REFLECTIONS OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TECHNICIAN, MY DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNEY

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My background

- 2nd youngest of seven children
- Grew up in Apartheid years
- Parents worked in factories after school
- Grew up with strong values
- Did not finish matric
- Married with three children
- Work history:
  - 1980-1991: St Josephs Home
  - 1991- 2007: Lentegeur Psychiatric Hospital
  - 2007-current: Stikland Psychiatric Hospital
Nine years after becoming an occupational therapy assistant (OTA), a national decision was made that all OTA’s who wished to bridge to an OT degree first had to write a special national examination to bridge to an OT Technician. Optimistically I passed this exam and became an OTT. However:

- I could not pursue the OT degree because it required that I give up my job to study full time and financially I could not afford this.
- A further national decision was made in 2002/3 that there will no longer be any further OTT/OTA training.
- Limited opportunity for mentoring & support because I was mostly supervised by newly qualified, less experienced OT’s who in many instances knew less than me.
I was left with a deep sense of loss: I could not become an OT, and I was now part of a “dying profession.”

I was disappointed and despondent.

I had lost hope, my sense of belonging, my professional identity, my purpose...

My sense of “being” or “becoming” within OT was gone…
My main objective was to regain my sense of being and becoming to be able to give my best to my clients, my family and my colleagues.

I needed to find meaning for me, within me…

I wanted to be a better version of me

I intended to regain my sense of purpose and self-identity
How did I get my “Mojo” back?
LIVING SPACE

- TAKE GOOD CARE OF ME
- TOOK UP RUNNING AS A HOBBY
  - 7 Comrade marathons
  - 13 Two Oceans marathons
  - African X 3 day stage race
- ENOUGH SLEEP
- GOOD DIET
- ONGOING SELF REFLECTIONS
- SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT/FAITH BASED ACTIVITIES
- POSITIVE THINKING
- POSITIVE SELF TALK
- FOUND SAFE SPACES TO VENT/CONFIDE IN OTHERS
LEARNING SPACE

- FORMAL
  - Wrote special exam at University of the Western Cape to obtain matric exemption (2007)
  - BA Degree (2012)
  - Post grad Honours degree in Public Administration (2014)

- INFORMAL
  - Short courses
  - Mentoring from outside my work place
WORKING SPACE

- FOCUS ON MY CLIENTS AND THEIR WELL-BEING
- VALUE-BASED PRACTICE
  - RESPECTFUL
  - CARING
  - INNOVATIVE
  - INTEGRITY
  - RESPONSIVE
  - COMPETENT
- MAKE WORK FUN
- ONGOING SELF DEVELOPMENT
- BE CURIOUS, HAVE AN ENQUIRING NATURE
- TEAM PLAYER
- SHARING OF SKILLS
  - OTA workgroup
- SELF REFLECTION
- EXPANDED MY CIRCLE- DRAW ON OTHERS’ EXPERTISE
SOCIALIZING SPACE

- QUALITY TIME WITH MY FAMILY
- COFFEE DATES WITH OLD AND NEW FRIENDS
How did I change...?

- “It is not the strongest of species that survives. Nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change”.

Charles Darwin
How did I change...?

- Emotionally stronger
- Inner-meaning & purpose regained and even stronger
- Sense of fulfilment
- Self-confident
- Enhanced leadership skills, able to inspire others, influence decisions
- Passionate about OT as a profession, happy to be able to contribute to the process
- Optimistic outlook on this journey called life
Recognize that leadership can be found at all levels of the profession.

Employee needs:
- Have purpose, meaningful contribution
- Skilled to do the job
- Informed about the company’s future
- Level of autonomy

“Happiness is an inside job!”
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING