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The Role of Occupational Therapy for Homeless Women and Women At-Risk of Homelessness

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The Role of Occupational Therapy for Homeless Women and Women At-Risk of Homelessness

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BACKGROUND

In 2019, 151, 278 individuals were homeless in California (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). Additionally, 40% of homeless adults are women, indicating that there is an even larger population of women who are at-risk of homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). Although more occupational therapists are beginning to work with this population, there is still an insufficient amount of clinicians to meet the needs of resource centers (Gammon, 2019).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This capstone project sought to assess the occupational needs and barriers of women at-risk of homelessness at the Community Mission of Hope, a resource center in Temecula, CA. There is a gap in the literature for demonstrating the role occupational therapist can fulfill for providing interventions for individuals at-risk of homelessness.

OBJECTIVES

- Administer interviews for research study
- Assess the strengths and limitations of current programming at CMOH through observations and needs assessment
- Initiating program development at CMOH
- Identify and contact schools and resource centers in communities surrounding Riverside and San Diego

PROCESS

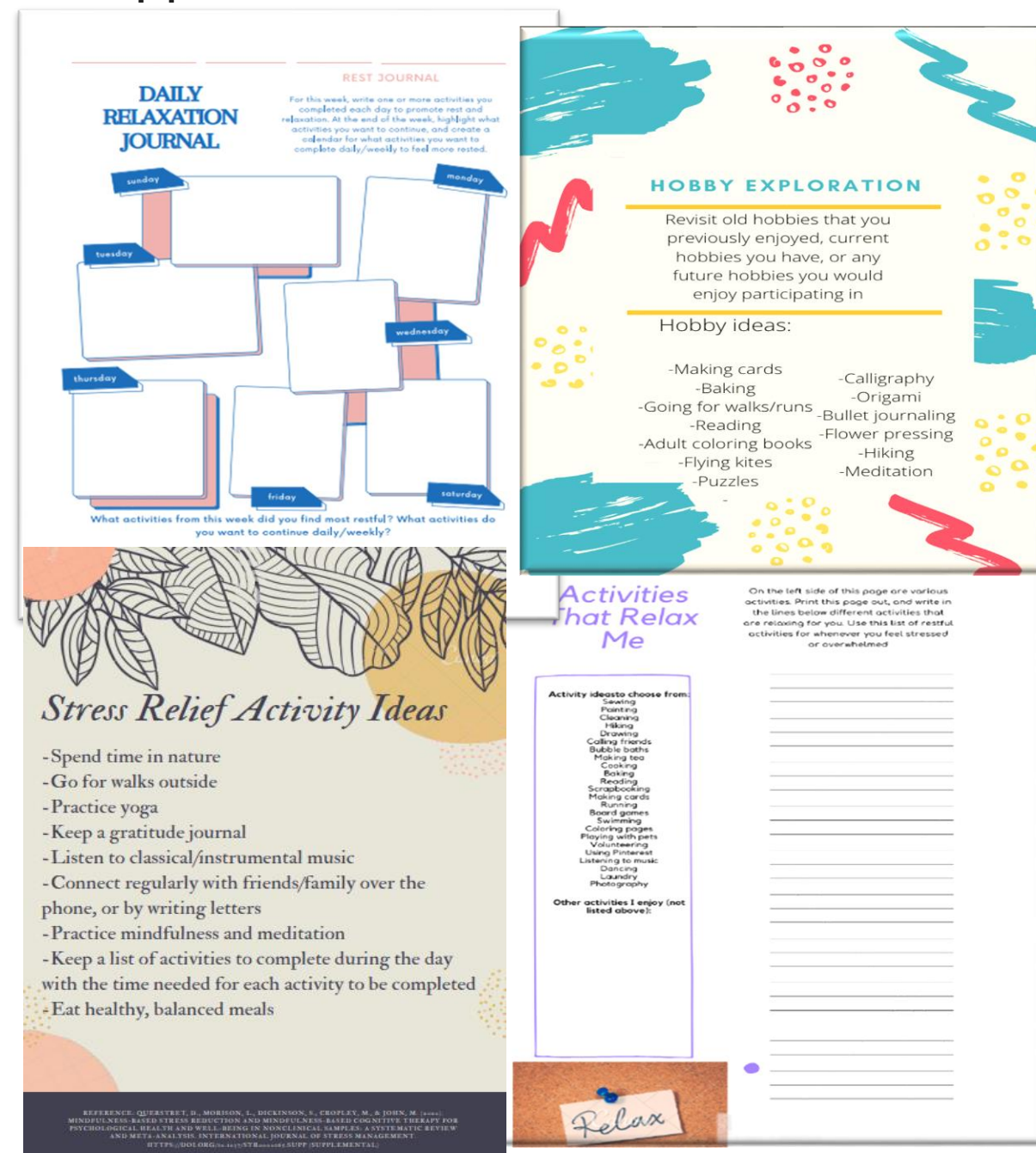
A needs assessment and research study were performed to identify the occupational needs and barriers of women at-risk of homelessness and establish site needs.

The needs assessment explored the specific needs that clients at CMOH have related to programming at this facility.

The research study sought to explore themes that can be inferred about the occupational barriers and needs of women at-risk of homelessness and to understand participants' own life experiences and stories.

Questions for the study included some of the following:

- What life roles do you feel successful in? (such as being a mother, employee, friend, etc.)? Are there any roles you experience stress or difficulty with?
- What meaningful activities are you currently unable to participate in?
- What daily factors contribute to your happiness and overall health?



RESULTS

| Theme from Study | Quote |
|---|---|
| Concern about safety and meaningfulness with employment | "I'm terrified of going back to work." "I hopefully will find a good job soon, something that's a good job, not something horrible." |
| Financial restrictions impacting leisure | "Whether I need to budget \$10 for gas, \$15 for brunch, so I've limited the amount of times I've played tennis on top of the other activities I used to do." |
| Disparity between desire/need for social roles and limited occupational roles | "Both my brother and sister died, my father died, my mother's alive, but I don't really have no support system right now." |
| Decreased motivation for self-care | "What I find is that when I work, I look better, and I map everything else out because I only have so much time to do things, and it takes me a lot longer." |

DISCUSSION

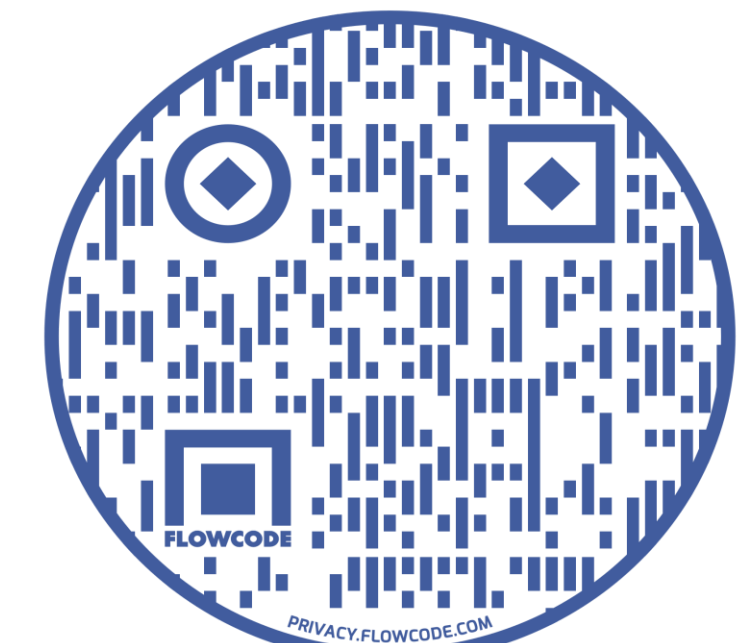
The research and needs assessment delivered to CMOH have demonstrated that occupational therapy would be a beneficial service for this site. Although the office is temporarily operating at half-capacity for CMOH due to COVID-19, program development has been initiated for allowing Level II students from the University of St. Augustine complete fieldwork at this site in the future.



CMOH 10 Year Anniversary Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

IMPACT ON OT

- Fieldwork manual for future FW students created
- Flyers and interactive worksheets created and sent to CMOH clients, including topics of leisure exploration, stress management, and sleep hygiene (featured on the left)
- Interventions focused on role transitions, community reintegration, and leisure exploration will be occupations that future fieldwork students and practitioners can provide for this population based on present research and previous literature.



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