

# Physical Therapy Talking Points

## Target Audience: Sixth to Eighth Grade

All talking points can be used with or without the associated PowerPoint (Grade 6-8 PowerPoint) and are meant to be used as a guide to lead conversations. Feel free to omit or add topics as needed, based on the needs of your target audience.

### Things to Think About

When speaking with this age group (sixth to eighth graders) the goal is to light a spark in their minds about the profession of physical therapy and get them thinking about what it would be like to be a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant. This presentation will focus less on the specifics of the profession and more on the high-level aspect of physical therapy, what PTs and PTAs do, and how they help people and bring value to the world.

When possible, try to relate what you are talking about back to your audience to help them connect with it personally. A great way to do this is by asking questions. For example: “Have you or anyone in your family ever seen a physical therapist?”, “Have you ever fallen and hurt yourself and could not move like you wanted to?”

If you are using the Grade 6-8 PowerPoint along with these talking points you will see the slides that depicts the body systems of children and instructions that ask them to think about their movement. Think of it as trying to get them to learn while moving and having fun, engaged learning.

### Talking Points

#### Physical Therapy Moves Me!

- Welcome.
- Introduce yourself and give the reason for your presentation.
- Explain what you hope to achieve by the end of the presentation (ex. “By the end of this presentation I want you have a better understanding of how PTs and PTAs help people move”).

#### Start by watching the video if using Grade 6-8 PowerPoint.

- Here Dani talks about how we are all healthier and happier when we move and how working with her physical therapist after her accident helped changed her life for the better.
  - This slide is a visual aid to help the audience see how physical therapy can have a positive impact on people’s lives. This age group is usually very visual, so hopefully it will help them connect to the rest of the presentation.
  - If you want to find another video, visit [ChoosePT's YouTube Page](#). If you are a PT Moves Me Ambassador, you can find videos on the [PT Moves Me Ambassador Hub Community](#) under the Recruitment Resources File Library.

#### What are things you do that require movement?

- Start with a conversation to engage your audience and get them thinking about movement.

- Try to get them to think beyond the obvious of walking, running, etc., to activities such as breathing, heart beating, swallowing, writing, chewing, etc. This will help them understand that movement involves multiple systems of the body, and PTs and PTAs treat and/or work with all those systems.
- Help your audience to understand how essential movement is to life.

#### **42 million people in the United States experience some form of movement disorder.**

- You just had a conversation about things we commonly do that require movement. Now tie that into the fact that there are people who do not move as freely and need assistance.
- The purpose of this is to get them thinking about how many people in the country and the world are not able to move as freely or need assistance moving.
- Movement is essential to life, and that's why the profession of physical therapy is so important and why PTs and PTAs provided a valuable service to society.
- Source: <https://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/brain-neurological-conditions/movement-disorders>.

#### **Physical therapists are doctors who are movement experts.**

- Physical therapists are doctors who are movement experts and help people move.
- They help people who:
  - Are not able to move as freely or who have lost the ability to move.
  - Are trying to maintain their movement function and prevent movement loss and function.
- Here you can ask if anyone has seen a physical therapist or gone with a family member to see a physical therapist.
- Emphasize again that movement is an essential part of life, and physical therapists and physical therapist assistants play a key role in keeping patients healthy through movement and increasing their patients' quality of life.

#### **Physical therapist assistants work with physical therapists.**

- There are two career pathways in the profession of physical therapy:
  - Obtain a doctor of physical therapy degree and become a licensed physical therapist.
  - Obtain an associate degree and become a physical therapist assistant.
- Physical therapists are doctors who treat patients with movement dysfunction.
- Physical therapist assistants work under the supervision of physical therapists and assist with implementing patient treatment plans.

#### **PTs and PTAs care for people of all ages and abilities.**

- We all need to move. From the moment we enter the world (even before), until the moment we leave. Movement is essential to life.
- PTs and PTAs work with patients from all populations, young and old and all in between.
- Depending on your audience, if you want to provide more detail, you can include the information below:
  - PTs and PTAs treat athletes and those who recently had a surgery, but they also treat:
    - Chronic conditions such as cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, and multiple sclerosis.
    - Those with autism, traumatic brain injury, and dementia.
    - Those with heart disease, COPD, recovering from COVID-19.
    - Those with chronic headaches, balance disorders, and musculoskeletal pain.

- Physical therapy even helps after having a baby, having or recovering from cancer, and experiencing burns and wound.
- Almost any place you find health care providers, you'll find a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant (hospital, outpatient clinic, assisted living facility, school, corporate workspace, health and wellness facility, etc.)

### **What body systems are involved in movement?**

- The systems of the body are skeletal, muscular, nervous, endocrine, cardiovascular, lymphatic, respiratory, digestive, urinary, integumentary, and reproductive.
- When you think about movement, which body systems do you think involve movement?
- You need the muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems to move. Muscles attach to bones and the brain sends signals to your muscles through nerves telling your muscles to move.
- However, movement takes place in other body systems as well:
  - Cardiovascular: Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood through your body.
  - Respiratory: Your lungs include your diaphragm, which is a muscle that allows you to breath.
  - Digestive: Your digestive system moves and contracts to enable you chew, swallow, and digest food.
  - Integumentary: Your skin moves and shifts with your muscles and bones.
  - And more.
- Most of your body systems involve movement, and physical therapists work with all body systems. Some physical therapists even specialize in certain areas such as cardiopulmonary, neurology, electrical stimulation, and wound and burn management.

### **Who can benefit from physical therapy?**

- Everyone!
- If you move, you can benefit from seeing a physical therapist.
- PTs help those with conditions and diseases such as:
  - Chronic pain such as back, knee, and shoulder pain.
  - COVID-19.
  - Heart or lung disease.
  - Cancer.
  - Balance issues.
  - Injury recovery.
  - And much more.

### **PTs and PTAs use various methods, techniques, and equipment to treat patients.**

- Physical therapy is a very active profession. You will spend a lot of time with your patients and really get to know them. And you will move with your patients, which sometimes requires assistive devices, techniques, and creativity.
- Here are a few treatment techniques used:
  - Exercises using equipment and body weight, which teaches proper movement mechanics and strengthening muscles.
  - Pools or aquatic physical therapy, which helps decrease stress on the joints and muscles while providing resistance that helps with physical therapist treatment.
  - Toys and games, including video games, virtual reality, and robotic devices. When you are playing video games, playing with toys, and playing games you are moving! So, they can also be used to teach proper movement mechanics and help patients regain movement.

- Manual therapy and electrical stimulation. PTs and PTAs are trained to locate muscles, joints, nerves, bones, and tendons through physical touch. PTs and PTAs can use massage, electrical stimulation, and other manual therapy techniques to treat patients.
- Goniometry and assistive devices. PTs and PTAs use goniometry to measure joint motion and range of motion. These measurements help determine patient treatment plans and more. PTs and PTAs also teach patients how to properly use assistive devices to help with movement function.
- These are just a few examples of how PTs and PTAs treat patients, there are multiple treat methods and options.
- Sometimes these and other treatments are used together to help patient's move better.
- If you are a PT, PTA, or student, this is a great place to include a personal story about how you had to be creative with treating a patient or something similar.

### **Lead some movement activities.**

- Since PTs and PTAs focus on movement, it is time to get up and get moving!
- Choose from various activities. With these activities it is important to:
  - Explain the importance of each activity and how it is beneficial (functional movement, etc.).
  - Use your judgment on what is appropriate and safe depending on your audience and your environment. Safety first!
  - Be ready to provide modifications for those with physical limitations.
- Examples of exercises and activities:
  - Stand up from the floor without using your hands.
  - Stand on one leg with your eyes closed.
  - Walk heel to toe with your eyes open and then with your eyes closed (partner exercise).
  - Perform a Y-reach.
  - Stretch.
  - Sit back-to-back on the floor and use your body weight to stand up (partner exercise).

### **Physical therapy keeps people moving!**

- After completing the movement activity, bring everyone back together.
- Remind them that physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help keep people moving. If you have muscle pain, movement loss, or you just want to move better, see a physical therapist!

### **Call to a career in physical therapy!**

- If you like science, being active, talking to people, and being creative, then physical therapy might be a great career choice for you!

*Optional Talking Points and Slides (depending on your audience)*

### **Pathway to DPT**

- To be a physical therapist, like most health professions, you will have to attend college and complete an undergraduate/bachelor's degree, which takes about four years. Then you will need to earn a professional doctor of physical therapy graduate degree, which takes approximately three years.
- The average salary for a physical therapist is about \$89,000.

### **Pathway to PTA**

- To be a physical therapist assistant, you will need to earn a two-year college associate degree after high school.
- The average salary for a physical therapist assistant is about \$58,200.