

INSPIRE

2024 Annual Conference & Expo
March 21–23

Orlando

Learn What Inspired Anita Bundy, ScD, OT/L, FAOTA, FOTARA,

this year's Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecturer, to speak about the importance of risk taking for clients of all ages. Dr. Bundy will be presenting at AOTA INSPIRE | 2024 Annual Conference & Expo in Orlando on March 23 about this important topic.

Bubblewrap is for Packages, Not for People Balancing Dignity of Risk With Duty of Care

My journey into manageable risk-taking and its benefits began more than 30 years ago when I embarked on my doctoral work focused on play. Many years later, a series of events led me to design intervention trials funded by the Australian government. These studies, carried out on school playgrounds, were known as the Sydney Playground Project (SPP). SPP interventions took place for more than a decade in mainstream schools and schools with substantially separate programs for children with autism and intellectual disabilities. SPP involved placing recycled materials on the playground, which children found to be irresistible. However, as we anticipated, some parents and teachers found children's play with the materials to be risky. Thus, we created a second SPP intervention for parents and teachers called risk reframing. Through risk reframing, I became intrigued with helping adults overcome their fears to see the benefits of promoting risky play for children.

During the time SPP was happening, I also worked with a PhD student who had



significant physical disabilities. She interviewed other adults with serious physical limitations and parents who had raised children with significant disabilities but who said they lived “ordinary lives.” She asked participants about the advice they received, especially from professionals. Those individuals indicated they either left the systems that were supposed to help them or found a professional *within* the system who broke the rules to help them create ordinary lives. The PhD student named her dissertation “The Risk of Good Intentions.”

Through all these experiences, I've become convinced that life is full of risks and the benefits of confronting those risks far outweigh the potential problems. Now, living as an older adult, I see the same thing in my own life. In reflecting on all this work and my own experiences, I have come to see that bubble wrapping children, older adults, and people with disabilities of all ages qualifies as occupational injustice. As professionals we have a duty of care to our clients, but we must balance that with the dignity of risk.