some discussion time afterwards.*
- *Start with activities that have the least water contact then gradually move to activities with maximum contact. End each session with a song or poem about water, snow, swimming, or rain. Make sure client hands are dried at the end of the session and offer hand lotion for your client to rub in.*

Water Activities (from least water contact to most contact)

Scooping for Ducks: Get 6 or so rubber ducks and with water proof marker write a number on the bottom of each. Place the ducks in a basin of water. Have client attempt to scoop up a duck



using a small net or strainer. Have the client check the bottom of the duck, that is their score or offer a small prize. Or instead of all ducks have a variety of rubber bath toys for scooping and ask them to try and pick up the cat or the frog, until they are all out.

Boating: Use basin as above but in place of the ducks use various boats, sailboat, and other water crafts. Provide clients with either small dowels or straws to push or blow the boats around. Other options are wind-up boats and other wind-up figures.

Water Pistols: This should only be held outdoors. Provide clients with water pistols that do not require too much grip strength. It is best to find ones that are the shape of anything other than a gun so not to frighten anyone. Set up targets such as a target board, ground target and other objects for the client to try and hit.

Water Balloons: Fill small sized balloons with water and have them in a container. Have clients see how far they can throw the balloon. Encourage them to throw them further each time. Pick up the broken balloons as soon as this program is finished.

Water Balls: Same as above except use the balls that soak up water so that client has contact with the water. Squeeze some of the water out of the ball before handing to client so it does not drip on their laps.

Waterwheel: Use a small wading pool that can be placed on top of a table at a level that the clients can easily get their hands into. Provide water type toys designed for pouring, scooping and manipulating water. A waterwheel works well for this.

Water Treasure Hunt: Use wading pool as above. Drop into the pool interesting objects that will sink to the bottom. This might be a key, a bolt, a shell, a rock etc. Have about 12 or so items. Name one of the items and see if the clients can find it. Continue until all items are named.

Sink or Swim: Gather an assortment of about 12 or so items, half of which will sink and half which will float. Give one of the items to a client and ask them if they think it will sink or float. After the client answers ask the others if they agree with that. Then have the client drop the item in and see what it does. Continue until all of the items are tested. At the end have the clients fish all the items out.

Cool Those Feet: Place small wading pool on ground, fill with water and add some soft floating toys. Remove clients' shoes and socks and have client sit near edge of pool so they may put their feet in the pool. Encourage client to move feet and objects in the pool. A glass of lemonade or a container of bubbles to blow makes this a relaxing program.

Baby's Bath Time: Provide baby tabletop bathtub, waterproof doll, washcloth, soap and towel. Baby dolls are not for every client. (See the protocol for Nurturing Dolls) Reaction to the doll should be tested prior to attempting this activity.

Sensory Handwashing: Provide small basin of water, scented soap, bathing sponges, towels and hand lotion for clients to do a luxury hand washing. (See protocol on Sensory Hand Washing)

Washing the Dishes: Provide basin of water, break-proof dishes, glasses and silverware, dishcloth or sponge and dishtowel for client to wash the dishes.

Washing the Clothes: Provide basin of water, liquid soap and small articles of clothing such as stockings, socks, handkerchiefs to wash. Change water for rinsing. Optional is to provide a small clothes scrubber.

Bridging activity to personal hygiene: Some of the clients may feel more comfortable around water at this point and may be less resistant to personal hygiene. For those who are not there are other steps to take at this point.

- The first is to take a prop from a water activity that the client really enjoys and ask the client if he/she would like to use it the next time he/she takes a bath/shower. This could be a rubber doll, rubber duck, or a small boat.
- Another method is to invite the staff member, who usually bathes the client, to attend the water activity group. In this way the client and the staff member may form a better relationship concerning water.

Possible Client Objectives

- Increased comfort around water as evidenced by washing hands and face without agitation.
- Decreased passivity as evidenced by participating in program.
- Decreased restlessness as evidenced by remaining in program.
- Improved small group socialization as evidenced by verbalizing with at least one other person in the group during each session.
- Improved mood as evidenced by positive comments about experience and/or by a happy expression.
- Decreased wandering by remaining in program
- Reduced or resistive or aggressive behaviors during personal hygiene.

