

SECOND EDITION

# THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

## A PRACTICAL APPROACH



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# Preface

What is therapeutic recreation and what is required of students in this major? The profession and the practice have undergone and will continue to undergo changes. Social, economic, and legal concerns and trends give direction to the growth of this emerging profession and area of service. This text is designed primarily for the introductory course in therapeutic recreation at the undergraduate level. Students who have an undergraduate degree in another area may also find the text useful. Our intention is to provide, in a practical, student-oriented fashion, a comprehensive overview of the fundamentals of therapeutic recreation as a profession and as a career choice.

As an introductory text, this book examines the primary roles of a “helping practitioner”; presents the fundamental tool—the therapeutic recreation process—used in the field; overviews settings, services, and clientele with whom the practitioner works; and introduces the student to the theoretical concepts underpinning the practice. Students also explore the historical and philosophical growth of the profession as well as their personal and professional commitment.

The therapeutic recreation profession serves a number of clients in a variety of settings. The scope of services requires comprehending extensive amounts of material that describe the relationships between theoretical concepts and their practical application. Part One of the text introduces students to the fundamentals of the profession and the practice of therapeutic recreation. In Part Two, the therapeutic recreation process is applied to clients who are recipients of therapeutic recreation services. Each chapter is organized in a similar fashion that describes the nature of the various impairments and the

role of the therapeutic recreation specialist in assisting in maintaining or improving an individual's level of function, health status, and/or quality of life.

We believe that the learning process transcends the walls of academia only to be fully realized through meaningful, practical experiences that allow students to apply knowledge and skills they have developed in a wide variety of experiences. We have drawn collectively on our experiences as practitioners and educators to define the scope of the text. An introductory statement with student objectives opens each chapter and is intended to focus the student on both the theory and the application of the information presented. Within the text, case studies, illustrations, and photos depict actual situations. Each chapter concludes with study questions and practical exercises to guide the student in reviewing and applying the concepts. By becoming involved in the learning process, we hope to excite students about the practice of the profession. A key to selecting a career is a comprehensive awareness of a profession's nature and a knowledge of the practical tasks undertaken as a professional—thus, the practical, student-oriented, comprehensive approach of *Therapeutic Recreation: A Practical Approach*.

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Marcia Jean Carter  
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Gary M. Robb

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# Contents

**Preface**      xi  
**Acknowledgments**      xiii

**Part One: An Overview of the Profession**      **1**

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**1 Becoming a Part of a Profession**      **3**  
    Student Objectives      3  
    Introduction      4  
    The Nature of Therapeutic Recreation      5  
    Summary      23  
    Study Questions      24  
    Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives      24  
    Key Terms      25  
    References      26  
    Selected Readings      27

**2 Discovering the Roots of a Profession**      **29**  
    Student Objectives      30  
    Introduction      30  
    Prenatal Period of Professional Development  
        (1800–1935)      33  
    Becoming a Profession      40  
    The Birth and Infancy of Therapeutic Recreation  
        (1935–1965)      40  
    Childhood (1966–1980)      47  
    Adolescence (1981–1990)      55  
    Young Adulthood (1991–Present)      62  
    Summary      66  
    Study Questions      66  
    Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives      67

Key Terms	68	
References	68	
Selected Readings	70	
<b>3 Becoming a Helper</b>		<b>73</b>
Student Objectives	73	
Introduction	74	
What Characterizes a Helper?	74	
What Characterizes a Client?	78	
The Ethics and Problems of Helping	80	
Facilitation Skills	85	
Intervention Strategies	92	
General Leadership Interaction and Intervention Considerations	105	
Summary	107	
Study Questions	108	
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives		108
Key Terms	110	
References	111	
Selected Readings	113	
<b>4 Program Design</b>	<b>115</b>	
Student Objectives	115	
Introduction	116	
Individual Program or Treatment Plans	118	
Comprehensive Program Plans	142	
Summary	151	
Study Questions	152	
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives		152
Key Terms	153	
References	154	
Selected Readings	154	
<b>5 Management of Therapeutic Recreation in Clinical Settings</b>		<b>157</b>
Student Objectives	158	
Introduction	158	
An Overview of the Clinical Health Care System		159
A Written Plan of Operation	160	
Financial Operations	166	
Technical Operations	175	
Personnel Operations	180	
Summary	183	

Study Questions	185
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	185
Key Terms	186
References	187
Selected Readings	187

## **6 Management of Therapeutic Recreation in Community Settings      189**

Student Objectives	190
Introduction	190
A Written Plan of Operation	192
Financial Operations	207
Technical Operations	211
Personnel Operations	218
Summary	221
Study Questions	222
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	223
Key Terms	223
References	224
Selected Readings	225

## **Part Two: An Overview of Individuals with Disabilities      227**

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## **7 Musculoskeletal, Neurological, and Neuromuscular System Impairments      231**

Student Objectives	232
Introduction	232
Overview	233
Functioning Characteristics	244
Purpose of Therapeutic Recreation	252
Delivery Settings	263
Leadership Interaction and Intervention Considerations	264
Related Considerations	269
Summary	271
Study Questions	272
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	272
Key Terms	273
References	275
Selected Readings	275

## **8 Sensory and Other Hidden Impairments      277**

Student Objectives	277
Introduction	278

Circulatory Impairments	279
Respiratory Impairments	286
Endocrine and Metabolic Impairments	291
Cancer	296
Chronic Pain	299
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome	302
Sensory and Communication Impairments	304
Related Considerations	321
Summary	323
Study Questions	324
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	325
Key Terms	325
References	327
Selected Readings	327
<b>9 Cognitive Impairments</b>	<b>329</b>
Student Objectives	329
Introduction	330
Disorders Usually Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood, or Adolescence	331
Mental Retardation	339
Severe Multiple Impairments	355
Autism	363
Summary	370
Study Questions	371
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	372
Key Terms	372
References	373
Selected Readings	374
<b>10 Psychological Impairments</b>	<b>377</b>
Student Objectives	378
Introduction	378
Major Perspectives on Psychological Disorders	380
Classifications of Psychological Disorders	384
Psychological Disorders and Treatment Programs	387
Delivering Care	402
Leadership Interaction and Intervention	
Considerations	407
Related Considerations	414
Summary	414
Study Questions	416
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	416

Key Terms	417	
References	417	
Selected Readings	420	
<b>11 Social Impairments</b>		<b>421</b>
Student Objectives	421	
Introduction	422	
Substance-Related Disorders	424	
Eating Disorders	435	
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	443	
Abuse and/or Neglect	450	
Individuals Who Are Homeless and/or Destitute	457	
Delinquent and Criminal Behaviors	464	
Summary	470	
Study Questions	471	
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	472	
Key Terms	472	
References	473	
Selected Readings	475	
<b>12 Children in Health Care Settings</b>		<b>477</b>
Student Objectives	477	
Introduction	478	
Population Overview	478	
Purpose of Therapeutic Recreation	487	
The Nature of the Therapeutic Recreation Process	496	
Related Considerations	509	
Summary	514	
Study Questions	516	
Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	516	
Key Terms	517	
References	517	
Selected Readings	518	
<b>13 The Aging Process</b>		<b>519</b>
Student Objectives	519	
Introduction	520	
Population Overview—The Aging Individual	521	
Population Overview: Aging Persons with Illnesses and Disabilities	536	
Related Considerations	552	
Summary	555	
Study Questions	555	

Practical Experiences to Enhance Student Objectives	556
Key Terms	557
References	557
Selected Readings	559
<b>Glossary</b>	561
<b>Index</b>	573

## 2 PART I: An Overview of the Profession

In chapter 1, we consider what makes therapeutic recreation a unique profession. A conceptual model is used to describe therapeutic recreation's role and function in health care. We will explore the nature of therapeutic recreation by studying each phase of the model.

In chapter 2, we challenge you to consider the present status and nature of therapeutic recreation within the context of historical events and circumstances. We use the framework of developmental stages to outline the major influences on the profession and to compare the past with the present while pondering the future.

Chapter 3 examines the helping, or therapeutic, relationship that is established through the use of interpersonal communication skills. Why do you want to help? "Helping" can either enhance or detract from the significance of the therapeutic recreation process. It is important to develop the facilitation skills useful for both individual and group helping situations.

Chapter 4 looks at each phase—assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation—of the therapeutic recreation process, which is similar in both clinical and community settings.

Chapters 5 and 6 conclude Part One with the consideration that many programs fail not because they have not been well developed but because the designer has neglected important management details. These chapters present information on the written plan of operation, fiscal management, technical operations, and personnel management in clinical (chapter 5) and community (chapter 6) settings.

# 1

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## Becoming a Part of a Profession

Becoming a part of a profession requires an understanding about the nature of the profession. We also need to develop a perspective or attitude toward important issues involved in the practice of this profession. This chapter will provide you with an orientation to therapeutic recreation and a conceptual framework useful in your understanding of the process of becoming a therapeutic recreation specialist.

### Student Objectives

The intent of this chapter is to enable you to

- Review the various factors and perspectives of therapeutic recreation that have contributed to the current definition
- Identify the purpose of therapeutic recreation
- Study a model framework for understanding therapeutic recreation
- Explore the nature of health care delivery systems
- Identify the roles, settings, and responsibilities common to the field
- Identify the service goals and outcomes of therapeutic recreation
- Develop an attitude that facilitates a humanistic perspective

## Introduction

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Approaching the study of a profession that is being considered as a career is both exciting and sobering. The excitement stems from the interest we might have in the topic and the potential it holds for fulfilling certain needs or dreams. Helping and serving others is indeed a stimulating and challenging task, one that we cannot approach lightly. It has been said that if you can help someone by what you do, you also have the potential for harming them. Therapeutic recreation, like recreation and leisure services, is a human service profession. Therapeutic recreation specialists are in the business of providing certain services to people for the purpose of improving their health, functional abilities, and quality of life. How these services are provided is extremely critical to the ultimate outcome for those



Affective qualities are essential to the professional helper.

we serve. Becoming a professional is no small or insignificant task that might be accomplished by taking a few courses, reading a few books, listening to more than a few lectures, taking a certification exam, or even applying some professional skills in a therapeutic program. We hope that from reading this chapter you will begin to understand the nature of therapeutic recreation and grasp the importance of becoming a professional—not simply a graduate with a degree in recreation or therapeutic recreation.

The field of therapeutic recreation is relatively young. Even in its short lifetime it has been affected by many professional and social changes. As you will soon discover, the profession has struggled and continues to struggle with its unique role and function as a human service. What is its primary function? How should that function be modified to accommodate continual changes in our society? Although we cannot propose a final answer to these questions, we will begin to define the parameters and thus provide an orientation to the essential elements of the profession.

## **The Nature of Therapeutic Recreation**

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“Therapeutic recreation? What is that?” For those entering the field, these become routine questions that you will attempt to answer repeatedly in your career. It seems easy enough simply to respond with, “Oh, it’s a profession that provides recreation programs for persons with disabilities who are in hospitals or institutions.” There was a time when this answer would have been very acceptable. Historically, therapeutic recreation has been closely linked with (1) the settings in which the recreation activities occurred (usually hospitals or institutions), (2) the emphasis on the therapeutic value of recreation, and (3) the nature of the participants or clients, that is, persons with impairments. In light of recent trends, however, these criteria are no longer the exclusive factors used to define therapeutic recreation. In effect, societal changes have forced the profession to reconsider the special mission or purpose it performs.

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### **Redefining the Profession**

So what’s new? Everything! Well, almost everything. So much has changed since the origin of the profession in the middle of the twentieth century that it’s hard to know where to begin. Most of these changes will be discussed in chapter 2 where we outline in detail the history of the profession. For our purposes here, however, we’ll concentrate on just a few factors that have influenced our contemporary understanding of therapeutic recreation.