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# How occupational therapists can engage with risk to achieve their goals

## Learning outcomes:

1. When and how to carry out a risk assessment and enablement plan, and what should be included in both
2. How to strike the right balance between risk and choice
3. How to incorporate risk enablement into everyday practice
4. What to do when risk becomes a reality



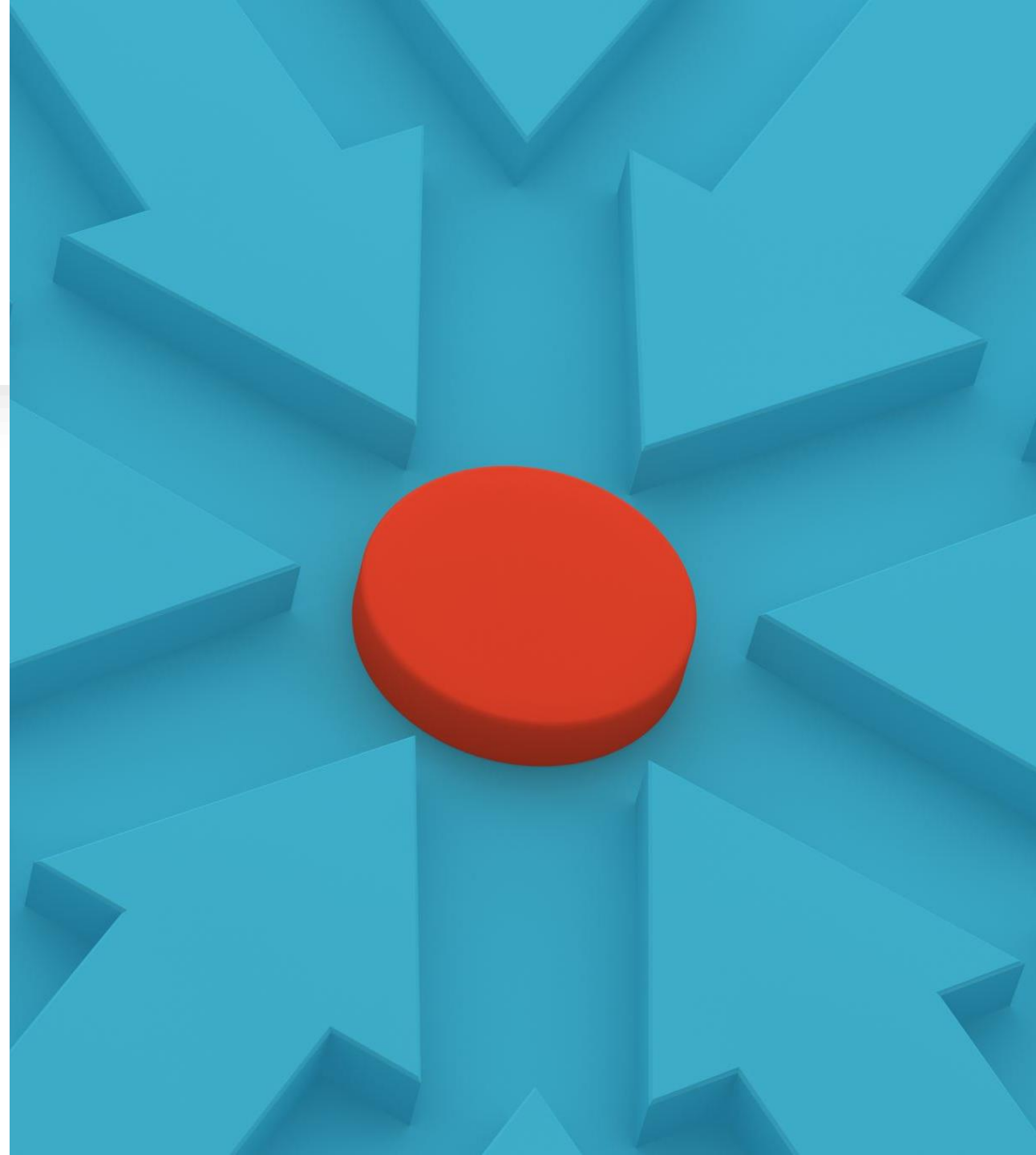
# Before we begin.....

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Life is risky business... my background

Consider your own relationship with risk.....

Now consider a life without risk or reward



# RCOT definition of risk management

Risk management is a plan, strategy or programme that aims to manage the incident, event or hazard, removing those elements that would do harm, or reducing them to an acceptable level, and enabling any opportunity for positive gain to be taken as safely as possible (RCOT)



# What is a life without risk?

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1. Lack of Growth and Opportunity
2. Reduced Autonomy and Choice
3. Absence of Reward
4. Emotional and Psychological Impact
5. Theoretical vs. Practical Reality



Occupational  
therapists as  
risk  
enablers...



# Why should Occupational therapists embrace risk and enable choice?

- Taking risks is important to living a meaningful life.
- Just pause and consider a life without the chance to try new things, push yourself out of your comfort zone, take holidays, or have opportunities and new challenges.
- Without risk, growth, development and achievement are significantly limited

# 1. When and how to carry out a risk assessment and enablement plan, and what should be included in both



**When:** Risk assessment and enablement are part of your everyday occupational therapy practice and professional reasoning. Assessing and enabling risk should be an ongoing process.



**What?** The service user needs to be central to your assessment of risk. You need to consider any factors that may generate risk/s as that individual carries out their chosen activities



**Who?** Having identified any hazards and the potential risk, you must then consider who or what is at risk of potential harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Great Britain. Parliament 1999), assessments should consider possible risk to all those affected by the work or activity.



## 2. How to strike the right balance between risk and choice

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Risk enablement

Judgements and  
preferences

Duty of care

Minimising  
potential harm

Achieving a  
balance can be  
challenging

Preventing harm  
vs being risk  
adverse

### 3. How to incorporate risk enablement into everyday practice

- Managing risk is a statutory and regulatory duty (Great Britain. Parliament 1974, 1999)
- included in your regulatory and professional standards (HCPC 2013, 2016; COT 2015, 2017)
- Get to know your clients
- Be familiar with the legislation
- Review

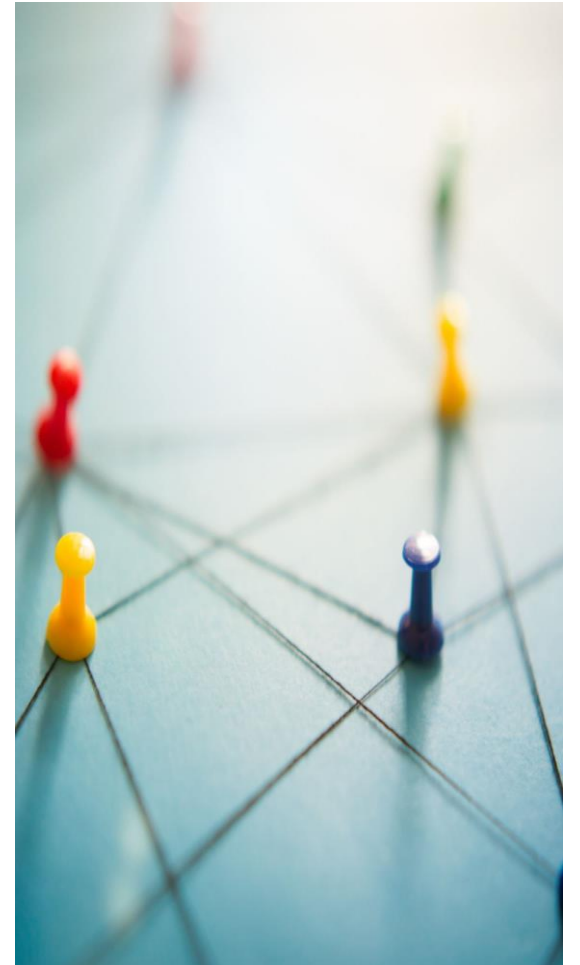


# Occupational therapists superskills

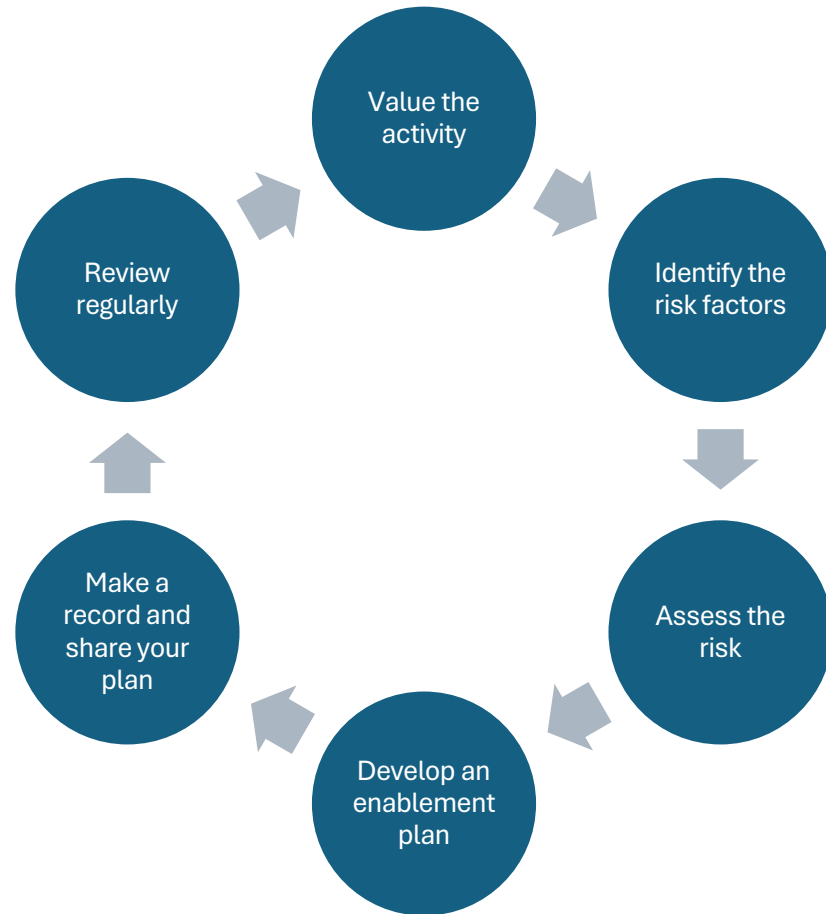
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## Consider the following:

- Can you physically take action to remove the situation/activity/item that creates the risk?
- Can you physically take action to reduce the likelihood of the harm occurring?
- Can you involve other people to reduce the likelihood of the harm occurring?
- Can you change the environment to reduce the risk or create protection?
- Can you use techniques, approaches or behaviours to make a situation or activity safer?
- Can you introduce technology to make an environment, situation or activity safer
- Can you change or learn behaviour/systems to reduce the risk or create protection?



# The risk enablement process RCOT (2018)



- Risk is dynamic and fluctuating
- Consider the Occupational therapy skills to contribute to this process
  - Person centred care
  - Activity analysis
  - Problem solving approach
  - Strengths based analysis



# Recording the assessment and enablement plan

- The risk assessment process is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork; it is about identifying and taking sensible and proportionate measures to control the risks. (HSE 2014, p1)
- Consider the following key aspects:
  - The risks and benefits.
  - The likelihood that risk might occur.
  - The seriousness/severity of those risks.
  - Actions to be taken to minimise the risks.
  - Actions to be taken if the risks occur.



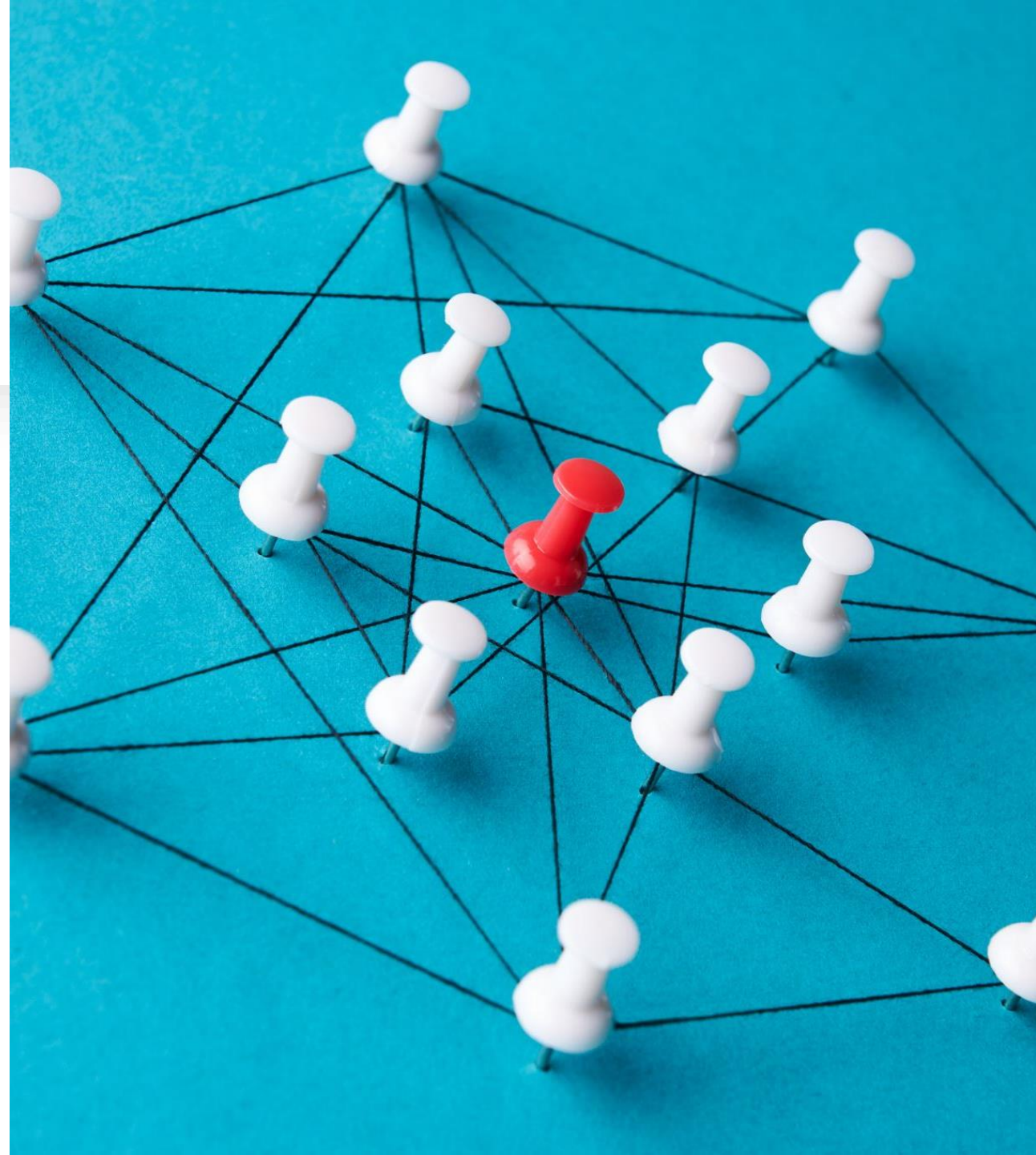


## 4. What to do when risk becomes a reality

- Immediate Response and Safety
- Re-evaluate Risk Assessment
- Collaborate with the Client
- Adjust Interventions and Strategies
- Support and Education
- Documentation and Communication
- Review and Reflect
- Follow-Up and Continued Monitoring

# Incident investigation

1. Severity of Risk
2. Frequency and Persistence
3. Impact on Client Goals
4. Complexity and Scope
5. Client or Family Concerns
6. Professional Judgment
7. Regulatory and Ethical Standards
8. Resource Availability



# Final points RCOT (2018)

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- Fear of supporting people to take reasonable risks in their daily lives can prevent them from doing the things that most people take for granted. (DH 2007b, p3)
- You should be aware of and abide by the current legislation, guidance and standards that are relevant to your practice, remaining up to date with relevant training where necessary. (COT 2015, section 5.1.2)
- You uphold the service user's right to make choices over the care that they receive and the plans that they wish to make. (COT 2017, section 2.5)
- Your records stand as evidence that you have carried out your duty of care; that you have acted on the basis of your assessment and your professional judgement. You must be able to demonstrate that you have provided adequate information. (RCOT 2017a)
- You enable positive risks to be taken safely by service users, in cases where such risks are a necessary part of intervention. (COT 2017, section 14.3)



# References & key policies

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