

# Physical Therapy Talking Points

## Target Audience: Third to Fifth Grade

All talking points can be used with or without the associated PowerPoint (Grade 3-5 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 (third to fifth graders), the goal is to light a spark in their mind about the profession of physical therapy. This presentation will not focus on the specifics of the profession; instead, it will focus on engaging the audience while providing high-level information about the profession.

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 your 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 3-5 PowerPoint along with these talking points you will see the slides that ask them to think about their movement, depict the body systems of children, and name movement activities incorporated with the body system. 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. For example, "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 the Grade 3-5 PowerPoint.

- This video shows Mac, who had a shoulder injury in the middle of his baseball season, working with his physical therapist to recover and get back on the field to play in the state tournament.
  - 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 more videos on the [PT Moves Me Ambassador Hub Community](#) under the Recruitment Resources File Library.

#### What are some 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.

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

- Physical therapists are doctors who are movement experts and help keep people moving. Physical therapist assistants help physical therapists treat their patients.
  - If your stomach or throat hurts, you see a medical doctor.
  - If your tooth hurts, you see a dentist.
  - If your muscles hurt or if you have problems with movement, you see a physical therapist.

### **Physical therapy helps to keep people moving.**

- Improving body control and mechanics:
  - If you are an athlete or have a job where you do a lot of lifting and pulling, you need to know how to properly move your body to prevent injury.
  - Let us learn the proper way to pick up a heavy box or something off the floor:
    - Demonstrate how to properly pick up a pencil off the floor.
    - Ask the audience to join you.
- Increasing flexibility and joint mobility:
  - Flexibility helps prevent injury.
  - Let us check our flexibility:
    - Everyone stand up and touch your toes.
    - Now see if you can touch the ground without bending your knees.
- Learning how to move with assistive devices:
  - If you injure yourself or if you are someone with limited movement you might need an assistive device like a wheelchair, crutches, a walker, or cane to help you move.
  - PTs teach their patients how to use these devices to increase their ability to move and get around.

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

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

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

- Ask your audience to do some sort of quick and easy movement. Be sure to consider those with varying abilities:
  - 10 jumping jacks.

- 10 hand claps.
- Running in place.
- Neck or arm circles.
- Toe touches.

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

- You just did five jumping jacks (or whatever movement you asked them to do). What parts of your body did you have to move to do \_\_\_\_\_ (insert movement you asked them to do).
  - You are looking for answers like (arms, legs, feet, etc.).
- Now, what makes your arms and legs move? A combination of your bones, muscles, and nerves all work together to help you move:
  - Muscles attach to bones, and your brain sends signals to your muscles through your nerves that cause you to move.
  - Physical therapists are experts in how the body moves, and that is why they are so good at helping when your body doesn't move like it's supposed to.

### **What are some things you think physical therapists and physical therapist assistants use to help people move better?**

- Doctors use things like prescription medicine to treat patients.
  - Dentists use things like teeth-cleaning tools to help patients.
  - Physical therapists use movement! However, they have some things they use to help you move:
    - 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.
    - Technology and research. Physical therapy is a research heavy profession, and PTs and PTAs are trained to be evidence-based providers who use treatment techniques that are supported by current research and evidence.
    - 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:
      - Palpation and manual therapy:
        - Hold out your arm and touch your upper arm (bicep). Now flex your arm and make a muscle. Did you feel your muscle move? Does anyone know the name of this muscle? That's your bicep muscle.
        - Extend your arm again but this time feel the back of your arm (triceps). Now flex your arm again. Did you feel your muscle move? Anyone know the name of this muscle? That's your triceps muscle.
        - Now touch the back of your lower leg (calf). Flex your foot. Do you feel your muscle move? Anyone know the name of this muscle? That's your gastrocnemius, also called your calf muscle.
- A small prize to give out during this section of the presentation helps with engagement (piece of candy, toy, etc.). Check with the person organizing the presentation first to see if prizes are allowed.

### **Make time to move!**

- Since PTs and PTAs focus on movement, let's get up and get moving!
- Choose from various activities: With these activities it's important to:
  - Explain the importance of each activity, how it's beneficial (functional movement, etc.).
  - Use your judgment on what's 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, then with your eyes closed (partner exercise).
  - Perform a Y-reach.
  - Stretch.
  - Sit back-to-back on the floor and use body weight to stand up (partner exercise).

### **Remember what we've learned.**

- Movement is essential to life, and physical therapy helps to keep people moving.
- Just since we have been together today, you have done quite a bit of movement:
  - Squats = picking up boxes.
  - Stretching = touching toes.
  - Jumping jacks or hand claps.
  - Flexed and extended muscles = biceps, triceps, and gastrocnemius muscles.
  - Breathing = diaphragm.
- So, keep moving, because movement is an important part of life.

### **You could have a career as a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant!**

- 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 Become a PT**

- 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 Become a PTA**

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