

Clinical best practices when describing movement

Tips & Advice

Jolene Young

Clinical Service Advisor

When describing how a person performs a task, words like 'difficult', 'struggling', or 'significant' are vague and subjective. These terms express an opinion about the task, rather than providing concrete details about how it is being performed.

Saying that someone is "struggling to get dressed" does not explain what aspect of dressing is challenging. Whether it's buttoning a shirt, reaching for clothing, or balancing while putting on pants. Similarly, calling a task 'difficult' does not specify whether the issue lies in strength, coordination, cognition, or another factor. Such language lacks the precision needed to fully understand a person's abilities and challenges.

By using activity analysis, we can provide a clearer and more actionable description of how a person performs daily activities. Instead of saying someone is "struggling to get dressed," we might analyse and document that they require assistance to pull a shirt over their head due to limited shoulder mobility; or take longer than average to fasten buttons due to reduced finger dexterity.

Activity analysis shifts the focus from subjective to objective, measurable observations.