

Positive Psychology and Leisure Education

A Balanced and Systematic Service Delivery Model

John Dattilo

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to present a balanced and systematic leisure education service model grounded in positive psychology principles that are applied across diverse audiences and in various venues that is designed to facilitate the interrelated positive experiences of leisure, happiness, and flourishing (cf. Dattilo, 2015). Six principles help leisure educators work together with participants along with their families, friends, and communities so that they experience leisure, are happy, and flourish: These principles include intrinsic motivation, self-determination, flow, arousal, savoring, and positivity. The term *leisure education* describes a multifaceted, dynamic process that promotes exploration of perspectives and opportunities intended to develop an ethic of positivity and savoring that is conducive to flow, arousal, and leisure. Leisure education is designed to stimulate self-awareness, promote acquisition of leisure-related knowledge, and encourage skill development that enhances self-determination by meeting needs for autonomy, competence, and social connections, which are influenced by a variety of factors and people including family members, educators, leisure service providers, and neighbors. Leisure education includes programs specifically intended to empower people to experience leisure and happiness and ultimately flourish and it includes information infused throughout services to encourage these positive experiences.

Keywords: *leisure education, positive psychology, service delivery model*

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Given Bregha's (1985) position that leisure is the most precious expression of our freedom, a convincing case is made that leisure is a right of all humans (United Nations, 1948). Since the underlying assumption of leisure education is that everyone should have opportunities to experience leisure and that leisure contributes to human development, it is important that everyone also have the chance to be educated for leisure (Sivan, 2008). Leisure education is based on the premise that all individuals, irrespective of race, socioeconomic status, gender, color, religion, ability, age, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic have the right to experience leisure. Accordingly, "the main issue is that of opportunity: If leisure is the element of life in which unique opportunities for expression, development, and relationships are found, then should not a full range of opportunities be available for everyone?" (Kelly, 1990, p. 385)

The purpose of this paper is to present a service delivery model titled a Balanced and Systematic Leisure Education Service Model that is depicted in Figure 1. This model is based on principles grounded in positive psychology and is one way to think about and deliver leisure education in a balanced and systematic way. Furthermore, these principles are applied across the diverse audiences being served or the multiple venues in which services are delivered. In a paper highlighting the Charter of Leisure Education by the World Leisure and Recreation Association, Sivan (1997) described leisure education as a directed, methodological, structured process, recognizing the individual's right to leisure and the wise use of it, with the objective to impart and foster desirable patterns of leisure behavior. These ideas are further explored in this paper.

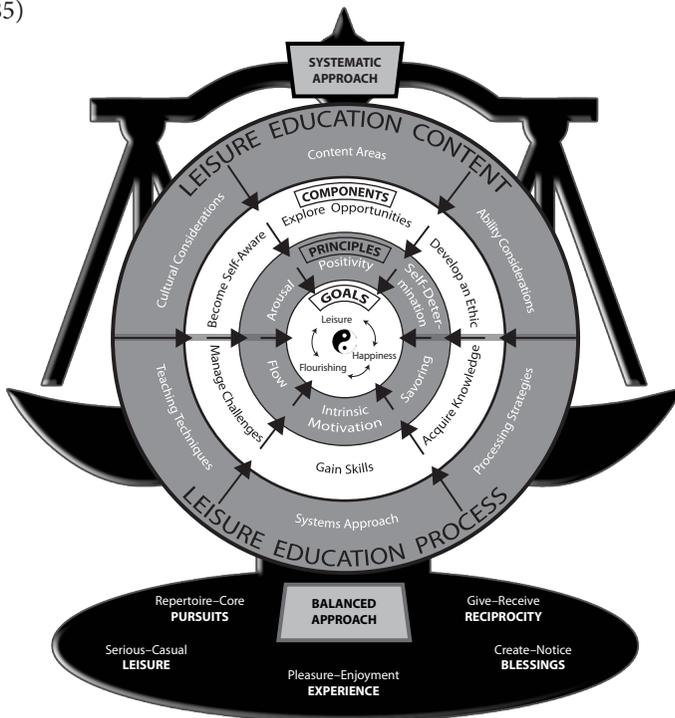


Figure 1. A balanced and systematic model for leisure education

A possible model for leisure education based on several concepts addressed in positive psychology is presented in the paper and represented in Figure 1. The innermost circle depicts potential goals of leisure education and the interactions between leisure, happiness, and flourishing. Positivity, savoring, intrinsic motivation, flow, arousal, and self-determination are all associated with experiencing leisure, being happy, and flourishing, and are reflected in the second circle out from the center. The third circle out from the center illustrates the characteristics of leisure education that highlight the value of developing an ethic, acquiring knowledge, gaining skills, managing challenges, becoming self-aware, and exploring opportunities. The outermost circles of the figure present both the content and the process associated with the delivery of leisure education programs. The leisure education content includes specification of content areas (e.g., self-awareness, leisure ethic) and identification of cultural and ability considerations. Also, process considerations are illustrated that include a systems approach containing teaching techniques and processing strategies depicted in the outermost circles. Achieving a balanced life is represented by the inclusion of a scale and at the base of the scale the identification of five examples of maintaining a balanced approach. Finally, the arrows are used to demonstrate that the leisure education content and process, a collaborative effort between the instructor and learner, is designed to move individuals toward development of an ethic, awareness, understanding, and multiple skills that assist in managing challenges to leisure. As challenges to leisure are managed, people tend to gravitate to positive experiences such as being intrinsically motivated, achieving flow, becoming self-determined, and en-

countering optimum arousal, positivity, and savoring. These positive experiences transport individuals toward the ultimate goals of experiencing leisure, being happy, and flourishing.

This paper contains a description and explanation of the information presented in Figure 1 depicting the Balanced and Systematic Leisure Education Service Model. To begin, information about the goals of leisure education is provided. These goals are based on several social-psychological principles that are highlighted to provide insights into the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of leisure education. Following these two foundational aspects of the model, a description of the components of leisure education is offered. Next, the systematic nature of the model is identified that includes elaboration of the process by which services are delivered as well as the content presented with this approach. Subsequently, a description of how the model represents a balanced approach to service delivery is addressed. Finally, a conclusion is provided that identifies implications for the therapeutic recreation (TR) specialists.

Although there are numerous writings and research studies devoted to leisure education, there is an absence of a clear and systematic presentation of leisure education service models that connect recent research and thinking in the area of positive psychology to the actual delivery of leisure education services. There are a variety of perspectives about leisure education that create the opportunity for diverse pathways for conceptualization and implementation (Sivan & Stebbins, 2011; 2013). Given the various perspectives on leisure education, this paper presents a way to organize an approach to leisure education and includes a presentation of assumptions upon

which one model for delivery of leisure education services is grounded

Goals of Leisure Education

The model introduced in this paper is based on the goals of leisure education that include experiencing the interrelated positive experiences of leisure, happiness, and flourishing. The concepts are synergistic, and as these goals are achieved, the overall quality of people's lives is enhanced.

Leisure is an experience that results from being intrinsically motivated to participate in what is perceived to be a freely chosen meaningful activity that when engaged in competently is a form of self-expression, contributes to a sense of identity and connectedness, and results in positive emotions such as enjoyment (Pieper, 1963). Williams, Dustin, and McKenney (2004) made the connection between Joseph Pieper's thoughts about leisure and Victor Frankl's (1992) personal philosophy that emerged from his experience as a prisoner of war in Auschwitz and as a survivor of the Holocaust. The connection between experiencing leisure and surviving traumas is in finding meaning in experience that results in discovery of one's purpose. Similarly, leisure is inherently connected to our sense of happiness and our ability to flourish. To engage in leisure is to express our individual essence, including our talents and capabilities, pursue our potential, and experience a variety of positive emotions while we participate in enjoyable and meaningful activities (Kleiber, 2012). Times when we perceive that we have the knowledge and skills needed to participate and that we are free from responsibilities and obligations are conducive to leisure. Through leisure we encounter positive experiences such as perceived freedom to engage in meaningful experiences, intrinsic moti-

vation associated with positive emotions such as enjoyment, self-expression, and a sense of identity. Consequently, leisure is an experience, a process, and a subjective state of mind that transcends time, environments, and situations.

Although happiness is an elusive concept that is defined in many ways, people tend to agree that it is critical in living a healthy life of contentment (Adams Miller, & Frisch, 2009). Basically, *happiness* is an emotional or psychological state that contributes to our overall sense of well-being and involves positive feelings that result in satisfaction with life. *Happiness* is a word that we generally use to indicate an experience and not the actions that give rise to it; it occurs based on an accumulation of positive experiences (Gilbert, 2005). The concept of happiness includes experiencing positive emotions, feelings of engagement, and a sense of meaning that all influence our satisfaction with life (Seligman, 2002). Consequently, happiness contributes to our overall perceived sense of well-being and our ability to flourish (Prager, 1998). Moreover, the pursuit of happiness is not restricted to a particular culture but appears to occur throughout the world (Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2013).

It is one thing to be happy; it is another to flourish. Flourishing extends us beyond happiness to doing something valuable with our lives (Anderson & Heyne, 2012a; Rubin, 2011). To *flourish* we must move past self-interest to arrive at a point when we share and celebrate goodness in others and the natural world (Fredrickson, 2009). Many contexts and situations that are conducive to happiness and leisure create opportunities for us to share and celebrate goodness in others and the natural world (Gaffney, 2011). As we share and recognize the goodness in others we are in a position to achieve our potential and flourish (Seligman, 2011).

Leisure is closely connected to happiness and our ability to flourish and the synergy generated by these three concepts is worth facilitating through leisure education. Although perceptions of leisure have varied over time, leisure provides a context for development of a healthy mind, body, and spirit and creates opportunities for us to experience happiness and to flourish (Heyne & Anderson, 2012). As depicted in the center circle in Figure 1, leisure, happiness, and flourishing are interrelated constructs that influence one another. These complex ideas have many overlapping elements that are synergetic. The synergy created by leisure, happiness, and flourishing forms the foundation for developing leisure education services.

Principles of Leisure Education

Leisure education helps people identify leisure experiences that facilitate building happy, growth-filled, valued lives (Carruthers & Hood, 2011). Six principles are identified in the proposed model to assist leisure educators in collaborating with participants along with their families, friends, and communities so that they experience leisure, be happy, and flourish. These principles are depicted in the model with arrows pointing to the inner circle of the goals of leisure education to reflect the contribution of these principles on helping individuals achieve those goals. Intrinsic motivation, self-determination, flow, arousal, savoring, and positivity are the six principles found in Figure 1 in the circle surrounding the goals of leisure education.

Since leisure occurs when we are intrinsically motivated, to engage in an activity primarily for the positive emotions experienced is an important concept to address when providing leisure education. Leisure happens when participation

is a deliberate choice, rather than from coercion (Quingguo, Jia, Liang, & Qiang, 2014). *Intrinsic motivation* refers specifically to the motivation to participate based on positive feelings derived from activity engagement (Neulinger, 1981a). We are motivated intrinsically when we are aware of potential benefits that may be derived from participating in various activities. As enjoyment associated with the leisure experience is encountered, we become intrinsically motivated to participate (Neulinger, 1981b). Although leisure engagement is sought for the purpose of experiencing positive emotions rather than for some external outcome, people differ in the degree to which they are intrinsically motivated to participate in various activities. Therefore, it is imperative that leisure educators work in close collaboration with individuals to create a context conducive for experiencing intrinsic motivation.

Since autonomy, competence, and connectedness are important to leisure engagement and are identified as needs met by being self-determined (Deci, Ryan, & Guay, 2013), the concept of self-determination is strongly related to leisure engagement (Chang, 2011; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). Leisure experiences provide opportunities to express self-determination (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 2004; Lloyd & Little, 2010) and create contexts that contribute to perceptions of being self-determined (Williams, Guerin, & Fortier, 2014). *Self-determination* is an essential ingredient of intrinsic motivation and refers to the flexibility and capacity of an individual to choose from available options and to adjust to those situations in which only one option is available (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2012). Cognition, affect, and motivation mediate self-determination; therefore, self-determined behaviors are intentional and are acted on

out of choice (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Given the interaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, many people's sense of self-determination is affected by a variety of socially influenced factors including gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class (Ryan & Deci, 2011). Rather than being antithetical to social contexts, self-determination is often intertwined with them (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003; Yamauchi & Tanaka, 1998).

A leisure experience is not necessarily achieved when people are provided with recreation activities or encounter additional free time. Rather, leisure educators may facilitate the leisure experience by helping people to move beyond boredom and anxiety, and by providing opportunities to participate in activities that create challenges that are in keeping with their skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Achieving a balance between the degree of challenge and skill required for an activity is referred to as *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997, p. 29), "the metaphor of flow is one that many people use to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives." It is valuable for leisure educators to deliver services that facilitate absorbing flow experiences (Perkins & Nakamura, 2013). Typically, flow does not occur in periods of relaxation; rather, flow occurs when activity requires us to stretch our physical and mental abilities. If we engage in pursuits that produce flow we concentrate, expend effort, and take control of the situation (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). As a result, it may be helpful for leisure educators to work to enhance participants' involvement, concentration, effort, and a sense of control while promoting freedom of choice and the expression of preferences.

Optimal arousal is based on the degree of stimulation we derive from en-

gaging in an activity (Iso-Ahola, 1980). We are either motivated to seek arousal if the current situation is lacking stimulation, or escape arousal if the environment presents too much stimulation (e.g., Caryer & Greenberg, 2010). The degree of arousal derived from participating in an activity changes daily, as well as over the course of our lifespan. This change in the ability of an activity to arouse us occurs because the level of stimulation an activity provides changes from situation to situation and as our skills develop (Jeong & Biocca, 2012). By seeking and facilitating stability (i.e., a sense of security and permanence) or pursuing novelty (i.e., the desire to do something new, original, or unusual that results in change) the degree of stimulation needed to be optimally aroused is adjusted. Given that the benefits associated with achieving an optimum level of arousal are well established and that our drive for stimulation and excitement elicits action, this is an important goal of leisure education.

Another more recently studied concept related to leisure is savoring. *Savoring* is an intentional, thoughtful process that requires noticing and attending to a positive experience and, over time, transforming that experience into positive feelings which are subsequently incorporated into our way of thinking (Bryan & Veroff, 2007). Indeed, savoring is recognized as a process that involves mindfulness by specifically attending to, appreciating, and enhancing a current positive experience free from social and esteem needs as major motivators (Bryan & Veroff). The idea of savoring is grounded in the work of Langer (1989). According to Langer (2009), mindfulness is the active state of attention to the present moment that occurs by noticing our thoughts and feelings without judgment—it allows us to live in the present; when we are mind-

ful, we become open to creating innovative ways to examine the world and we free ourselves from drudgery and habitual ways of viewing the world. Situations in which mindfulness is encouraged include those that are novel because automatic thinking is reduced when we encounter something new and unfamiliar. Similar to flow, mindfulness is enhanced when we are required to apply high effort because we need to focus our attention. Finally, situations that are uncertain and thus that involve a heightened state of arousal are also conducive to being mindful. Carruthers and Hood (2011) recognize that mindfulness training has the potential to be a powerful intervention to enhance wellbeing and increase benefits experienced through leisure (Gim, 2009). Even though the idea of savoring is grounded in the broad concept of mindfulness, savoring is a narrower concept because it focuses attention only on positive experiences and feelings; thus, it is closely aligned with leisure and is an important focus of leisure education.

Acting and thinking in a positive manner yields many mental, physical, and emotional benefits (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). As we focus on the positive, we are more likely to be happy and make friends and we are better prepared to experience leisure. Surrounding ourselves with people who are upbeat and optimistic further contributes to our ability to be positive. According to Fredrickson (2009, p. 6),

... *positivity* includes the positive meaning and optimistic attitudes that trigger positive emotions as well as open minds, tender hearts, relaxed limbs, and soft faces they usher in. It even includes the long-term impact that positive emotions have on your character, relationships, communities, and environment.

Through her research, Fredrickson discovered that the sense of oneness we feel with others who are close as a result of being positive extends beyond loved ones; positivity moves people closer to all humanity. As a sense of closeness with others is achieved the likelihood of demonstrating respectful actions that help to instill in others a sense of dignity is increased. Demonstrating respectful actions also increases the likelihood that people cultivate positive relationships and having these positive relationships creates opportunities for leisure, happiness, and our ability to flourish.

Components of Leisure Education

Although leisure education is defined in many ways, in the context of this paper and the leisure education service model presented herein, the term *leisure education* describes a multifaceted, dynamic process that promotes *exploration of opportunities*. This approach to leisure education is intended to support development of an *ethic* of positivity and savoring that is conducive to leisure, flow, and arousal. Also, leisure education is designed to evoke *self-awareness*, promote acquisition of *leisure-related knowledge*, and encourage *skill development*. Leisure education is offered to enhance self-determination by assisting individuals to meet needs for autonomy, competence, and social connection. As we become self-determined we are intrinsically motivated to *manage challenges* and experience meaningful and enjoyable leisure, achieve happiness, and cultivate the ability to flourish. These components of leisure education are located in the third circle out from the center of Figure 1. As further indicated by the arrows on the figure, these components are developed to apply the principles of leisure education that ultimately contribute to

a person experiencing leisure, becoming happy, and flourishing. The content components suggested via the leisure education model depicted in Figure 1 include (a) developing a leisure ethic, (b) becoming self-aware in leisure, (c) exploring opportunities for leisure, (d) acquiring knowledge and (e) skills that facilitate leisure engagement, and (f) managing challenges to leisure. These components are highly related and are not mutually exclusive. For example, skills that promote making choices often influence one's ability to make effective decisions, and social interactions require continuous decisions. Learning in these areas assists us in developing leisure attitudes, knowledge, and skills that are matched with suitably challenging opportunities; such experiences facilitate a sense of competence, autonomy, and interrelatedness. It is hoped that as these needs are met, we are more likely to experience leisure, be happy, and flourish.

For many of us, *developing an ethic* that involves an appreciation of leisure and its potential contribution to the quality of our lives is useful when attempting to understand the value of enhancing one's leisure. Embracing the ideas of savoring and positivity further contributes to an ethic that is favorable for leisure engagement. Exploring different opportunities expands the context for understanding leisure. Unfortunately, many people do not appreciate the value of leisure in creating a meaningful life (Hood & Carruthers, 2013). To help cultivate a sense of appreciation and an ethic that places value on leisure, participants are encouraged to understand leisure, consider effects of leisure participation, and realize the flexibility of leisure.

Becoming self-aware prepares us to manage challenges and solve problems; a lack of such awareness creates major life problems (Brevers et al., 2013). When

such self-examination and self-knowledge is accurate, we tend to make more effective leisure choices and decisions. An important aspect of developing meaningful leisure engagement is to become self-aware (Shannon & Shaw, 2005). Awareness of self in leisure is enhanced through teaching participants to be aware of their preferences, reflect on past participation, examine current involvement, envision future experiences, develop realistic perceptions of skills, examine attitudes and values, and determine satisfaction.

Exploring opportunities for leisure is an important step in setting the stage for leisure. Failure to engage in meaningful leisure activities may be the result of a lack of awareness of leisure resources and/or the inability to use them. While leisure resources may be available, not knowing how to access these resources creates barriers to leisure involvement (Chang, Yu, & Jeng, 2014). To encourage people who desire to make decisions about their leisure, it may be helpful to have them (a) identify contexts conducive to leisure; (b) recognize people who could serve as resources; (c) locate facilities providing recreation activities; (d) understand participation requirements; (e) identify applicable materials, equipment, and apparel; and (f) obtain answers to relevant questions.

To both *acquire knowledge and gain skills* that specifically relate to leisure engagement is an important aspect of leisure involvement. As further described in the next several paragraphs, some of the knowledge and skills that are especially valuable when engaging in leisure include those associated with (a) making choices, (b) social interactions, (c) making decisions, and (d) recreation activities.

To *make a choice* we must perceive that we have the freedom to make choices and the ability to initiate chosen activities (Rose, Geers, Fowler, & Rasinski,

2013). The likelihood of becoming self-determined is enhanced when we create and engage in environments that are option-rich, responsive, and informative. Some important instructional considerations associated with creating a context conducive for making choices include teaching people to indicate preferences, actually make choices, take responsibility for those choices, practice, initiate and terminate involvement, be assertive, and experience competence.

Leisure education programs assist participants in developing *social skills* that facilitate engagement in groups and the community. Although we may experience different problems that prevent us from flourishing, challenges to meaningful and fulfilling social relationships are particularly detrimental to leisure engagement. A lack of understanding and inability to demonstrate social skills are acutely noticeable during leisure participation and lead to isolation and loneliness; therefore, social skills interventions are important to consider (Goldstein, Lackey, & Schneider, 2014). Helping participants learn social skills is valuable because people who have leisure interests that are shared with others are more likely to be included in meaningful ways in social settings and develop a sense of relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2014). An understanding of expectations associated with social interactions and related skills are relevant to continuing and sustaining leisure participation in different activities. Therefore, the following areas of social interaction provide a focus of leisure education programs: communicate with others, understand social rules, solve interaction problems, and develop friendships.

Strongly tied to developing a sense of self-determination is acquisition of skills used to *make decisions*. To be self-determined involves the ability to decide among a range of options and to have

control over choices and decisions that impact everyday life (Wehmeyer, 2014). Given challenges many people encounter related to experiencing meaningful and enjoyable leisure, assisting them in making appropriate decisions regarding leisure participation is an important aspect of leisure education. An intended benefit of leisure participation is an increase in personal effectiveness that results from making timely and effective decisions. To address the topic of promoting the development of effective skills to make decisions, leisure educators may want to collaborate with participants to facilitate making decisions, setting goals, and solving problems associated with leisure engagement.

An important aspect of many leisure education programs is development of participants' abilities to choose and successfully engage in *recreation activities* of sufficient depth and variety to experience satisfaction and enjoyment. Since choice is a critical aspect of leisure participation and choice involves options, then an array of recreation activities and opportunities should exist from which we choose to experience meaningful leisure (Hutchinson, Bland, & Kleiber, 2008). Leisure educators work with participants to select and develop recreation activity skills that have strong potential for providing enjoyment and satisfaction (Lee & Scott, 2013). Individual needs, interests, motivations, and aspirations determine selection of recreation activity skills. Recreation activity skill development provides physical and emotional support assisting participants in overcoming fears of the unknown and failure. Reduction of fears associated with leisure participation stimulates interest and motivation to actively pursue leisure, experience happiness, and flourish.

Another facet of successful leisure engagement is working to *manage challenges* we experience associated with our

leisure engagement by creating a balance between setting goals and stretching to reach our potential and developing a realistic perception of skills. Evaluating how our skills match the requirements of specific activities is an important aspect of successful engagement. It is helpful when considering competencies that we recognize the skills we possess as well as those skills yet to be learned. Also, as constraints to leisure are understood we are better able to accept and address these constraints as well as develop skills that may enhance leisure engagement (Headley & Payne, 2014). When participants gain an understanding of their preferences and abilities, leisure educators work collaboratively with them, their families, friends, and communities to establish realistic ways to experience leisure. Unrealistic perceptions of competencies lead to disappointment and failure if demands of an activity greatly exceed actual skills. Conversely, unrealistic perceptions discourage participation in activities that could, in fact, be mastered and in which success could be experienced. Therefore, it is incumbent on leisure educators to work collaboratively with participants, families, friends, and their entire communities to assist participants in acquiring knowledge and skills that are helpful in experiencing leisure in a variety of contexts, settings, and situations (Hutchinson & Robertson, 2012).

A Systematic Approach to Leisure Education

To increase the likelihood that leisure education services will be systematic, we consider the *process* (how programs are structured, delivered, and evaluated) that involves a systems approach accompanied by teaching and processing techniques as well as the *content* (what information is presented and skills taught)

including content areas in conjunction with cultural and ability considerations. These considerations are depicted in the outer circle of Figure 1. Programmatic decisions are influenced by the entire system in which we exist including those individuals who influence, support, and guide us, such as family members, educators, leisure service providers, neighbors, friends, and merchants (Hutchinson & Robertson, 2012). Arrows pointing inward continue to be included in this portion of the figure to reinforce the notion that designing the content and process of leisure education services assists participants in learning the components of leisure education.

Leisure Education Process

An important aspect of developing the process of leisure education is incorporating a *systems approach*. Therefore, it is helpful when providing leisure education to clearly delineate a purpose to guide service delivery. Based on a purpose statement, goals are generated that further specify the intent of the services. After a statement of purpose and several goals have been established, specific programs are developed that make the goals operational. A specific program is identified as a systemically developed set of learning activities and corresponding processes (Stumbo & Peterson, 2009). These activities and processes are designed to promote achievements by particular participants. A specific program is implemented and evaluated independent of other specific programs and often includes delineation of goals in the form of enabling objectives and performance measures. When considering leisure education learning activities, it is useful to provide details relative to the content of the material to be presented and the process by which the content will be delivered.

There are many valuable *teaching techniques* that assist instructors in developing and implementing effective programs. When delivering leisure education programs there is merit in engaging in systematic preparation and planning of leisure education sessions as well as effective service delivery. Determining the appropriateness of leisure education sessions, the environment, and having knowledge of the program are important elements in preparation and planning of a leisure education session. When conducting education sessions it is helpful to provide a clear introduction and explanations, effectively implement sessions, use prompting strategies as needed to promote skill acquisition, and bring closure to sessions.

Processing techniques are designed to assist people in describing, reflecting on, analyzing, and communicating about experiences to help them transfer what they have learned in an activity-based experience to other life contexts such as home, community, or school. Therefore, processing involves not only attending to the immediacies of the experience but also relating aspects of the experience to future issues (Priest & Gass, 2005). Since the value of a leisure education program is often evaluated on how learning experienced during an activity will serve the participant in the future, processing becomes a valuable tool to assist in this transformation. Although processing often involves some form of dialogue or discussion with groups, it occurs through activities such as reflective writing, expressive art projects, or dramatic presentations. Questions and activities designed to facilitate processing are intended to transform attention from a general awareness of behaviors, feelings, or thoughts, to acknowledging self-responsibility, making choices, and

then applying these choices to other life contexts.

Leisure Education Content

An important aspect of developing a person-centered approach to leisure education is, whenever possible, to work together with the individual, the person's family and friends, and consider their community to select meaningful leisure education *content areas*. The content areas include those components of leisure education described in the previous section of the paper labeled "components of leisure education" that include becoming self-aware, exploring opportunities, developing an ethic, acquiring knowledge, gaining skills and managing challenges. Leisure educators provide services tailored to meet the needs of each participant.

Delivering leisure education services is challenging given that people living in diverse situations within our communities consider different elements of an experience to be important. As a result, developing and implementing leisure education requires *careful consideration of cultural factors and contexts* (Trilla, Ayuste, & Agud, 2014). Various perspectives exist and are important to consider when we try to meet the needs of participants. When providing leisure education it is helpful to think about the values and preferences of people we serve and to listen closely to what they say. It also is useful to remember that it is unlikely that we will ever interact with a person who shares the precise set of values and worldview as any other person, including ourselves. These differences provide us with an opportunity to simultaneously celebrate the uniqueness of each individual, learn from one another, and improve services. When we reflect on the many perspectives that are held by individuals across the world, as suggested by Sivan and Stebbins (2013)

and others, we recognize that our perspective on any issue is limited. Leisure educators are encouraged to develop multicultural competence to effectively serve people from diverse backgrounds (Dieser, 2013) so that they move beyond their individual perspectives and expand service delivery to include individuals whose perspectives and characteristics may be different than those possessed by service providers.

The intent of systematic and balanced leisure education is to work together with participants to design and implement programs that help individuals of all abilities participate in programs together. Leisure educators are encouraged to *consider participant abilities* and then achieve a balance between adjusting the programs to be inclusive (Hutchinson & Warner, 2014) and educating participants so they develop awareness, knowledge, and skills that facilitate leisure engagement. Focusing on abilities and expanding upon those abilities is consistent with recent approaches to TR assessment and service delivery that emphasize participant strengths, capabilities, and aspirations (Anderson & Heyne, 2012b; 2013; Carruthers & Hood, 2007). A general guideline designed to help make adjustments intended to facilitate active leisure participation is to work together with participants to focus on the person first by individualizing adaptations, concentrating on their abilities, and matching challenges to their skills. In addition, autonomy is encouraged by facilitating independence, determining the necessity of adaptations, and viewing any adaptation as being transitional. It is critical that leisure educators view their role as collaborators with participants throughout the entire process including times when adaptations are needed by discussing the adaptations with participants, determining feasibility of adaptations, and ensur-

ing that all adaptations promote safety. Since participant skills and environmental situations often change, it is useful for instructors to evaluate adaptations by conducting ongoing observations and making adjustments based on participant feedback and observations.

A Balanced Approach To Leisure Education

Leisure education occurs in a variety of ways. As described in the previous section, one strategy is to develop programs specifically intended to empower people to experience leisure and happiness, and to ultimately flourish. Since leisure contexts provide opportunities for people to acquire information, develop ideas, and construct new visions for themselves and society (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004), another way to deliver leisure education is to infuse it throughout all services to set the stage for leisure, enhance happiness, and encourage flourishing. A collection of ideas to be introduced within any program is presented in this section of the paper and depicted in the concepts surrounding the base of the scale in Figure 1. The wording associated with the concepts to be balanced are placed at the base of the scale at the bottom of the figure to illustrate that while there are valuable contributions to providing specific leisure education services there are also considerations that are easily incorporated into all aspects of leisure service delivery.

Overall, a balanced approach to life tends to result in positive outcomes. Similarly, a balanced approach to leisure education is helpful in leading us toward the leisure experience, happiness, and flourishing. Ancient philosophies from both eastern and western cultures support such a balanced method. For example, the Chinese philosophy of *yin and yang* emphasizes that working to achieve a bal-

ance of sometimes opposing yet complementary forces results in experiences that are precious. Similarly, Aristotle posits that true happiness comes from virtue, which is achieved by the pursuit of the *doctrine of the mean* that occurs by evading both excess and deficiency. To follow the doctrine of the mean, we must use both restraint and learning to experience leisure, become happy, and flourish.

To achieve a balance associated with one's *pursuits* between developing a leisure *repertoire* and focusing on *core leisure pursuits*, leisure educators work with participants to identify those skills that they want to learn that expand their ability to engage in a range of activities and those skills that have the strong potential for increasing their quality of life. Working closely with participants to identify those experiences that could occur often, on a regular basis, increases the likelihood that educators provide relevant leisure services that are used immediately and consistently. Also, inclusion of a broad range of experiences expands opportunities for any of us to encounter a variety of leisure experiences (Lundstrom, Lilja, Petersson, Lexell, & Isaksson, 2014).

There are many benefits of engaging in *leisure* casually that contribute to a thoughtful and relaxed approach to life (Kleiber, 2012; Kleiber & Linde, 2014). Also, there are a variety of positive results that occur based on leisure engagement that is more serious (Cohen-Gewerc & Stebbins, 2013; Stebbins, 2005; 2007) and requires a commitment of effort and skill development that is reflective of grit (Seligman, 2011). Leisure educators who consider the range of available opportunities and the desires of participants will tend to promote a balanced approach to service delivery that provides opportunities for both *serious* and *casual leisure pursuits*.

Achieving a balance between *giving* and *receiving* assistance creates a condition of *reciprocity* that is conducive to leisure, happiness, and flourishing. It is as helpful and meaningful for people to provide assistance to others, as it is to receive assistance; the perception of shared usefulness contributes to the ability to sustain relationships and fulfill a need for long-term intimacy (Greenberg, Rosenblum, McOnnis & Muzik, 2014; Greenberg, Motenko, Roesch & Embleton, 2000). An important way to develop relationships is to achieve a balance between giving and taking, especially associated with giving gifts, doing favors, providing attention, and disclosing thoughts (Haidt, 2006).

At times, we focus on what it is that we do not have, or difficulties and barriers we encounter. When we do this, we often are not in a frame of mind to experience leisure and happiness; we do not flourish. As we begin to notice the *blessings* (Spangle, 2001) we have we are more likely to experience leisure; consequently it is helpful to achieve a balance between *noticing* and *creating* blessings. Fredrickson (2009) brings attention to the two sides of kindness identifying that when we count our blessings, we often appreciate the kindness of others and that engenders our sense of gratitude as we notice our blessings; however, it is valuable to recognize the other side of kindness, our side that involves initiating kind acts toward others. The combination of noticing and creating blessings or acts of kindness is one way to heighten our positivity. There is merit in leisure educators developing contexts that focus our attention on blessings or acts of kindness we receive and encourages us to create acts of kindness or blessings that we bestow on others.

A major issue in many cultures is achieving a balance between the *experi-*

ences of pleasure and enjoyment. We pursue immediate gratification associated with pleasure (Biswas-Diener et al., 2014) and we invest our energy by focusing our attention so that we experience enjoyment (Ainley & Hidi, 2014). A challenge arises in achieving a balance between these two drives so that we find pleasure in the moment and also experience enjoyment and flow associated with focused involvement.

Conclusion

Because leisure involves feelings of autonomy, a sense of competence associated with active engagement, and connections with others who are valued, there is merit in TR specialists creating a supportive context that fosters a sense of self-determination within leisure. As practitioners consider the connection between leisure, healthy lifestyles, and functional outcomes it is useful to provide leisure education that facilitates physically and mentally active leisure engagement that can be pursued in a casual or serious manner. Leisure education programs that focus on the individual and the environment may assist TR practitioners in addressing challenges to participants' leisure and general functioning. Once these challenges to leisure and functioning are addressed, individuals, regardless of illness, disability, or other restricting conditions, are situated to experience flow, optimal arousal, and social connectedness.

One way to offer leisure education that is described in this paper is to provide a balanced and systematic approach to facilitating leisure participation. Offering leisure education services creates opportunities for individuals, regardless of severity of their limitations, to engage in various meaningful and enjoyable recreation activities. As these opportunities

are created for participants, TR specialists help individuals generate leisure options and choices. If participants feel as if they have the freedom and opportunity to engage in recreation activities of their choosing, they are likely to experience a sense of empowerment. Such empowerment is an important therapeutic goal that is present across settings in which TR services are delivered.

The ability to develop functional skills through leisure is important for individuals receiving TR services. Unfortunately, for many people the experience of active leisure involvement is often overshadowed by the amount of time spent involved in passive activities such as watching television or videos. By implementing the concepts of the leisure education model presented in this paper, TR practitioners are positioned to encourage people with disabilities, who are ill, or possess other characteristics that create challenges to their overall quality of life to take charge of their lives and learn to experience leisure, achieve happiness, and flourish.

The leisure education services described here are designed to encourage participants to learn from challenges in their lives and avoid being passive individuals who are disempowered and helpless. There is growing recognition of the value of leisure in all societies and the importance of leisure education. Although leisure education has been identified as a way to help people improve their lives, it remains an underutilized tool. Throughout this paper examples of leisure education content and processes based on principles of positive psychology are presented to encourage TR specialists to develop a balanced and systematic approach when providing leisure education.

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