Coping with the Physical and Emotional Effects of Essential Tremor

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What is Occupational Therapy?

- Skilled
- Person-specific
- Addresses any deficit or impairment impacting participation in daily life
  - Self-care/Leisure
  - Mobility
  - Home Management
  - Incontinence
  - Employment
  - Driving

Image retrieved from: http://piratepenguinreads.blogspot.com/2013/01/commenting-system.html
How can OT help my Tremors?

- Tremors impact participation in daily activities
- OT will strive to improve independence with daily activities and maintain your quality of life
  - Recommendations to adapt how task is completed, the environment, equipment utilized, etc.
- Provide helpful resources
- Guidance in stress reduction
- May help you problem-solve the best solution for you!
How can OT help my Tremors?

- **Assess**
  - Motivation to maintain Independence
    - Outside supports?
  - Priorities
    - Areas of interest
  - Context
    - Environment
    - Tools and equipment available
    - Available financial resources
  - Co-morbidities? Overall health and fitness level
Research on treatment interventions

- Inconclusive and variable
  - Limb cooling
  - Weights
  - Electrical stimulation
  - Strength training
  - Vibration
  - Bright lights
General Guidelines

- Conserve Energy
  - Do the hard work when you are at your best
- Reduce Demands
  - Use Adaptive Equipment and/or Technology
- Set Realistic Goals and Prioritize
Stability

- We all seek it!
  - Use of Sensory Profile
- Use proper body mechanics
- Consider use of weights or compression
- Maintain healthy exercise regimen

Image retrieved from: http://guyinaustin.blogspot.com/2013/02/dp-faces-cold-hard-truth.html
Common areas of difficulty
Drinking

- Straws
- Cups with lids
- 2-handled cup
- Tall, straight glasses
- Under-fill your cup
Eating

- Utilize dull utensils to increase safety
- Consider using a spoon versus a fork
- Weight your wrists or knuckles
- Steady your elbow on the table or at your side

Image retrieved from:
http://fondogastronomico.blogspot.com/2013/09/como-se-origino-popeye-el-marino.html
Eating

- Weighted, built-up, or bendable utensils
- Covered spoons
- Balanced utensils
- Rocker knife
- Weighted plate OR suction cup plate
- Dycem placemat
- Divided plates OR plate guard
- Plates with vertical rims

Grooming/Hygiene

- Electric tools (e.g. toothbrush or razor)
  - Typically have larger handles, additional weight, and reduce work load
  - Allows you to stabilize your elbow at your side
- Disposable floss holders
- Containers which are easy to hold and open
Grooming/Hygiene

- Long-handed tools (e.g. long-handled comb)
- Use of suction cups or holders
  - Secure items for increased ease
    - Loading toothbrush
    - Trimming your nails
Dressing

- Magnetic fasteners and clasps or Velcro closures
- Use of button hook
  - Weighted or unweighted
  - Built-up handle
- Elastic shoelaces or slip-on shoes
- Zipper extenders
- Pullover shirts and elastic waistband pants
- Camisole with built-in bra
Bathing

- Bath mitt
- Long-handed loofah
- Terry cloth robe to dry off
- Secured container bin with pump bottles
In the Kitchen

- A cutting board with spikes, side walls, or attached pivot knife
- Mounted can openers
- Electric devices
  - One-touch can openers
  - Electric mixers, choppers
  - Food processors
- Purchase items that reduce food prep
Handwriting

- Prepare ahead
- Take your time
- Consider your set-up
- Print versus cursive
- Consider pre-printed labels, signature stamp, or voice-to-text program
Handwriting

- Find a pen that feels comfortable in your hand
  - Nice flow
  - Bigger grip
  - Adapted grip pens
    - Steady Write or Pen Again
  - Weighted (weighted pen, wrist weights, universal weight, weighted gloves)
Computer and Mobile Use

- Adapted mouse software
  - Reduces accidental clicks
- Mouse Dwell
- Speech-activated software
- Hands-free speaker phone features
  - Headset or Bluetooth
- Autodial options or voice-activated dialing
Computer and Mobile Use

- Large button phones and keyboards
- Keyguards
- Re-set screen option for a larger view
- Record notes and reminders with recorders
- Set your computer to omit double strikes on the keyboard and double-clicks on the mouse
- Speech recognition and word prediction programs
Computer and Mobile Use

- **Typeway App - iPad**
  - Automatic adaptation of the key configuration
- **Abilipad App - iPad**
  - Customizable keyboard and adaptive notepad, with word prediction and text-to-speech capabilities
- **Dexteria - iTunes**
  - Fine motor skills development program
- **BIG launcher - Android**
  - Easy to read interface
- **Dragon- Android**
  - Personal assistant via voice recognition commands
Computer and Mobile Use

- Contour roller mouse
  - Ergonomic mouse
- Mousecage and Steady Mouse
  - Decreases sensitivity of mouse
  - Not been updated recently
- Chestercreek Visionboard 2 Keyboard
- Big Keys LX Keyboard
Other helpful considerations:

- Electric pill organizer and dispenser
- Key turner
- Spill-proof urinal
- Card holder
- Eye-drop aid

- Lamp switch enlarger
- Universal, large button remote
- Stain-free carpets
- Leather couch
Creative Solutions

- Paperclip for a zipper pull
- Washers or bolts to add weight to utensils
- Use shelf-liner to provide a non-skid surface
- Create cardholder by adding slits in a carton or foam noodle
- The sky is the limit!
Emotional Effects of Tremor
Factors which may Increase Tremors

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Rushing
- Overexertion
- Caffeine
- Exercise
- Excitement
- Anticipation
Reducing Stress

- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Dance
- Laughter Therapy
- Massage
- Acupuncture
- Regular Activity/Exercise

- Mindfulness
- Progressive Relaxation
- Mental Imagery
- Deep Breathing
- Listening to Music
- Fresh Air
Acceptance

- Feeling comfortable with the physical manifestation
- Learning to relax those areas which tremor

Developing Insight

- Learn to know when you need to slow down
- Recognize the tension
- Scan the body
- Breath awareness
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