**CAREERS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY**

**Presenting on**

*There is nothing more terrifying than standing up in front of your peers and talking about your profession – or wait, yes there is something more terrifying! It is standing before young people and trying to entertain them while explaining to them what you do for a living without boring them to sleep – especially if one of your children/niece/nephew/grandchild is in the room and dying inside of embarrassment…*

**LET’S START WITH THE BASICS**

* **Grade level/Age of Audience/Approximate Number of Students**
* **Geographic Location of School**
* **Length of Presentation**
* **Virtual or In Person**
* **Be Safe**

**It’s important to know your audience. If you don’t have recent experience with students in the specific age level, its helpful to borrow a textbook from the classroom to get an idea of the reading/academic level so that you can speak in terms that they can understand.**

Talking to 5th graders about this really cool case where a snowboarder broke his fifth cervical vertebra in a quarterfinal race in the Winter Olympics might not have the same dynamic impact as clearly explaining that he broke his back. High schoolers might know what vertebra are, but it wouldn’t hurt to follow up with a “can you imagine breaking your back and still being able to go back to snowboarding after having physical therapy?”

**The geographic location of the school can also play a factor in how your presentation is received.** Students living in more affluent areas are more likely to have had experiences with physical therapy associated with organized sports and have higher expectations regarding their college plans that students living in impoverished communities with less access to health care and limited financial resources. You may have to take more time explaining what physical therapy is to certain groups, so having some basic questions and answers to determine the groups awareness can help get you off on the right foot.

“Does anyone know what physical therapy is?” “Has anyone had to go to physical therapy? Or had a parent or grandparent go to physical therapy?” Starting the kids talking is also a good way to break the ice and get them interested by telling you stories from their personal experiences.

**Plan to talk about PT and PTA schools in close proximity to the community.** If you are uncertain what PTA program (community college) to promote, check with the school to find out what district the students are in.

**Make sure you confirm with the teacher/program coordinator how long they want you to talk, and if that includes time for questions from the class.** It’s also a good idea to check if there is any specific information they want to cover like education, wages, or personal stories about why you chose your career.

**If the presentation is to be virtual, confirm the logistics and practice with technology in advance.** Be prepared that getting them to participate may be more difficult and your questions may be left hanging without a response. (“*is anybody out there?”)*

**If you are presenting in person, confirm that you will have access to any technology you would like to use (i.e. LCD projector and screen) or logistical needs (i.e. open floor space for the students to move around). You may also want to confirm logistics:**

* **Will the teacher/program coordinator be present for your presentation?** In an emergency can you reach that person the day of the presentation (i.e. cell phone number).
* **Confirm parking instructions and where/how to enter the building.** Will you be required to show some form of ID?
* **What time should you plan to arrive and set up for your presentation.** Allow time to work on technology – or find you way in a large building.

**Other considerations when presenting in a school:**

* **Be sure to comply with any social distancing, mask, or other policies in place at the building you are visiting.** If you are not sure what the requirements are, ask in advance.
* **Avoid any physical contact that could be considered inappropriate.** Handshakes and pats on the back are ok; full body hugs are not.
* **Do not give students your personal contact information.** If you are offering them opportunities to contact you with questions about careers in physical therapy, provide your business phone/email.
* **Do not put yourself in a position where you are alone with a minor.** Make sure that there is always at least another adult or several other students with you.

**YOUR PRESENTATION STARTS WITH YOU**

**From the first step through the classroom door or the first shot from your camera, you are representing all physical therapists and physical therapist assistants.**

**Look the part.** Dress as you would if you were in your place of work. If you wear pants and a polo, then do so in the classroom. If you wear scrubs, then they are appropriate as well. No make up and pony tail is normal for work? Then it is perfect for the classroom. You want the students to feel as comfortable with you as your patients are.

**Act the part.** Be professional, courteous, and use appropriate language. If you are in front of a camera for a virtual presentation, think about your surroundings. Ideally you are in a clinic without patients (think HIPAA) but, if at home, make sure the background is free from distractions – particularly things like last night’s wine bottle or beer can.

**Use props.** They keep your hands busy and can help to keep students interested. They also work as great conversation starters: “Can someone tell me what this is?” (holding up a XXX) “What do you think I use it for?”

**WHAT TO SAY**

The IPTA has developed a simple presentation that covers the basics in an easy to follow format complete with talking points to help you through it. You can customize it for your audience by adding or removing slides or adding personal stories to your presentation.

SLIDE 1: Title Slide

General introduction: Introduce yourself and your title, how long you have been a PT/PTA and thank you for the invitation to come talk about physical therapy.

SLIDES 2-5: What is Physical Therapy? Who goes to Physical Therapy?

Opening questions to find out how much the group already knows about physical therapy. Photo collage on slide 5 includes military, toddler, professional athletes, seniors as examples.

SLIDE 6: Military Story: David

Summary of case included in notes, explain David’s story in your own words. Follow up with a story about one of your own patients (optional).

SLIDES 7-8: Who provides Physical Therapy?

Be prepared to here a variety of answers and explain the differences between professions in general terms. Be sure not to discredit any other professions.

SLIDES 9-10: Where do Physical Therapists and Physical Therapists work?

Let students offer ideas and then talk briefly about all the types of places a PT can work. Pictured are home health, with athletes, in a clinic, at a school or in a hospital. Talk about where you work now and where you have worked in the past. What would be your dream job as a PT/PTA?

SLIDES 11-14: Four examples of PTs with dream jobs (use some or all)

SLIDES 15-19: What’s the difference between a PT and PTA?

Talk about what PTs and PTAs do and how they work together.

The differences in education and then share your education experience – where you went to school.

Talk about the types of courses PTs and PTAs take and what courses in high school they could take that would be helpful if they are interested in pursuing a career in PT.

Finally, talk generally about the costs of educations and then the salaries to expect after graduation.

SLIDE 20: IL PT SCHOOLS

All school logos have links to their web pages on PT programs – select one or two to visit and talk a little more about the program and application process (older students).

INSERT LOCAL PTA SCHOOL SLIDES HERE: SELECT FROM SLIDES AT END, all school logos have links to their web pages…talk about program and application process (older students). You should select schools that are in the geographical area of the school that you are presenting in. PTA programs at community colleges offer in-district tuition and those should be the ones you highlight. As an example, College of DuPage serves mostly only residents of DuPage County, so students at schools in Will County would be out of district. The only exceptions are Fox College (private) and SIU (state); there is no district tuition differential for those two programs.

SLIDES SLIDES 21-22: Would I be a good PT or PTA?

This is a good time to tell the story of how you decided to become a PT/PTA. Why do you think you are good at this job? Why do you enjoy it? Helping people is a positive note to end on.

SLIDE 23: High School Athlete Story: Jonathan

Summary of case included in notes, explain Jonathan’s story in your own words. Follow up with a story about one of your own patients or yourself if you had an injury that led to you pursuing a career in PT (optional).

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

SLIDE 24: DESK EXERCISES (ALL AGES)

SLIDE 25: TEXT NECK (PHONE APPROPRIATE AUDIENCES)

SLIDE 26: YOU CAN BE ME (APTA VIDEO) (HIGH SCHOOL VIDEO)

CONCLUSION

SLIDE 27: FOR MORE INFO, VISIT IPTA. You can add your business contact info if you would like to invite students to shadow at your clinic or contact you for more information. If you are presenting in person, with the teacher’s permission, you can prepare a handout that gives the students contact information or links to follow up for more information on careers in Physical Therapy.

SLIDES 28-40: IL PTA PROGRAM SLIDES

**LEAVE THEM HAPPY**

Talk with the teacher/coordinator about what is appropriate. If you are doing an in-person presentation, you could offer to bring in “bling” from your clinic such as a pen or water bottle, or bring a nutritious snack like cliff bars (no nuts!). If you are presenting virtually but the class is in person or will be in the classroom, you can make arrangements ahead of time for your treats to be delivered.

**GRADES ARE IMPORTANT**

After your presentation, be sure to send a thank you note to the teacher/coordinator and ask for feedback on your presentation. Constructive comments will help you do a better job in the future – and it’s always nice to hear the funny things kids say about you and your career after you’ve left the room. 😊

INTEREST IN A CAREER IN PHYSICAL THERAPY?

FIND OUT MORE….