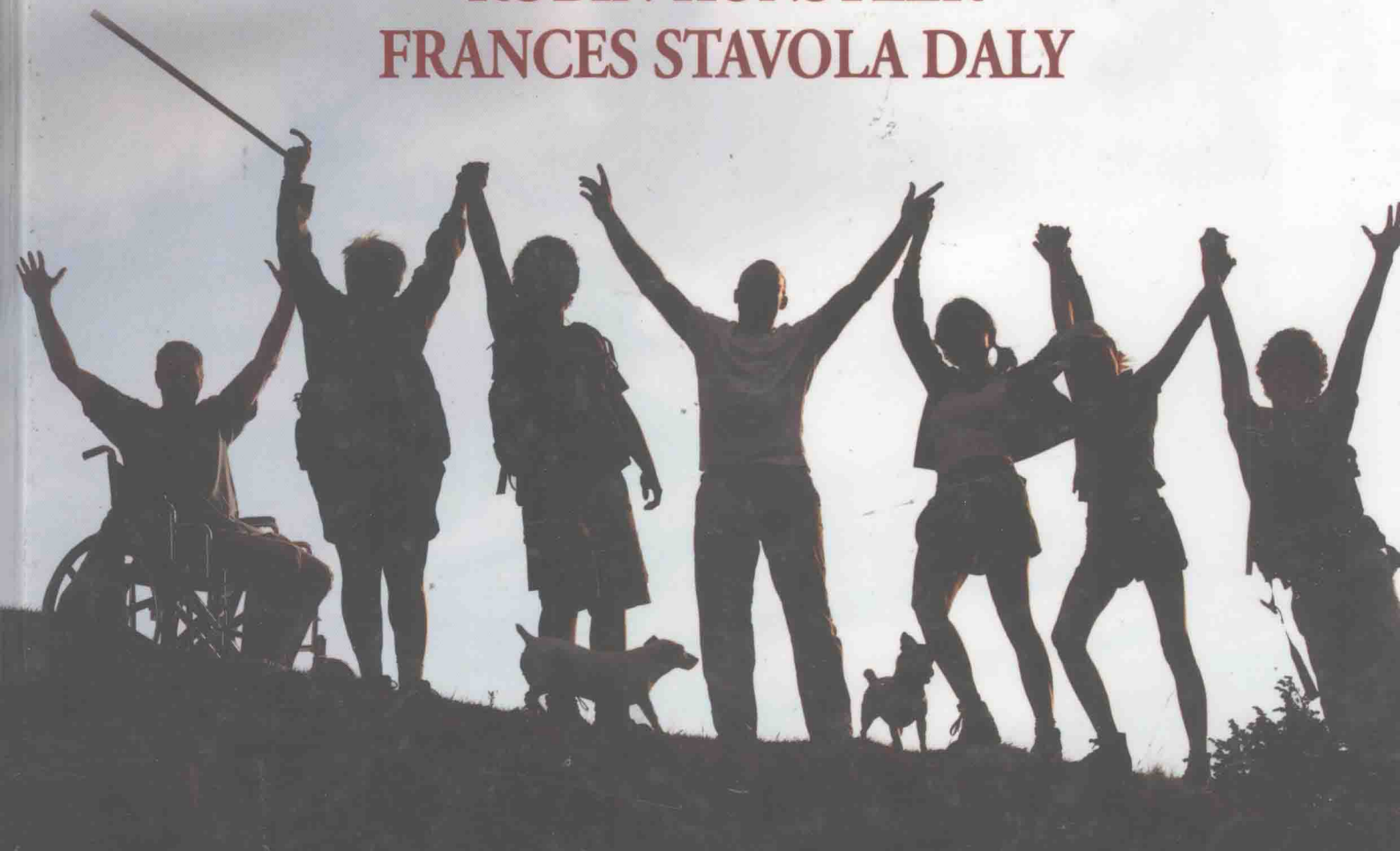


# THERAPEUTIC RECREATION LEADERSHIP AND PROGRAMMING

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ROBIN KUNSTLER  
FRANCES STAVOLA DALY



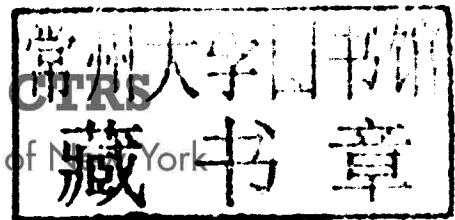
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# Therapeutic Recreation Leadership and Programming

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# PREFACE

Every day, therapeutic recreation (TR) professionals experience the rewards and challenges of providing quality services in complex and sometimes frustrating health care settings and community environments. The broad social changes, diverse demographics, shrinking resources, and competing interests affecting our work settings have major effects on our day-to-day practice. To provide high-quality services to clients, and maintain the integrity of the TR profession in the context of 21st-century developments and conditions, therapeutic recreation specialists (TRSs) must effectively communicate the purposes of TR. For the TRS, it is the day-to-day practice of TR that truly demonstrates what TR is and what it can accomplish for participants.

The purpose of this book is to provide a thorough and detailed understanding of “how to” carry out the responsibilities and tasks of the TRS on a daily basis, according to the highest ethical standards and the best practices of the profession. Ethical principles should be first and foremost in our interactions with our clients as we provide TR leadership. We believe that the information in this book will enable the TRS to develop TR experiences that are life affirming and that spring from the foundations, theories, and concepts that direct our actions.

This book is the only TR text that focuses primarily on TR leadership and highlights that the power of TR comes from the synergy created by the blending of the roles of recreation specialist and therapist. The heart of TR practice is the delivery of TR leadership, a concept and a role that have not been fully described in the literature of the field. We have developed a definition of TR leadership that combines the strategies and techniques used by therapists to promote growth with the abilities of the recreation specialist to create and facilitate leisure experiences. This “blended” role distinguishes TR practice from both recreation service and rehabilitation-oriented approaches, and reflects the term *therapeutic recreation* as we use it in this book. In all the TRS’s daily interactions with clients, she delivers TR leadership, embodying ethical principles and applying professional knowledge, abilities, and skills.

People of all ages, demographic characteristics, and abilities, regardless of health status or level of functioning, may benefit from TR services. People may be served in any type of setting, including community-based programs, nonprofit organizations, schools, health care institutions such as hospitals, outpatient and adult day programs, long-term care, group homes, residential facilities, prisons, and private homes. Neither the setting nor the diagnosis or condition of the individual is what defines TR. Therapeutic recreation is characterized by the application of the TR process, which are the actions performed by the TRS to plan and deliver appropriate TR programs. In TR the focus is not only on the outcomes of participation, but also on the meaning of the experience to the individuals and on how this experience helps them to grow and change. In this book, the word *client* is used for the most part to describe the individual with whom the TRS works. *Client* denotes a recipient of services who willingly participates with the service provider. We also use the word *participants* at times, which conveys the active involvement of the clients.

There continues to be debate in the TR profession regarding the definition of the field and the scope of practice. The field is currently using several different terms to define itself. Therapeutic recreation, recreation therapy, and recreational therapy are the three names most commonly used. We have chosen to use *therapeutic recreation* throughout this book because we believe this term best conveys the range of services provided and the settings and clientele served by TRSs. Therefore, we use the term *therapeutic recreation specialist*, which parallels the profession’s primary credential of Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS).

This book is organized into three parts that take the reader through the process of developing a way of *thinking* about TR practice, to *creating* a framework for TR practice, to *applying* TR leadership. Part I, “Establishing a Foundation for Ethical Practice,” sets the stage for the TRS to design and deliver TR programs. In chapter 1 the reader explores the core concepts of leisure and recreation and their relationship to a definition of TR. What it means to have a

mindset for ethical practice is explained, along with an examination of bioethical principles and the TR codes of ethics. Chapter 2 discusses the core values and principles underlying TR practice and seven well-recognized TR practice models. In chapter 3, eight contemporary approaches to program planning are described along with implications for TR program planning. The four steps in the TR process—assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation—are explained and illustrated. Chapter 4 goes into depth about the blended role of TR leadership and the knowledge, skills, and abilities of therapists and leaders that merge in the application of TR leadership.

Part II, “Creating the Structure of TR Practice,” presents TR clients, programs, and methods. The TRS matches the needs of the clients with the appropriate programs and selects strategies to facilitate the achievement of predetermined client outcomes. Chapter 5 presents prevailing definitions of health and healthy behaviors along with the most frequent common concerns that may be shared by a range of TR clients, regardless of their primary diagnosis or the setting in which they are served. Case studies of clients with common concerns have been developed that identify a TR model, goals and objectives, and a TR plan. Chapter 6 introduces the TR toolkit, which contains specific recreation activities in five major program areas. Evidence of their effectiveness, benefits, implementation methods, and risk management concerns are covered. Chapter 7 describes specific strategies the TRS uses with the client during participation to promote growth and learning; these include identifying learning styles, communication, motivation, instructional techniques, feedback, and debriefing. Chapter 8 explains useful procedures for evaluation of the TRS, the TR programs, and the progress of clients. Regulatory agencies, performance improvement, and research processes are discussed.

Part III, “Applications of TR Leadership,” covers organizing and delivering TR programs in detail.

Chapter 9 confronts the reality that we offer a weekly or monthly calendar of activities to meet the needs of many individuals. It provides direction for balanced unit-wide programming that includes scheduling, group size, and environmental considerations. In chapter 10, the dynamics of a TR group including roles, stages of development, and characteristics are explained. The entire process of planning and structuring TR groups and the actual leading of a TR group are illustrated step by step. Chapter 11 describes the settings for one-to-one TR programming, with activity suggestions, guidelines for TRS–client interactions, and ethical practices. Finally, chapter 12 presents a call to action for the emergence of TR as a mature profession in the 21st century.

Each chapter begins with a list of things you will learn from reading the chapter. Throughout the chapters, certain concepts are highlighted regularly. These include ethical principles, the benefits of TR participation, risk management concerns, the importance of keeping the focus on clients’ needs and interests, cultural considerations, and the qualities of the TR environment. In addition, much of the information in the chapters is illustrated with concrete examples of real and imaginary clients, which bring to life the practice of TR as described in these pages. Sidebars provide additional resources, learning activities, TR stories, programming suggestions, checklists, and tools for everyday practice. Finally, each chapter concludes with a summary and a set of learning activities for personal reflection and small-group discussion.

Whether you are a student, a new practitioner, or a seasoned professional, we hope this book will affirm your belief in the power of TR. We believe that growing as a TRS is a professional obligation to ourselves, the individuals we serve, our colleagues, our profession, and society. Join us in this ongoing process of learning as we continually strive to practice ethically and from the heart.

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● PART ●

**I**

# **Establishing a Foundation for Ethical Practice**

In part I we examine the roots of the TR profession—the core values and core principles that represent what we believe and guide our work, as well as the bioethical principles that apply to TR practice. Exploring, analyzing, and reflecting on the foundations of the field are essential to professional practice. Reflection enriches our practice; we appreciate our own work more, which enhances its quality and meaning.

The foundations of our profession are brought to life in the models, processes, and methods we

use in TR on a daily basis. As TR practitioners, we blend the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the recreation specialist and the therapist to deliver TR leadership and programming. Our purpose is to help individuals improve their health, well-being, and quality of life as they experience the benefits of recreation and leisure. You will come to understand that therapeutic recreation is a thoughtful and complex process of great value to clients when practiced by a self-aware and competent TRS.



# A Mindset for Ethical Therapeutic Recreation Leadership

**In this chapter you will learn about:**

- A mindset for ethical practice
- Definitions of therapeutic recreation
- The concept of therapeutic recreation leadership
- Functional and existential outcomes
- Bioethical principles
- NTRS and ATRA Codes of Ethics
- Ethical issues that arise in therapeutic recreation practice
- Models for ethical decision making

**A**spirating to the highest level of professionalism should be the goal of any practitioner working with people. A critical step in advancing the **therapeutic recreation** (TR) profession to a higher level of practice lies in developing a way of thinking, or a mindset, about TR. A mindset is a mental attitude that reflects one's values and beliefs and that influences how one interprets and responds to situations. It is difficult to act effectively—or indeed, do anything well—if professionals do not reflect on their actions and assess the thinking, feelings, and values behind those actions. By concentrating and focusing on the meaning and process of one's professional practice, the professional can provide a higher-quality and more effective service. The practice of TR, as addressed in this book, centers on the concept and actions of TR leadership to help clients achieve the goals of improving health, well-being, enjoyment, and quality of life as guided by the ethical standards of the TR profession. Understanding on a deeper level what TR is, its roots in leisure and recreation, and the potential impact of TR leadership enriches TR's contribution to society. Therapeutic recreation serves any person who could benefit from TR services.

Developing a **mindset** about one's profession is an ongoing process, shaped by both hands-on experience and critical reading, reflection and discussion of important principles, concepts, practices, and trends. An educated professional reads not only about his discipline but also about social issues, current events, research findings, and related topics that affect everyday practice. This process ultimately influences one's beliefs, strategies, and methods as a TR specialist (TRS). It is the TRS's personal and professional hallmark, which becomes a part of her approach to planning and leading TR programs and her reputation as a practitioner. When a profession is practiced according to a mindset that has been developed through a process of reading, thinking, discussing, and analyzing the values and principles supporting services, it can fulfill a more meaningful role in society. This chapter explores what it means to have a mindset for ethical practice and to be an ethical practitioner. It also addresses the meaning of TR, the concept of TR leadership, ethical principles and codes of ethics, and their relevance to TR practice.

## DEFINING THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

The first step in developing an ethical mindset for TR practice is to understand the definition of TR and

what a TRS does. Many definitions of TR have been written and refined over the years. These definitions often reflect the time period in which they were developed, the trends in health care and human services at that time, and the unique perspective of the author. Definitions of professions do evolve along with society. Nonetheless, "virtually every definition of TR includes the notion of involvement in activity that is oriented to treatment, education or recreation as a means for improving the health and well-being of people with disabilities" (Sylvester, Voelkl & Ellis, 2001, p. 16). Four common themes have been identified in most definitions of TR (Bullcock & Mahon, 2000):

- Purposeful use of recreation activities
- Enhancement of functioning through recreation participation
- Focus on the whole person in the context of his or her environment
- Long-term improvements in health, well-being, and quality of life as core concerns

On the basis of these commonalities, the authors have put forth a composite definition of TR:

engaging individuals in planned recreation and related experiences in order to improve functioning, health and well-being, and quality of life, while focusing on the whole person and the needed changes in the optimal living environment. (Stavola Daly & Kunstler, 2006, p. 179)

Additionally, an important component of an evolving definition of TR, according to Sylvester and colleagues (2001), is the concept of leisure. Their definition expands on the generally accepted meaning of TR to include the idea that "recognizing the potential of leisure for contributing to the quality of life of all people, therapeutic recreation facilitates leisure opportunities as an integral component of comprehensive care" (p. 17). A focus on leisure, in addition to recreation as described in the composite definition, can be considered the unique contribution of TR to the comprehensive services provided to clients. Let's take a brief look at leisure and recreation.

## Leisure and Recreation

*Leisure* and *recreation* are words that are often used interchangeably and may have particular meanings to each individual. The general public considers leisure to be free time or a certain type of activity (Shank & Coyle, 2002) that is done for fun or relaxation. Various definitions, from many countries and cultures, imply that the meaning of leisure is closely

linked to choices freely made in one's free time, or choices about how one spends free time. "Leisure" comes from the Latin word "licere," meaning freedom. The French word "loisir" means free time, and the English word "license" means permission to do something. The word "liberty" also comes from the Latin "licere." Leisure has a strong connection to education as well, as can be seen in the French word for school, "lycee." This reveals that leisure has been viewed over centuries as a period of time in which one is free to do something personally enriching or educational. However, we do not experience leisure every time we engage in a freely chosen activity; a state of mind is required also. A **leisure "state of mind"** is characterized by feelings of competence and mastery, accomplishment, self-satisfaction, freedom, and the meaning leisure holds for the individual. Freedom to make meaningful and personally rewarding choices has been a focus of TR service.

Recreation is generally viewed as an activity one chooses to do for fun or to share an experience with others, or for some specific benefit that is meaningful to the participant. "Recreation" comes from the Latin word "recreatio," meaning "that which refreshes or restores" (McLean, Hurd & Brittain Rogers, 2005, p. 38). Recreation can be defined as voluntary, nonwork activity engaged in for the attainment of personal and social **benefits** (Shank & Coyle, 2002). While recreation is usually done for fun or pleasure, it may also involve serious commitment to learning a new activity and improving a skill. Serious commitment can produce enjoyment or deep psychological absorption, as well as a sense of control and competence. Participating in recreation can restore, refresh, and renew the individual. In TR, the fun aspect of recreation can be motivating to people by helping them to "re-create themselves" through participation.

Recreation is the specific activity or program that an individual, professional, or agency organizes for participation. As TR professionals, we structure and conduct a wide range of recreation activities to appeal to our clients and help them to meet their goals. While we cannot "program" leisure, we plan recreation programs to enable individuals to experience leisure. Leisure is a personal experience an individual has that can occur through participation in meaningful recreation. Studying the concepts of leisure and recreation contributes to developing a mindset for TR practice that reflects key human values and enhances the TR profession's significance and meaning for clients. One characteristic of a profession is that practitioners establish professional organizations that provide leadership on a number of professional issues and concerns.



**Recreation is generally viewed as an activity chosen for fun or to share an experience with others.**

Realistic Reflections/Getty Images

## Therapeutic Recreation as Defined by Professional Organizations

There are two national professional organizations in TR, the **American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA)** and the **National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS)**. Both organizations have developed and adopted definitions of TR. These definitions serve to crystallize current perspectives regarding the practice of TR. In 2009, ATRA replaced its definition of TR with a definition of "recreational therapy."

The following is the NTRS definition of therapeutic recreation (2000):

Therapeutic recreation uses treatment, education, and recreation services to help people with illnesses, disabilities, and other conditions to develop and use their leisure in ways that enhance their health, functional abilities, independence and quality of life.

The ATRA definition of therapeutic recreation (1993) is as follows:

Therapeutic Recreation is the provision of Treatment Services and the provision of Recreation Services to persons with illnesses and disabling conditions. The primary purpose of Treatment Services, which is often referred to as Recreation Therapy, is to restore, remediate or rehabilitate in order to improve functioning and independence as well as reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability. The primary purpose of Recreation Services is to provide recreation resources



and opportunities in order to improve health and well being.

ATRA also offers the following definition of recreational therapy (2009):

“Recreational Therapy” means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition.

In comparing the two definitions of TR, we can see a common feature: TR serves persons with illnesses and disabilities, or disabling conditions. In addition, NTRS includes service to people with “other conditions,” which may be interpreted to refer to people who are homeless or youth at risk, for example, who do not fall into traditional categories of disability or illness. Both definitions of TR include treatment and recreation as the services TR provides, but NTRS also includes education as one of its services. ATRA’s definition of recreational therapy is a substantial change from its previous definition of TR in that it identifies only *treatment* as the service provided by the profession. ATRA’s new definition of recreational therapy (RT) represents a significant shift from its own definition of TR, which did include the provision of recreation services. It appears from its definition that NTRS covers a broader range of services and a wider range of clients than does ATRA.

Both the NTRS definition of TR and the ATRA definition of RT focus on health. ATRA uses the term “wellness” and NTRS uses the term “quality of life.” The most significant distinction between ATRA’s definitions of TR and RT is that ATRA has removed any reference to recreation; services are now limited exclusively to treatment and no longer include recreation service as a means of improving health and well-being. The definition of recreational therapy also differs significantly from the NTRS perspective, which places primary emphasis on the development and use of leisure. See table 1.1 for a comparison of the three definitions.

In developing a mindset for TR practice, examining and reflecting upon these definitions to determine which best expresses one’s beliefs and views is a meaningful exercise. The struggle to define TR has been viewed by some as an impediment to the development of the profession. The premise of this book is that the purpose of TR cannot be limited to the provision of recreational therapy (as in the ATRA definition) or geared only to helping clients develop or use leisure (as in the NTRS definition), but should be inclusive of both as well as emphasizing the use of recreation as both a means and an end. An umbrella or combined approach may be more relevant in an increasingly multicultural and diverse world (Dieser, 2008). This approach holds that TR is used *simultaneously* as “a medium for therapeutic change” and “as an enjoyable outcome that is pursued for its own sake” (p. 26).

**TABLE 1.1**

**Comparison of the NTRS and ATRA Definitions of TR and RT**

	NTRS TR	ATRA TR	ATRA RT
Types of services	Treatment Education Recreation services	Treatment services Recreation services	Treatment services
Clients served	People with illnesses, disabilities, and other conditions	Persons with illnesses or disabling conditions	People with activity limitations and restrictions in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition
Purpose	Develop and use leisure in ways that enhance health, functional abilities, independence, and quality of life	Restore, remediate, or rehabilitate in order to improve functioning and independence Reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability Provide recreation resources and opportunities in order to improve health and well-being	Restore, remediate, and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities Promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations



## CHARACTERISTICS OF THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

Similar to the practice of other therapies, TR participation is based on an individual assessment and plan designed to help the client achieve specific goals or outcomes. Outcomes represent the measurable changes in the client from his entry into the program to his departure. Other therapies may even use recreational activities to achieve outcomes. In particular, the differences between TR and occupational therapy (OT) have not always been clear because OT not only utilizes recreation-type activities such as cooking and arts and crafts in its services, but also addresses outcomes similar to those of TR. Physical therapists offer exercise programs, social workers offer group activities, and psychologists may use games; yet all focus on the outcome that will be achieved at the point of departure from services.

There are two important characteristics, however, that define TR as distinct from other therapies. The difference between TR and any other therapeutic service is that TR provides both purposeful intervention and a leisure context (Robertson & Long, 2008). While TR is providing a purposeful intervention directed toward achieving an outcome, TR also provides a leisure context. The leisure context means that the TRS creates conditions to enable the clients to successfully experience leisure *during* the TR

program. This adds to the meaning and the quality of the therapeutic recreation program by offering both leisure opportunities and intervention services. Leisure experience, as described earlier, includes choice making, competence, and positive feelings during and after involvement. Services provided by other professionals, while outcome focused, do not occur in a leisure context. This context not only helps to define TR but is also the characteristic that distinguishes it from other therapies.

The leisure context characterizes both TR and recreation services, but it is the provision of purposeful intervention that differentiates the two. Recreation services are based on general group needs and interests, rather than designed for a particular individual as in TR. Broad goals are set for recreation groups and programs, and individual changes are not formally measured. Recreation specialists conduct programs that possess the qualities of recreation—they are fun and enjoyable, restorative and refreshing, and challenging to participants and provide opportunities to learn and use skills. The recreation specialist plans and organizes the physical, social, and natural environment by selecting the appropriate setting for a program, gathering the necessary equipment and supplies, and providing the leadership so that participants can experience the benefits of leisure (Edginton et al., 2004). As Paul Haun, the noted psychiatrist, wrote in his classic book *Recreation: A Medical Viewpoint* (1965), the essential skill

## The Difference Between Recreation and TR

When you participate with your friends in a recreation activity, such as going to a movie, you expect to have a good time. You may look forward to the social interaction with your companions, being entertained by the movie, and going out to a new restaurant afterward and analyzing the film director's technique in a discussion over dinner. You can accomplish these desired outcomes of the experience on your own, as well as through interaction with your friends, without the assistance of a qualified professional. But what if you didn't like the movie? What if the restaurant wasn't accessible? You may still have had fun because you and your friends joked about the experience, you were able to find a different restaurant at the last minute, and had a great conversation over dinner. You were able to experience recreation and its benefits and did not require the services of a TR professional to help you learn specific skills in order to be successful.

But what if you don't have adequate conversation skills? Are you too shy to ask people to join you? Maybe you don't know how to find information about the times of the movies or the location of the restaurant because of a physical or cognitive limitation. Perhaps you can't pay attention for the full length of the movie. Perhaps you have poor budgeting skills and don't know how to put aside the money the outing will cost. If the outing did occur, maybe the restaurant turned out to be too crowded and you wanted to go someplace else. A TRS can help you learn the new skills and behaviors needed to have a successful outing, as well as help you to have fun during the therapeutic and educational process. For clients, therapeutic recreation is an opportunity to learn, practice, and utilize new skills and behaviors, as well as to experience the joys of recreation and leisure.

of the recreation worker is “his open invitation to another human being to come and play, to have fun, to experience the zest of emotional release limited by nothing but the rules of the game. His unique skill is getting the willing consent of another person to take the plunge into play . . .” (p. 82).

While the TRS also creates an environment with the intention of clients experiencing these benefits, the difference between recreation and TR is that TR is purposefully focused on achieving outcomes based on individual needs. In TR, outcomes include improving health, increasing functioning, changing behavior in a positive direction, or finding meaning and purpose in life. **Functional outcomes**, those that are instrumental for living, have long been the focus in health care; however, **existential outcomes**, those that provide meaning to life or enhance quality of life (Shank & Coyle, 2002), are becoming more valued (Ross & Ashton-Shaeffer, 2001). The TRS’s unique skill as a recreation leader contributes to existential outcomes for the client. In fact, the TRS has been identified as the “existential therapist” (Richter & Kaschak, 1996) on the medical treatment team, the professional “who is concerned with the clients identifying activities that are motivating and affirming of their abilities” (Sylvester et al., 2001, p. 57). Having a mindset for ethical TR practice includes understanding the significance of the leisure context to achieving the purposes of TR outcomes. Purposes are achieved through the provision of TR leadership by the TRS.

## THERAPEUTIC RECREATION LEADERSHIP

This book takes the perspective that **therapeutic recreation leadership** is the core of the day-to-day practice of TR and deserving of much greater attention. The meaning and process of TR leadership have not been thoroughly explored in the TR literature (Austin, 2004), nor has TR leadership been discussed as a unique concept. An assumption of TR practice has been that TR leadership is characterized by the roles and responsibilities of both a therapist and a recreation specialist, with one or the other predominating based on any number of factors. These factors could include the TRS’s personal philosophy, skills, and qualities; the nature of the setting; or the characteristics of the clients.

In the composite definition of TR, the word *engaging* is used, implying that a major task of the TRS is to attract the attention of potential participants and to draw them into involvement in TR programs. TR leadership “involves the ability to influence the

activities of clients toward accomplishing sought outcomes” (Austin, 2004, p. 324). The TRS makes the clients feel that they are being paid attention to, that they are understood, and that the TRS is aware of their unique needs. During a TR session, the client may find meaning in the doing of the activity itself (leisure context), may find meaning because the activity is a way to achieve a goal or behavioral change (functional intervention), or may experience a combination of both. At times the practice of TR has been focused on functional outcomes without attention to creating a leisure experience, which might be considered recreational therapy; or focused primarily on the recreational aspects of the activity to the exclusion of the individual client’s desired outcomes, which has been viewed as “special” recreation. Therapeutic recreation may be considered the integration of therapy, education, and recreation to produce the conditions necessary for a client to experience leisure. The concept of TR leadership reflects this integration and provides a framework for what the TRS actually does on a day-to-day basis, grounded in the values and principles of the profession.

We have developed a definition of TR leadership that extends the umbrella definition by blending the simultaneous functions and practices of a recreation specialist with those of a therapist. This definition incorporates Robertson and Long’s (2008) two criteria for TR, purposeful intervention and leisure context, into the practice of TR leadership to create a synergistic effect that heightens the TR profession’s contribution to health and human services:

Therapeutic recreation leadership is the unique blending of the therapist’s purposeful application of therapeutic strategies and facilitation techniques with the recreation specialist’s abilities to create and facilitate leisure experiences in order to deliver TR services according to the highest ethical standards.

This definition is the beginning of a fuller exploration of the unique role of the TRS and provides guidance and direction for *how* the TRS conducts programs and offers services on a daily basis. As with the definitions of TR itself, it invites comments and refinements as the field evolves in response to and reflects the changing world. One constant in practice, despite the inevitable changes in one’s day-to-day responsibilities, is to behave ethically and thoughtfully in all we do.

## ETHICAL PRACTICE

**Ethical practice**, simply put, refers to practice that conforms to established professional standards