



Information about  
the **CO-OP** approach



**C**ognitive **O**rientation to daily

**O**ccupational **P**erformance

Heerlen, 2013

In contact with therapists, parents, partners and others playing an important part in the lives of clients it became clear that there was a need for an information booklet explaining the CO-OP approach. This booklet has been compiled by Jolien van den Houten and Rianne Jansens, members of the CO-OP academy.

The information presented is based on:

- CO-OP academy meeting Toronto 2011
- Helene Polatajko & Angela Mandich: Enabling occupation in children. The Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) approach. 2004

This booklet is in its entirety free for use by therapists providing the CO-OP approach.



The global strategy of CO-OP **goal-plan-do-check** is to provide supports to perform an activity, reminds you to check if the activity is carried out correctly and if the plan worked well.

As a parent, partner, teacher, sports instructor, family member, friend or person otherwise connected to the client, you are involved in the well-being of a child or adult receiving treatment with the CO-OP approach. This approach requires a certain degree of understanding and is dependent on the support of the people surrounding the client.

### **The aim of this booklet**

The occupational therapist, physiotherapist and rehab team providing the therapy aim to inform you as to what CO-OP stands for, the shape it takes and what kind of support it can give at home, in school, at work or elsewhere. This information is aimed at stimulating you to help the child or adult to apply these support strategies in everyday life.

### **Check**

Is this information clear? Does it contain relevant information and answer all your questions? As we would like to check if our plan for this booklet worked well, please inform the therapist regarding your experience, or, alternatively, the writers of this booklet.

Daily activities,  
a chain of all kind of  
“occupational  
performances”.



### **Occupational performance and cognition**

The day starts with turning off the alarm clock, getting showered and dressed, eating breakfast, going to school or work, using the pc or writing notes and continuous social activities in the playground or during breaks, going out for music lessons or the gym,...etc.

These activities are not easily performed by everyone. Motor skill problems, lack of concentration and social skills, difficulty planning and overseeing tasks can limit the successful completion of these tasks.



Thinking about (cognitive orientation) what you would like to achieve, setting up a plan for your goal, carrying out this plan and checking if the plan worked for your activity, support occupational performance.

## CO-OP

The Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) is an approach developed in Canada, supported by evidence and applied worldwide with different clients. Is a client centred performance based approach for people with problems with daily activities. CO-OP is based on theories of motor learning, cognitive behaviouristic theories, learning and problem solving theories. The child or adult learns to find his own solutions (cognitive strategies) to perform the skills he wants to acquire or to improve. The client will improve his motor skills, has improved planning capacities and becomes adept at using strategies which can be applied in varying situations. This enables the person to use cognitive strategies whilst performing the activity in another context as well as coming up with strategies to perform a new activity. This transfer to other daily tasks contributes to the participation at home, in school, work or at leisure clubs.



### CO-OP aims

- Acquire new skills or improving the quality of a current activity
- Become a strategy user
- Apply the learned in daily activities

Research publications about the application of CO-OP in children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), Cerebral Palsy (CP), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Acquired Brain Injury or stroke with adults show that participants could acquire new activities or could perform current occupational performances with greater satisfaction.



Cognitive orientation, much practise and feedback are essential to acquire new skills.

## CO-OP and motor learning

Acquisition of new skills is part of every phase of life. Because most of our activities have motor-based elements, motor learning is essential. The motor learning process can be divided into three phases: 1) Cognitive orientation to the new skill, 2) Incorporating feedback (from own body or environmental factors) and practising, 3) The skill becomes fluent. The CO-OP therapist supports the client in all phases of motor learning. Varying exercises in different situations, with different materials contribute to the learning process.

Siem's phase of motor learning regarding cycling (phase 2) is characterised by



Based on Polatajko & Mandich (2004)

## CO-OP as a problem solving approach

When you are required to actively think about a new activity, you develop a better understanding of all the aspects involved and this supports you in finding your own solutions. When you are able to solve personal problems, you gain self-efficacy and competence grows.

The global strategy Goal-Plan-Do-Check of the CO-OP approach is taught by the therapist. Domain specific strategies are unique for each person performing an activity in a certain environment. The therapist uses performance knowledge about the person, task and environment so the child/adults discovers his own strategies/solutions.

Some examples of Domain Specific Strategies:

- body position, e.g., foot on the ground when starting to cycle
- attention to task, e.g., front wheel has to point in the direction I want to travel. I am looking forward
- self instruction during performance e.g., talking to yourself 'turn the handles with the bend'



The **global strategy** provides support to find the right solution. It is an iterative process with four steps:

- 🕒 **Goal:** What do I have/want to do?
- 🕒 **Plan:** How am I going achieve this? I shall make a plan!
- 🕒 **Do:** I do it! I carry out my plan.
- 🕒 **Check:** I check the result and how well my plan worked.

### **Domain specific strategies**

supports the performance of the activity and are individual.

They are invented by the person.

The therapist uses **guided discovery** to support one to think about ones own strategies.

*As, for example, during cycling, Siem discovered that his front wheel had to be pointing in the right direction.*



**Guided discovery** is an approach the therapist learned during CO-OP training. You will be supplied with more information and can learn by observing how the therapist applies it.

More information about CO-OP can be found in the following book, available from your therapist:

**Helene Polatajko & Angela Mandich: Enbaling Occupation in Children. The Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) approach, 2004**

A cognitive strategy is 'a tool' that supports learning, memorising, recalling and problem solving. This may be described as a goal directed cognitive process that enables learning and problem solving behaviour (adapted from Pressley, 1986)

The table below outlines the **CO-OP intervention**. Before starting treatment, there is an in-depth goal setting process. This results in three goals that are meaningful for the child, the adult and you as involved person. These goals are the framework for discovering strategies and the learning process which take place during therapy as well as in all kinds of daily situations.



<b>Pre intervention</b>	Setting three goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diary</li> <li>- Photo interview and/or COPM</li> </ul> Determine baseline of the performance (PQRS) Dynamic Performance Analysis (DPA)
<b>Interventions sessions</b>	Use of cognitive strategies via guided discovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Session 1: Teach Goal-Plan-Do-Check</li> <li>- The following sessions: apply Goal-Plan-Do-Check and use domain specific strategies with own goals</li> </ul>
<b>Homework</b>	Carry out tasks, using what has been learned, at home, in school, at work and during leisure time. (Generalisation and transfer)
<b>Post intervention</b>	Evaluation of the goals (PQRS and COPM)

## Guidance at home, in school, at work, at the sports club

The parent, carer, teacher, partner, sports coach and others closely involved with the client all play an important role in helping the client develop problem solving skills. In supporting the learning process, it is crucial to encourage the person develop his own plan.

**Goal-Plan-Do-Check** can be used in every daily life situation.

Practising activities often and in a variety of ways is necessary to the development of new skills.

The use of Goal-Plan-Do-Check and its own domain specific strategies

Give the person the chance **to discover his/her way of learning**, and to think about problems. Asking questions, demonstrating and verbalising that what you are doing can be helpful. **Make learning fun** by using all kinds of variations and exaggerating. You can also choose a theme day or week.

*Be aware....learning is about 'one thing at a time'. For example, I have to learn to turn my handles in the direction of the curve.*



These goals are key goals in the intervention.



1	
2	
3	

This is really important to us:



With special thanks to:

- The CO-OP academy, an international group of CO-OP researchers and trainers, founded by Prof. dr. H. Polatajko. The mission of this academy is to continue scientific research about the effectiveness of CO-OP. It also aims to disseminate knowledge about CO-OP, and to facilitate its use in clinical practice.
- Prof. dr. Helene Polatajko and Ass. Prof. Dr. Angela Mandich cofounded CO-OP based on theories and research data.
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