



# Management of leisure time by young adults with deeper intellectual disability

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The aim of this article is to identify competences in the field of free time management by young people with deeper intellectual disabilities and the possibility of using it in terms of preferred forms and organizations.

For the purposes of this publication, research was carried out on a group of 30 people with more severe intellectual disability with the use of two research tools. The necessity of further research on the given topic was emphasized.

**KEY WORDS:** leisure time, deeper intellectual disability, activity

## Introduction

Active spending of the leisure time by people with deeper intellectual disability as a way to participation in social life.

In the era of reform of the education system in pedagogical literature, the need for broadly understood activation of students in both didactical and leisure time activities is stressed.

Contemporary pedagogists give priority to the use of multiple activation methods in social rehabilitation as well as in the didactic and educational work.

Spending leisure time in the manner that is satisfying is essential in the life of each person and that includes people with deeper intellectual disability. .

This is important for maintaining good physical and mental health and contributes to a better quality of life. It is of particular importance in the case of young people with deeper intellectual disabilities in order to avoid social isolation and develop individual interests. The manner in which it is implemented is important for the development of mutual relations, as well as for the intensification of the social integration process<sup>1</sup>.

Free time is an important topic in the context of the social functioning of young people with deeper intellectual disabilities, yet it is ignored, downplayed and underestimated in society. Taking into account its role, skills in the field of resourcefulness, independence, assertiveness and self-development are developed<sup>2</sup>.

Currently, the emphasis is on searching for and applying innovative methods to activate people with deeper intellectual disability in the process of education, upbringing and social rehabilitation. The leitmotif of this approach is to prepare these young people for active participation in social life

As Małgorzata Czajkowska (2005) emphasizes, the synchronization of the emotional and volitional spheres while taking into account socially recognized moral principles, allows to multiply positive stimuli, develop socially useful activity, and at the same time influences self-esteem and independence. Therefore, creative revalidation, called "creative therapy"<sup>3</sup>, has a special place in the revalidation process. Participation in creative therapy allows these people to experience a different dimension of humanity, to encoun-

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<sup>1</sup> L. Melbøe, B. Ytterhus (2017) Disability leisure: in what kind of activities, and when and how do youths with intellectual disabilities participate?, *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 19:3, s. 245-255.

<sup>2</sup> W. Sroczyński, L. Ploch L., *Czas wolny i niepełnosprawność*. Warszawa, 2017, s. 108.

<sup>3</sup> M. Czajkowska, *Kompensacyjna funkcja internatu w procesie socjalizacji młodzieży upośledzonej umysłowo*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls Kraków, 2005, s. 33-41.

ter beauty, something unusual and unique. All forms of artistic creativity for people with intellectual disabilities are often the only way of expressing themselves, their feelings, complaints and dreams. Therefore creative therapy appears to be one of the forms of self-validation.

Activity is an essential element of the mental development of a human being. By influencing the shaping and regulation of relations with the surrounding environment, a person is subject to their own, individual changes, as well as influences the surrounding reality. The forms of activity are shaped and changed as a person develops. Its progressive nature manifests itself in the change in the scope of a person's activities and the quality of their performance. In the case of people with intellectual disabilities, triggering, developing and strengthening various types of activity has a very significant impact on the process of their own development<sup>4</sup>.

In general, activation is a form of mobilisation and provokes the will to act. This should be categorized as exerting some kind of influence on a person. In a situation where a person is activated, and consequently motivated to act, you can give support by creating different opportunities and helping identify and create different means of implementation. The activation process takes place in three stages. From passive, it turns into active, ready to act, and the finale is an independent action. In summary, a non-disabled person as well as a person with intellectual disabilities learn mainly through experience. According to this, the activation process is understood in terms of inspiration, encouragement, persuasion, collaboration – "activation of the development potential"<sup>5</sup>. With regard to people with disabilities, and in particular to people with intellectual disabilities,

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<sup>4</sup> W. Dykcik, Szychowiak B. (red.) Nowatorskie i alternatywne metody w teorii i praktyce pedagogiki specjalnej. Przewodnik metodyczny, Wydawnictwo UAM Poznań, 2001, s. 79-88.

<sup>5</sup> A. I., Brzezińska, A. Resler-Maj, Aktywizacja dzieci i młodzieży z grup ryzyka [w:] A.W. Brzezińska, A. Hulewska, J. Słomska-Nowak (red.), Edukacja kulturowa. Społeczność – aktywizacja – uczenie się, Wydawnictwo WSZ „Edukacja” Wrocław 2010, s.83-99.

the form and manner of spending free time plays an important role in the activation process.

As emphasized by Beata Cytowska (2011), the issue of free time is of interest to many researchers in various scientific fields (economists, psychologists, educators). However, it is the educators who attribute to themselves the greatest responsibility and role in this respect<sup>6</sup>. It is inextricably linked with the purpose of education of young people with deeper intellectual disability, which emphasizes the comprehensive development of each person according to their individual abilities and maximum preparation for life – thus participation in social life<sup>7</sup>.

Reflecting on the value of free time, Maria Jolanta Stąpór (2005) emphasizes early cognitive and social experiences. According to the author, proper management of free time can set a goal and give meaning to the lives of people with deeper intellectual disabilities. It can serve as a unique reward after difficult and burdensome everyday tasks and, above all, mobilize for further effort. One must also agree with her position that the essence of free time is to experience a sense of freedom and relaxation, freedom to decide about yourself, regeneration of physical and mental strength and the chance to gain new experiences, as well as a completely different form of realization of desires. Free time creates an opportunity for exercising one's own choice and experiencing appropriate motivation. It allows to be guided by an individual selection of specific situations and behaviors, permits the development of interests and creative desires and facilitates improvement in a selected field<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> B. Cytowska, *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań – krytyka podejść – propozycje rozwiązań*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek Toruń 2011, s. 359 – 383.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kościółek, K. Parys, D. Wolska, [w:] P. Pilecki (red), *Usprawnianie, wychowanie i nauczanie osób z głębszym upośledzeniem umysłowym*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP Kraków 2002 s. 193-202.

<sup>8</sup> M. J. Stąpór, *Czas wolny w procesie rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych*, [w:] J. Rottermund, A. Klinik, S. Wrona (red.), *Wybrane uwarunkowania rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls Kraków 2005, s. 263-273.

The importance of the close relationship between the activity conducted in the family environment and the effects of social rehabilitation was also noticed. The frequent lack of continuation of activities in the home environment that leads to the absence of new positive behaviors, socially accepted games and activities after returning to the facility were indicated<sup>9</sup>.

The autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities is implied by their active inclusion in social life. The task of specialists, parents and legal guardians of people with intellectual disabilities is to support the process of becoming an autonomous member of society – the right to decide on forms of spending free time, the right to decide about oneself, the right to establish interpersonal contacts. Proper management of free time for these people is one of the most important elements of adulthood and active social adaptation (M. Kościółek, K. Parys, D. Wolska 2002, s. 193-202).

Free time should be the property of every person, both able-bodied and intellectually disabled. Leisure time varies depending on the phase of a person's life. Its appropriate organization plays a very important role in the general development of a person with intellectual disability, as it enriches his intellectual and physical sphere, develops him morally and aesthetically, and has an important compensatory and socializing function. Introducing people with intellectual disabilities to the rational use of free time requires creativity from specialists working with these people (Your guide to. Leisure for people with a learning disability, 2008, Mencap, London).

At the turn of recent years, research interests in this area of human life have acquired a slightly different meaning. Free time is recognized in terms of health, entertainment and educational importance, as well as its culture-forming impact. Timeless and still valid is the statement that “free time is used to relieve mental tensions, counteracts overloads resulting from obligatory life tasks and should be considered as a factor of comprehensive, dynamic,

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<sup>9</sup> M. J. Stąpór, Czas wolny w procesie rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych, [w:] J. Rottermund, A. Klinik, S. Wrona (red.), Wybrane uwarunkowania rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls Kraków 2005, s. 263-273.

positive development, shaping the personality at the optimal level appropriate for a person. Therefore, introducing a person into the circles of social life, facilitating the process of getting to know oneself, strengthening one's self-esteem, defining one's own identity is also done by using tradition as the content of culture, customs, commonly accepted social forms of behavior (regulating the behavior of an individual), as well as customs cultivated by rituals, celebrations, practices. determining the type of social relations "10.

## Own Research

30 young people aged 13 to 32 with more severe intellectual disability participated in the research.

Tools applied in this research:

- Adaptive Behaviour Skale for Children, Youth and Adults by Ray Fostera, Max Shellhaasa, Henry Lelanda, translated, modified and adapted by Janusz Kostrzewski.

Part I, category - (VIII) self-control (initiative, persistence, organization of free time) was used for the study.

The mentioned research tool belongs to the category of observational scales. It is a grading scale dedicated to the study of people with intellectual disabilities, socially maladjusted individuals and people with emotional disorders<sup>11</sup>. The study was conducted twice in order to check whether the study group had acquired greater competences in the study area after one year.

- Poll diagnostic method using the questionnaire technique<sup>12</sup>.  
Questionnaire was addressed to young adults with deeper in-

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<sup>10</sup> M. J. Stąpór, Czas wolny w procesie rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych, [w:] J. Rottermund, A. Klinik, S. Wrona (red.), Wybrane uwarunkowania rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls Kraków 2005, s. 266.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kirenko, M. Parchomiuk, Edukacja i rehabilitacja osób z upośledzeniem umysłowym, Wydawnictwo Akademickie WSSP Lublin 2008, s. 116-117.

<sup>12</sup> T. Pilch, T. Bauman, Zasady badań pedagogicznych. Strategie ilościowe i jakościowe, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak Warszawa 2001, s. 79-82.

tellectual disability. The questions developed in the questionnaire concerned the preferred forms and organization of free time.

Table 1. Age of the surveyed people with more severe intellectual disability

Age range	Study group	
	L	%
13 - 19	15	50
20 - 29	10	33
30 - 32	5	17

Source: own study.

Table 2. Study Group - spare time

Range/Indicators	Study Group Study 1					Study group Study 2					p
	M	SD	Me	Min	Max	M	SD	Me	Min	Max	
Iniciative	6,93	1,17	7,00	4,00	9,00	7,63	0,81	8,00	6,00	9,00	0,0007
Endurance	8,90	1,49	9,00	6,00	12,00	9,73	1,26	10,00	7,00	12,00	0,0001
Spare time organisation	2,40	0,86	2,00	1,00	4,00	3,23	0,77	3,00	1,00	4,00	0,0001
Self-control	18,23	2,33	18,00	13,00	22,00	20,60	1,90	21,00	16,00	24,00	0,0000

Source: own study.

The data presented in the above tables, relating to the study group, confirm the existence of statistically significant differences in terms of all indicators. Comparing the differences in the arithmetic mean value between the first and the second measurement, it can be stated that the study group obtained results after one year, indicating some increase in the ability to organize free time. The following factors influenced the obtained results: age, level of intellectual

disability, individual characteristics, favorable conditions, and the attractiveness of classes.

On the other hand, in the conducted surveys, the issues related to the organization, decision-making, place and forms of spending free time by young adults with deeper intellectual disabilities were analyzed.

Table 3. Free time-who do you spend it with and who would you like to spend it with?

	Who do you mostly spend your free time with?	Who would you like to spend your free time with?
With Friends/ Acquaintances	8,6%	71,4%
Family	68,6%	20,0 %
With Partner	0,0%	5,7 %
Alone	22,8 %	2,9 %

Source: Own Study

The conducted research shows that people with more severe intellectual disability spend most of their free time with their family (68.6%), even though they would like to spend it to a large extent with friends / acquaintances (71.4%). The respondents show a great need for contact with friends and acquaintances. It is worth noting that 22.8% of respondents spend their time alone, although only 2.9% declare such a need.

The attractiveness of forms of spending free time is very important in the life of a person with a deeper intellectual disability. It has an impact on maintaining physical and mental health and promotes a better quality of life. Spending free time in a creative manner allows these people to acquire new experiences and skills, as well as learn about their own preferences, abilities and limitations. Despite the fact that there are many arguments in favor of promoting and implementing free time management skills in this group, young people with more severe intellectual disability most often spend

time at home, 62.9%. Less often with family 20%, in public places 14.3% and with friends 2.8%.

In the study group, 68.6% of the respondents do not participate in organized activities, while 31.4% are people participating in organized activities, e.g. sports, theater workshops, etc. The reason for this may be due to the fact that third parties are more often involved. as the level of functioning and individual limitations of a person with a deeper intellectual disability demand such support.

It is important to learn how to spend free time properly, "from an early age the family and school should shape children to spend their free time in a conscious, pleasant and valuable way"<sup>13</sup>. The family plays an important role in developing and shaping interests and the ability to spend free time in an appropriate way. It is a source of model forms of spending free time as the child learns through imitation. It is within the family where he learns how to properly use his free time. In the research group, more people prefer the passive spending of their free time 51.4% while 48.6% chose an active form.

An important function of leisure time is self-education and self-improvement, which allows you to achieve autonomy. Acquiring knowledge and new skills is aimed at personality formation and self-improvement. Working on oneself is connected with finding one's place in society and the development of subjectivity<sup>14</sup> (Orłowska, Bleszyński 2016, p. 36). Working on oneself has also a cultural and educational significance. Thanks to it, personal development is possible. It consists of assimilating and expanding one's knowledge, acquiring new skills.

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<sup>13</sup> K. Kwilecki, Rozważania o czasie wolnym wybrane zagadnienia. Górnośląska Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa GWSH, Katowice 2011, s. 6.

<sup>14</sup> M. Orłowska, J. J. Bleszyński, Czas wolny jako środowisko życia. Perspektywa pedagogiczna. Warszawa 2016, s. 36. Przegląd Pedagogiczny 2018, nr 1.

Table 4. Free time – organisation and decision making

	Decision making in the field of spare time management for people with deeper intellectual disability
Myself	68,6 %
Decision made by other people	31,4 %
	Who organises spare time
Myself	34,3 %
My family	62,9 %
Friends	2,8 %

Source: Own Study

In the conducted research, attention was paid to the issue of decision-making in the area of free time. According to the research, the organizer of leisure time of a person with more severe intellectual disability are family members (62.9%), less often it is organized by the person concerned – 4.3%. On the other hand, the choice of activity is more often made by a person with more severe intellectual disability (68.6%). This picture is undoubtedly influenced by the age and degree of disability as well as the place of residence.

Summing up, it is worth noting that people with more severe disabilities, despite many limitations, show a need and willingly undertake activities aimed at participating in various forms of leisure activities. The barrier may be insufficient competences in the field of free time management. An important aspect is the preparation of these people at every stage of their development, taking into account the environment (family, school, peer), supporting and implementing trainings that will equip them with appropriate skills, taking into account their individual potential, but also limitations resulting from their disability.

## Summary

Free time becomes the basic value of everyday life that facilitates personal development of a person with deeper intellectual disability. The joy and satisfaction derived from fruitfully spent free time

translates into an improvement in the quality of life. It is important that the free time is so arranged that a person with a deeper intellectual disability derives positive benefits<sup>15</sup>.

In educational as well as rehabilitation work with people with deeper intellectual disability, it is important to recognize the importance of the ability to manage free time. It is of particular importance in the context of preparing young people for a fuller participation in social life. Systematic, consistent work on acquiring competences in the field of managing free time influences: an increase in the sense of satisfaction with the activities undertaken, awareness of one's own limitations and possibilities, and thus building a positive self-image, increase in skills in establishing and maintaining social relations, acquiring knowledge about social norms, improves the psychophysical condition and the development of emotional intelligence, favors the pursuit of dreams. All these elements contribute to a significant improvement in the quality of life of young adults with deeper intellectual disabilities<sup>16</sup>.

Modern technologies and continuous modernization allow for greater accessibility and elimination of barriers that contributed to the isolation of this group of people. Free time influences the development of personality and increases the effectiveness of the revalidation process. Properly organized, gives a chance to compensate for other failures. At the same time, it can become an area of unlimited rehabilitation prospects. Creative and at the same time useful free time satisfies the need for belonging, expression or action.

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<sup>15</sup> L. Ploch, Czas wolny dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością [w:] W. Sroczynski, L. Ploch (red.), Czas wolny i niepełnosprawność, Warszawa 2017, s. 168-182.

<sup>16</sup> Magiera, Czas wolny osób niepełnosprawnych Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach ISSN 2083-8611 Nr 392, Katowice 2020 s. 59-68.

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