

Your First...experience of an initial assessment.

Rose speaks to Sophia, a newly qualified occupational therapist, about her first experience of an initial assessment.

Have a comment on the show? Please email us at yourfirstofeverythingpodcast@gmail.com

Presented by: Rose James
Produced by: Ben Capper

Your First of Everything is a Production of Grey Fox Communications and Marketing Ltd, in partnership with the University of Chester and Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

Rose [01:00:01]

Welcome back to another episode of your First of Everything. Today I am joined by Sophia, who is an occupational therapist who has literally just qualified. So, Sophia, you're going to talk to me about your first experience of an initial assessment. But before we get into that, can you explain to me what initial assessment is? What does it look like?

Sophia [01:00:24]

Okay. So well, when you first get told that you've got to do an initial assessment, there are handouts and things so you can follow them. But basically an initial is from an art perspective, it's finding out everything about that person and their background, their current abilities and also their cognition. So you there's something called A66. So you would do that. This is from the basis of an acute hospital setting. And you could also check the baseline of mobility. And it's basically just getting a really big picture of this person and finding out who they are, what they love, what they like to do, and now sort of what they struggle with. And so it's a really nice way to get to know that person. But it's different for each setting and the questions will be different for each setting as well, right? Yeah. Okay.

Rose [01:01:20]

So from from that perspective then, when you did your very first initial assessment, what was that like? That must have been nerve wracking.

Sophia [01:01:29]

I was so nervous in my first placement was in A&E and I thought, how do you get a note in A&E and what does that look like? And it was I observe my educator for maybe 2 or 3 times because that's how I work best. I work best with observing. And and then she was like, okay, you just go and do it. And I thought, I can't do this. I was so nervous. I felt like I was on stage in front of like thousands of people when there was just one person staring at me. And I had the handout. And I think you want to get it perfect and you don't want to make mistakes and you don't know like what your style of communication is yet. And but this this person is just staring at you, waiting

to speak to you, and you're thinking, I've got to get it right. And and I remember being really nervous. And then as soon as you did the first one, it was a bit like, okay, it wasn't horrendous, but there's a lot of improvement. So and no one knew that that was just inside you. And so, yeah, I remember Anna had a lack of confidence as well because I was like, I've never done anything like this before and there wasn't really much practice. And so, yeah, I remember the first time doing that and being like, Oh gosh, how am I going to like, feel okay? Yeah, doing this and like confident. And then my educator was like, just if you do it ten times a day plus it just rolls off your tongue. Yeah. So I had to kind of believe that.

Rose [01:03:00]

Of course, and I really resonate with that as well. From a registered nurse point of view, when we do our initial assessments, a lot of the time that it is that internal monologue of I need to do this right, get it perfect, know exactly what I'm doing. But actually the patient doesn't know if you've messed up a little bit, you know, it's a learning curve for you as well. So then, you know, next time, Oh, I didn't say this, I need to remember that. And it is that practice. You said that you never had that kind of experience before. What did you do then before occupational therapy and what made you decide you wanted to go into this career?

Sophia [01:03:35]

I actually did another degree in English language, so I'd always had a background of the arts. So this is something completely different for me. No one in my family has ever done it before, so it's not like I had like inspiration from them and it was actually just a change of heart, I think. And when I read about Oti, I thought, this is me down, down to a T, Like it's positive, it's advocating, it's empowering. And I thought it's flexible. There's a lot of change involved as different environments, settings, different patients. And I thought, Yeah, that's me. And when I did it, I just thought, it just feels right. So yeah, I didn't look back.

Rose [01:04:15]

So what was that moment that you actually went, This is it? Was there a specific moment that you can think of.

Sophia [01:04:23]

I guess maybe on placement when you stood there and you're given the responsibility and you're not sort of in the shadow of your educator and you're thinking, this is on me now, but I'm smiling still and and like, you help a patient. And there was one patient that I remember and severe learning difficulties and. They didn't want to get out of bed. And I remember they loved music and dancing. And I so I wrote them a letter and I was like, if you ever feel like you want to dance or sing, like, just let me know. And he did. And we danced for about an hour. And then he was like, I feel amazing. I feel on top of the world now. And I was like, It's that the tiniest of things that you don't even think would help do. And I remember thinking, I love this. Yeah, like this is it. Yeah.

Rose [01:05:16]

That that sounds lovely that you've been able to change somebody's life in that way as well, you know, even if it is for that hour of that day, you've massively impacted. And I think that that, that really resonates with, I think health care, you know, as a as

a whole, really the health care sector, we all strive to make that difference. And I think you've certainly made that difference for that that patient there. And is there any advice that you'd give to anybody that's thinking about coming into occupational therapy?

Sophia [01:05:47]

Yeah, I think. It's harder than you think because it is a complex, very fluid job that doesn't really. No one kind of knows what it is, but actually it's probably the most rewarding in the sense that it looks at everything else that gets maybe ignored by other professions. And I think you've got a chance to make someone really happy to change their life post, say like acute or whatever. And I think, I, I have a very deep passion for it. And I would say to anyone, just give it a go, read about it, look at it, you know, and because it is every aspect of your life that I know t can be in and it's very varied. So if you like variation, that's really good. And. And it's also complex. It's a lot more complex than you think. And I liked that it was duly trained in mental health and physical health. Yeah, that was a big selling point for me. So good.

Rose [01:06:53]

Going forward, what are your future aspirations? Where do you want to go with this? Wow, that is a.

Sophia [01:07:01]

Big question because I have a lot of ideas and I think in terms of new environments, I'm really passionate about working with new mums and mental health and their occupations because their lives change and there's not really that support there for them in OT. So that's got a big call in on my heart, but my main interest is mental health really, and that's something that I research about a lot and have always had a passion for. So it could be something in that. But then alternatively, if you gave me a job in acute stroke or neuro, I'd take it tomorrow. It literally differs. So just something where you can get your teeth into and maybe more of the rehab aspects where you really get to do therapy.

Rose [01:07:49]

Yeah, I think that's a really interesting point of view as well, is that, you know, new mums and their careers following that, I think there is a massive stigma attached to once you've had a baby, that's it. Yeah. And actually that's not the case. You know, we're 21st century moving forward. We need to improve that really and allow mums to have that opportunity of actually, you know, I can have a career and have a child as well. Yeah. so I think that sounds fantastic in everything that you want to do from a student perspective, is there any advice that you'd give to an OT student for their very first initial assessment?

Sophia [01:08:28]

Absolutely. I would get to know your learning style and because I was very open about mine with my educators and I would tell them, you know, I would like to observe for a little bit see how you do it. I see how you ask things, see how you interact, and that gives me sort of like a platform to like go from and then I would like practice at home maybe, and, you know, ask the questions to my mum or something or just something like that. And then don't think about it. Just just go in and do it. And you've got the paper in front of you if you need it. And like we said before, they have

not a clue what you're meant to be asking them. So if you make a mistake, if you forget a question, I remember my educator always said they're literally still going to be there. So if you forget a question, go back and ask them. And I remember thinking, okay, that's so true. And and yet just go for it because it's something that you actually do all day, every day. So it's something that you will become literally second nature.

Rose [01:09:25]

So looking back on that experience, is there anything that you would have done differently?

Sophia [01:09:31]

I think I would have. I would have liked my educator to, you know. I think if the educator was a recent educator, then it makes it a bit more relatable. And but it's hard trying to relate to someone who's been qualified for so long. And it's have you got that truth and that real, experience? And I think, going back, I would have loved to have spoken to an older student and someone who has experienced it and been there and lived it and they just be really honest and truthful and maybe like, do some practices with you. And I think that would have been so beneficial for us and we just would have been less nervous. It would have broke a lot of barriers, I think.

Rose [01:10:21]

And is there anything that you can think of to be put in place for students experiencing that for the first time, that initial assessment?

Sophia [01:10:30]

I think the connection between third year and first years needs to be stronger. because they're such a useful tool because. They've got the knowledge, they've been there, but also they're just a student at the end of the day and they're still experiencing their firsts. And those conversations need to be there. But then also maybe like qualified people going back to talk, you know, having those relationships still with the uni and and just being open and honest so that the first years have got the confidence to go in and do it. Yeah.

Rose [01:11:06]

That way they can relate can't they. Because it's like, well you haven't qualified all that long ago or actually you're still a student and you can remember what it was like being a first year. And that's where I think in the health and social care environment there is that unspoken rule of you can't talk about these experiences. Well, nobody says that you can't, but actually it's just there as that unspoken side and you want to be able to relate to one another. And that's why through this podcast we've wanted to speak to people with those first experiences so that anybody who is listening can relate to that and feel that actually they're not alone. Thank you for sharing that advice. I'm sure the listeners will absolutely love that as well. Is there anything else that you would like to add? Anything you'd like to say to any student?

Sophia [01:11:55]

I think keep going when it is difficult and you sort of people ask you all the time, what is occupational therapy? And sometimes you can't answer it yourself and you might maybe lose your your way. Just remember why you did it and the the passion you

have behind it. And, you know, not everything has to be set out in front of you. Each placement is different. Your skills are just constantly changing and just roll with that and, and like take it all in like a sponge, and just have confidence in yourself because your confidence will grow by third year. I can guarantee you that.

Rose [01:12:32]

Thank you so much for that advice. Thank you for coming today and talking to us, and I wish you all the best.

Sophia [01:12:38]

Thank you so, so much.

Rose [01:12:38]

I've loved it. Thank you. You're welcome. Thank you for listening to your first of everything. If you enjoyed this episode, don't forget to subscribe and leave us a review wherever you get your podcasts from.