

Personal Transformation Reflection I Paper

Sydney Hess

Department of Occupational Therapy, Sacred Heart University

OT-525-B: Personal Transformation I

Dr Sheelagh M. Schlegel, DrHSc, MPH, OTR/L

December 14, 2025

The first semester of the Occupational Therapy (OT) graduate program at Sacred Heart University was transformative for me. By engaging in self-assessment, self-reflection, and goal-setting with five classmates in OT525, I began developing the essential skills required for professional growth. This course not only emphasized the importance of these elements but also encouraged me to move beyond basic task completion, fostering intentional self-reflection and meaningful development. The experiences I gained during this semester established a strong foundation for lifelong learning, professional advancement, and effective occupational therapy practice. In this paper, I will synthesize my self-assessment and goal development, highlighting the coursework that contributed to my personal growth.

The most eye-opening self-assessment I completed in OT525 class was the Occupational Balance Reflection. By examining my Wellness Wheel and Barth Time Construction sheets, I recognized that I struggle to maintain a healthy balance among my occupations, prioritizing my schoolwork and athletic commitments while spending minimal time on social activities and leisure (Wylie, 2022; Barth, 1988). As a result, my goals for the semester included speaking with my parents at least every other day for at least 20 minutes and engaging with friends through leisure activities at least twice a week. I initially set these goals with the intention of achieving them, but quickly realized they were unrealistic when I had many exams or was in the middle of the fall season. As a result, I adjusted my goals to include speaking with my parents for at least 10 minutes three times a week, coloring for at least 30 minutes at least once a week, and participating in at least one leisure activity each week. I applied these adjustments throughout the first semester and learned to prioritize my well-being, which helped me complete my coursework more effectively by reducing burnout. It also contributed to my journey toward becoming an OT

practitioner, as I discovered the importance of balancing daily activities, which directly relates to the experiences of future patients seeking balance.

Another learning activity that contributed to my personal transformation was the Vision 2030 assignment. Through this process, I identified key areas for growth, particularly the importance of fostering an equitable, inclusive professional community within COTAD and of demonstrating OT leadership beyond traditional roles. I wanted to join COTAD from the start of the program, but I hesitated because of my commitments to the Softball Team, coursework, and SOTA. I usually commit only when I can fully invest my time, energy, and effort. Despite my hesitation, I recognized that joining SOTA was necessary. This club enables me to connect with peers and professionals in occupational therapy and to participate in events and service opportunities that support leadership development. During advisement group discussions, I was excited to share the Softball Team's volunteer experiences. This helped identify more opportunities to expand my leadership and service within the program. I am inspired to bring my volunteer ideas to COTAD upon joining in the summer, based on group advising meetings.

Additionally, through group advisement meetings, I learned that I was not the only one struggling to meet deadlines or prioritize my well-being. This realization, reassuring in itself, underscored our shared understanding of the sacrifices and adjustments of a program of this caliber. In individual advisement meetings, I discovered that adversity and challenges actually strengthen us in our professional journeys. While confronting peer conflicts may be difficult, developing conflict management skills now prepares us for future workplace challenges. Receiving advice during advising sessions has made me more confident in addressing disputes in my career.

In conclusion, OT525 significantly contributed to my professional development as an OT. Through activities such as self-assessments, goal-setting, advising meetings, and participation in co-curricular activities, I developed a stronger understanding of myself as both a student and an emerging professional. These experiences enhanced my ability to reflect, adapt, and intentionally focus on well-being, leadership, and professional growth. The integration of these activities fostered meaningful personal change and underscored the importance of balance, accountability, and self-awareness in occupational therapy. As I progress in the program, I will apply these skills to become a competent, reflective, and client-focused occupational therapist.

References

- Barth, T. (1988). Barth time construction. In B. J. Hemphill (Ed.), *Mental health assessment in occupational therapy: An integrative approach to the evaluation process* (pp. 115–129). Thorofare, NJ: Slack.
- Wylie, A. (2022, May 4). *Wheel of Life Assessment - A visual tool to boost life satisfaction*. Balanced Healthstyles. <https://balancedhealthstyles.com/wheel-of-life-assessment/>