

Polkadot Sparrow
Occupational Therapy
Company Profile





Care with heart, grounded in science

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Introduction

Polkadot Sparrow Occupational Therapy is a PhD-led paediatric and adult OT clinic based in Hillcrest, Durban, dedicated to helping children, adults, and families thrive through compassionate care grounded in the latest research. As a family-centered practice, we provide a warm, welcoming space where therapy is fun, playful, and empowering for clients of all ages. True to our tagline “Care with heart, grounded in science,” we blend advanced, evidence-based therapeutic techniques with genuine compassion in every session. Our practice name itself reflects our ethos – “Polkadot” for playfulness and creativity, and “Sparrow” for resilience and the ability to soar after adversity. In short, Polkadot Sparrow OT offers care with heart, grounded in science, helping each client reach their fullest potential in a friendly, research-driven environment.



Mission & Philosophy

Our mission is simple: to help each child, adult, and family thrive through high-quality therapy delivered with both heart and scientific rigor. “Care with heart, grounded in science” is more than just a slogan to us – it encapsulates how we approach every session, ensuring that empathy and evidence go together. We are guided by core values of respect, kindness, safety, and empowerment, creating a nurturing environment where clients feel safe and supported while receiving the highest standard of care using proven techniques. Therapy at Polkadot Sparrow is meant to be fun, family-centered, and empowering for our clients, never just a box-ticking exercise.

Our philosophy centers on four key pillars:

- **Compassion & Respect:** We approach every client with warmth and kindness, honoring each individual’s journey and concerns. All questions are welcomed and every worry is acknowledged.
- **Evidence-Informed Practice:** As a research-driven clinic founded by two doctoral-level OTs, we ensure our interventions are grounded in the latest science and best practices. Professional care is delivered with a solid evidence base, never sacrificing quality.
- **Fun & Empowerment:** We believe therapy – especially for children – should feel like play. Our sessions are engaging and enjoyable, helping clients (young and old) build confidence and skills in a positive way. For adults, we focus on meaningful goals that foster independence in daily life.
- **Holistic, Team-Based Care:** We see each client as part of a larger picture. Our therapists collaborate with parents, caregivers, teachers, doctors, and other professionals to ensure support is well-rounded. This holistic approach means we consider all factors in a client’s life and work as a team to help them thrive.

By upholding these values, Polkadot Sparrow OT ensures that therapy is personalized, compassionate, and effective, turning challenges into triumphs for those we serve.



Our Story

Polkadot Sparrow Occupational Therapy was born from the shared dream of our co-founders, Dr. Gina Rencken and Dr. Pragashnie “Pre” Govender, to make top-quality, specialized therapy more accessible to the community. Having each spent over two decades in hospitals, academia, and various clinical settings, they recognized the need for a premium occupational therapy clinic in Durban that could serve both children and adults while maintaining a personal, family-oriented touch. They envisioned a practice where a child’s therapy feels like playtime, and where a worried parent or an injured worker can find clarity and hope through expert guidance.

That vision became reality in 2023, when Polkadot Sparrow OT opened its doors in Hillcrest. The name “Polkadot Sparrow” itself symbolizes the clinic’s approach: “Polkadot” for playfulness and creativity, and “Sparrow” for resilience and the ability to soar after adversity. From day one, our founders have remained hands-on, working directly with clients and ensuring that every service upholds the high standards they set. We take pride in being a small, client-centered clinic where every individual is seen, heard, and valued – when you come to Polkadot Sparrow, you’re not just a number on a waiting list; you become part of our family. We invite you to learn, grow, and thrive with us in this bright, playful, and hope-filled space.



Meet the Founders



Dr. Gina Rencken (Co-Founder & Senior Occupational Therapist):

Gina is a dedicated occupational therapist with over 20 years of experience helping children and families. She earned her B.OT from the University of Pretoria (2001) and M.OT from UFS, and is currently completing her PhD at UKZN. Specializing in paediatrics, Gina serves as a senior lecturer in pediatric OT at UKZN and has extensive advanced training – she is certified in Ayres Sensory Integration and Neurodevelopmental Therapy (NDT). Gina is also qualified to administer gold-standard assessments like the ADOS-2 for autism and the Optima™ School Readiness Test, among other credentials (including Functional Capacity Evaluation). As a member of the executive board of the South African Institute for Sensory Integration (SAISI) and the International Council of Educators in Sensory Integration (ICE-ASI), she stays at the forefront of OT research and best practices. On a personal note, Gina is the mother of a neurodivergent child – a journey that taught her the importance of blending science, love, and fun in therapy. She approaches each family with empathy and insight, ensuring therapy is tailored to each child’s unique story. Gina’s warm demeanor and wealth of knowledge help parents feel at ease, confident that their child is in expert hands.

Meet the Founders



Dr. Pragashnie “Pre” Govender (Co-Founder & Senior Occupational Therapist):

Dr. Pre Govender is a distinguished occupational therapist and academic with a career spanning more than two decades across clinical practice, research, and teaching. She holds a B.OT, M.OT, and PhD in Occupational Therapy from UKZN and is a Full Professor as well as the Academic Leader of Research in the School of Health Sciences at UKZN. An accomplished scholar, Pre has published over 100 peer-reviewed papers and several book chapters, earning recognition as a National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated scientist and a multiple award-winning researcher. Her collaborations with the World Health Organization and the World Federation of Occupational Therapists reflect her global impact and commitment to inclusive, human-centered care. Clinically, Dr. Govender’s expertise is remarkably broad – she supports infants and children through early intervention and paediatric therapy, assists adults in rehabilitation and chronic pain management, and conducts vocational assessments for return-to-work programs. She is certified in Functional Capacity Evaluation (WorkWell®) for work rehabilitation, PGAP® for chronic pain, ADOS-2 for autism assessments, and Optima™ for school readiness testing, among other specializations. Beyond her professional accolades, Pre is also the mother of a neurodivergent child, which gives her first-hand understanding of the challenges and triumphs families experience. This perspective infuses her approach with deep empathy, patience, and authenticity – every client feels seen, supported, and empowered in her care. Dr. Govender’s philosophy is simple yet profound: early detection and nurturing care can transform potential into possibility. She often speaks of creating a space “where science meets soul,” bridging rigorous evidence-based practice with heartfelt compassion to enable meaningful participation for people of all ages. Under her leadership, Polkadot Sparrow embodies this vision, providing inclusive, world-class therapy that never loses its personal touch.

Together, Dr. Gina and Dr. Pre lead Polkadot Sparrow OT with a unique blend of heart and science. Their combined expertise, qualifications, and personal experiences set the tone for a practice that is at once highly specialized and deeply caring. Clients benefit from their cutting-edge knowledge and credentials, while also feeling the genuine compassion and family-like support that the founders instill in the clinic culture.



Services

At Polkadot Sparrow OT, we offer a full spectrum of occupational therapy services for infants, children, and adults – ensuring personalized support for every need. Our key paediatric services focus on early development and childhood challenges, while our adult and specialized services address rehabilitation, work readiness, and professional training. No matter the service, our approach is individualized and evidence-based, tailored to each client’s situation. Below is an overview of our main services:



Pediatric Services

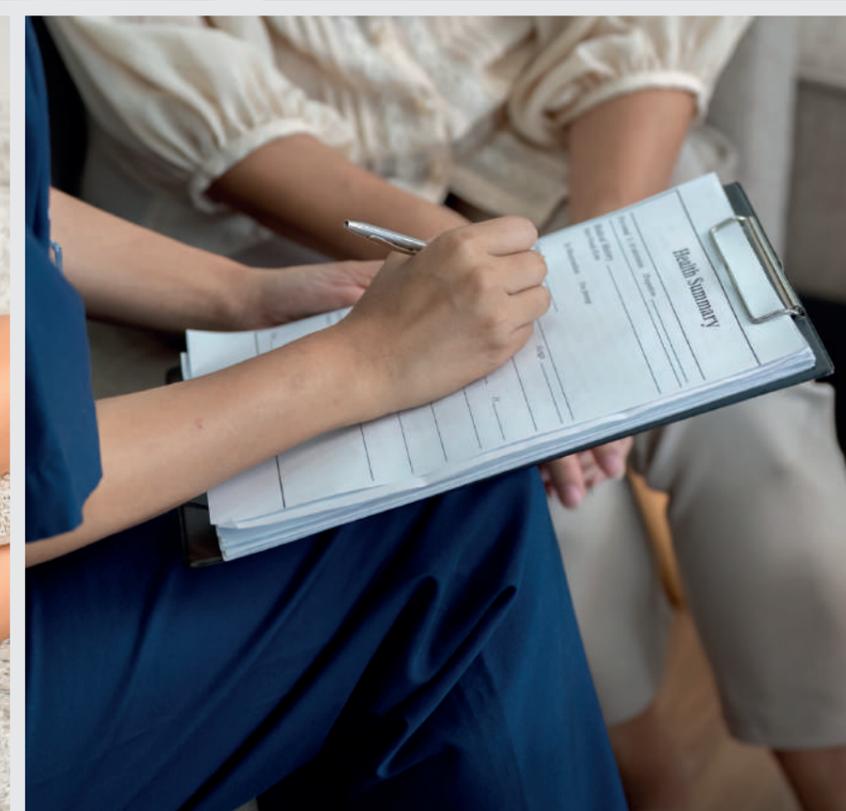
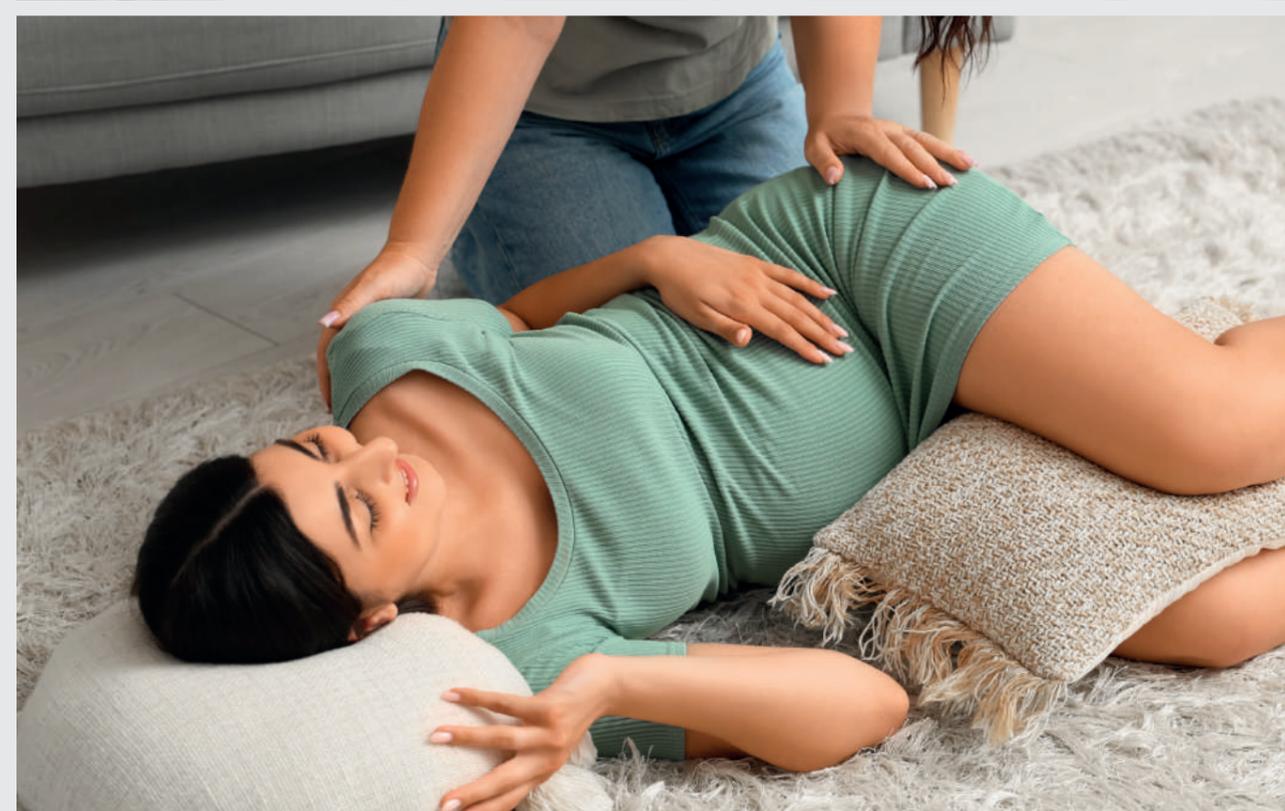
- **Comprehensive Pediatric Assessments:** Friendly, play-based evaluations of your child's developmental skills (motor, sensory, cognitive, and self-care) to understand their strengths and any challenges. We turn concerns into an actionable plan to help your child reach their potential. After the assessment, parents receive a clear, jargon-free report celebrating the child's strengths and outlining targeted support strategies and therapy goals.
- **Sensory Integration Therapy:** A fun, sensory-rich program conducted in our well-equipped therapy gym (featuring swings, foam pits, and more) to help children who struggle with processing sensations like touch, sound, or movement. We gently "train the brain" to handle sensory input more calmly, so that everyday experiences – from noisy classrooms to scratchy clothing – become manageable and positive.
- **Neurodevelopmental Therapy (NDT):** A hands-on therapy approach for children with neurological conditions or developmental motor delays (e.g. cerebral palsy). We use NDT principles (the Bobath approach) through guided play and exercises to help children build better control of their bodies. The goal is to improve muscle tone, coordination, and movement patterns, so kids gain more independence and confidence in daily activities.
- **Early Intervention for High-Risk Infants:** Special support for infants who were born prematurely or have had a difficult start (e.g. NICU stay or medical complications). We closely monitor your baby's early milestones and use gentle assessments (such as the General Movements Assessment) to catch any early signs of developmental differences. If needed, we coach parents in helpful activities – from tummy-time to infant massage – to give your little one the best start possible and peace of mind for you as a parent.
- **Autism Assessments (ADOS-2):** We provide **gold-standard autism evaluations** using the ADOS-2, a play-based assessment tool. Our qualified professionals make the process gentle and child-friendly, so you get clear answers about whether your child is on the autism spectrum and guidance on the journey ahead. These trusted assessments help clarify your child's needs and inform appropriate next steps, ensuring early support where necessary.
- **School Readiness Assessments (Optima™):** Wondering if your child is ready for Grade 1? We offer school readiness testing using the **Optima™** assessment to evaluate key skills needed for the transition to formal schooling. Through enjoyable games and activities, we assess your child's visual and auditory processing, motor skills, social-emotional development, and other indicators of readiness. Parents receive insightful feedback on their child's preparedness along with practical tips to support any areas that need bolstering.



Adult & Specialized Services

- **Functional Capacity Evaluations (Physical & Psychiatric):** Injury or illness can disrupt daily life and work. Our Functional Capacity Evaluations (**FCEs**) provide objective assessments of an individual's functional abilities and limitations following physical injury or mental health conditions. These evaluations measure safe work capabilities and are often used for return-to-work planning or to obtain impartial documentation for disability claims. All FCEs are conducted by our specially trained team, ensuring professional, evidence-based assessments.
- **Workplace Accommodation Evaluations:** We help adults thrive on the job after injury or amid health challenges. Through on-site visits or virtual consultations, our therapists assess your work environment and identify modifications or ergonomic adjustments to support your comfort and productivity. You'll receive tailored recommendations – think of it as a therapist-guided “tune-up” for your workplace – so that your job duties can be performed safely and efficiently, with any necessary accommodations in place.
- **Medico-Legal & Medical Negligence Assessments:** Polkadot Sparrow offers independent occupational therapy assessments for legal cases involving personal injury or medical negligence. Our highly qualified therapists (with PhDs and specialized certifications) evaluate an individual's functional status, future care needs, and the impact of injuries on daily life. We then provide clear, factual medico-legal reports that aid attorneys and courts in understanding the true extent of a claimant's limitations and requirements. These impartial reports help inform fair decisions in insurance claims or litigation.
- **Pregnancy & Postpartum Support:** We recognize the joys and challenges of motherhood. Our team provides holistic OT services tailored for expecting new mothers. Whether you're coping with physical changes during pregnancy, recovering after childbirth, or balancing the demands of caring for a newborn, we offer strategies and interventions to help you not just cope, but thrive. Our guidance covers everything from pain management and energy conservation to infant-care ergonomics and establishing routines – because a healthier, happier mom is the foundation for a healthy, happy baby.
- **Mentorship & Professional Training:** At Polkadot Sparrow, we also invest in developing the next generation of therapists and supporting fellow professionals. We offer mentorship and training programs for occupational therapy students, new graduates, educators, and even corporate teams looking to understand topics like ergonomics or disability inclusion. Led by our experienced founders, these programs provide personalized guidance, workshops, and consultations rooted in the latest research. Think of us as your trusted partner in enhancing knowledge and tackling challenging cases – we are passionate about sharing expertise and uplifting the broader community of care providers.

(In addition to the above, we continually expand our offerings based on community needs – for the most up-to-date list of services, please visit our website or contact our office.)



Location & Facilities



Our clinic is conveniently located in Hillcrest's Upper Highway area of Durban – easily accessible for families across the greater Durban/eThekweni region. The address is Unit 5, Burnside Office Park, 1 Builders Way, Hillcrest, Durban 3610. You'll find ample on-site parking and a welcoming, child-friendly environment when you visit.

Inside, Polkadot Sparrow OT features a well-equipped therapy gym filled with specialized equipment to engage the senses and motivate movement – including swings, foam pits, obstacle course setups, and more. This playful setup allows us to turn therapy into a fun adventure for children, helping them work on skills while they play. We also maintain private consultation rooms and quiet areas to ensure comfort for adults and parents during assessments or therapy sessions. Overall, our facility is designed to be a safe, cheerful space where clients of all ages feel at ease. From the colorful, tactile equipment that delights children to the calming, supportive atmosphere for grown-ups, every aspect of our clinic aligns with our philosophy of compassionate, family-centered care.

Contact Information

We would love to hear from you – whether you have questions about our services or want to discuss your or your child's needs, our team is here to help. You can reach out to us via the following channels:

- **Phone:** +27 64 729 2253
- **Email:** info@polkadotsparrow.co.za
- **Address:** Unit 5, Burnside Office Park, 1 Builders Way, Hillcrest, Durban 3610, South Africa
- **Social Media:** Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @ **polkadotSparrowOT** for tips, updates, and news from our practice. We frequently share helpful parenting tips, success stories, and clinic updates on these platforms.

Our practice hours are Monday–Friday 8:00–17:00, and Saturdays 9:00–13:00. For your convenience, we also offer an **online booking system** on our website – you can easily schedule assessments or therapy sessions at a suitable time. If you're unsure which service is right for you, feel free to call or email us for guidance. At Polkadot Sparrow Occupational Therapy, we are always happy to assist and welcome you into our community.

Polkadot Sparrow Occupational Therapy – “Care with heart, grounded in science.” All information on our website and materials is for educational purposes and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. For more details, please visit www.polkadotsparrow.co.za or contact us directly. We look forward to partnering with you and your family on your journey to thriving!



