

## Physical development as a chance for autism

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### Introduction

The topic of Autism is relevant today in Ukraine as well as through out the world. Meanwhile, the number of people with autism in Ukraine today remains unknown because of the lack of statistics, difficulty in diagnosing and other problems in herent to the country, which only recently began to recognize the existence of this problem.

In the Soviet Union, as we know, autism "didn't exist": children with autism who had reached the adult age were just receiving a diagnosis of "Schizophrenia."

Nowadays in our country it is still hard for the parents to get autism diagnosed due to insufficient finances and the lack of specialists in this field. With an early childhood autism diagnosis, an adult diagnosis can still be turned into schizophrenia.

5 actual problems for people with autism in Ukraine - 2019

1. Lack of specialized experts.
2. The difficulty of obtaining the diagnosis.
3. Complications with getting accepted into schools.
4. Impossibility to start the correction therapies in time.
5. The inability to get a pre-school education.

The system of inclusive education remains an urgent problem. Students are only superficially untrouces to this activity, but they are not taught how to professionally do correction therapy work with such children in Ukrainian universities. Many children stay at home or in specialized day care centres. Their future remains a question and anxiety for parents.

Most of all, Ukraine lacks speech therapists, defectologists, physiotherapists, massage therapists, and trainers.

Some parents acquire a second profession and retrain for psychologists, doctors, pathologists, psychologists, open rehabilitation centres, work in organizations for early intervention, supervise associations for autism, create teaching materials, educational videos, visual communication folders (Pecs cards), become ABA therapists, Flortime therapy specialists, create charity foundations and active civil organizations, organize conferences, entertainment festivals, summer camps to improve the development of their children.

As a result, having pedagogical, creative, coaching experience and noticing the problem of Autism, I could not stand aside and began to study this problem.

I gathered a group of children and parents and started training with them in the Central Sports Club of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Kiev on the first of September 2018.

### Purpose

Thus, the aim of the study is to describe an effective tool - playing sports, a healthy position towards the perception of the physical development of the parent and child as prerequisite for mental well-being ( as a chance for autism)

To show and prove that physical development not only reduces and reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes and obesity, but it is especially important that it gives many benefits to people with autism. This leads to improved communication and socialization, cognitive abilities, sensory and behavioral changes.

## Methods

The methods which I use are all about combination of physical trainings and creation of special atmosphere. This is the Adaptive fitness method.

Our «Adaptive Fitness» today - programme is different types of game activity in the group: Group game training, Elements of boxing, Elements of crossfit, exercises in the gym, Tennis, Stretching, Yoga.

Training is aimed at coordinating, forming good posture, forming the musculoskeletal system, improving the visual analyzer, improving visualization, proprioception, feeling the body in space, feeling and understanding parts of the body, adapting the whole organism to fitness. This is the joint work of children and parents on unification, endurance, strength, positive.

The first part of the session is held in the boxing hall, the second part is in the gym. We finish the training with Yoga + Encouragement. In training, I use a stopwatch, whistle, hourglass, adjustable backlit music, different melodies in the process of active training and quiet tasks.

We have our own rituals - at the beginning and at the end of the workout, the children sit in a circle. For such children, this brings an important understanding of the beginning and end of training, this is a moment of calmness and safety. This is a special magic of unification and joint power.

Sometimes my external image is different - I am the hero of a cartoon, or I have a face painting, or bright sneakers and a T-shirt. Children also sometimes draw and try something on themselves: they draw a face painting, wear attributes — a bright captain's cap or a bright T-shirt.

We also make massage with fitballs, such as rest, relaxation, calmness, adaptation between transitions from one room to another. The massage is also accompanied by light music.

So, I select the exercises for such children and direct them to activate the work of the two hemispheres, where there are also cross-movements of the arms and legs, exercises for balance, coordination, the use of boxing elements, bilateral body work.

Also, there are relays, team games, tug-of-wars, jumping rope, crawling, running, criss-cross, dance moves. For example, you are with us in the boxing hall and can step into the ring and wear real boxing gloves - for some children this is a dream!

As you know, it's better to see once than to hear a hundred times. Same for these people, especially initially, visualization is needed for support, calmness, understanding.

I developed my cards with the names for each fitness attribute and exercise machine in the gym. For the younger group there are their own tasks on the tablet-roulette, and for the older group there are separate independent tasks on the cards (4-5 cards each, which can be advanced by repeats / sets).

I recommend additional exercise videos to parents in our group on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/helena.koshelewa>),

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/446610632493929/permalink/656056634882660/>),

On youtube xsport1

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR\\_5Oj-atqmvc8mjas3sszq](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR_5Oj-atqmvc8mjas3sszq) )

(<http://trenirovka.in.ua>).

At the end of the training, each participant receives a treat (fruit, sweetness), passing the sensory ball in a circle, saying “I am amazing. I did great!”.

The great part of work I do with mothers: it's very good for them to meet each other, to consult with me about healthy food and the food for their special children. It is also very important to do physical trainings with mothers for their beauty, health, weight loss, healthy muscle tone, joy and the sense of life and wish to create something better. I think that happy mother is a way to health and strong child.

## Results

<https://www.mhgc21.org>

Now I already have regular classes with autistic children, children with Asperger syndrome and others.

We have two groups: the youngest (5-10 years) and the older group (11-20 years). And the number of children grows constantly. Training takes place every Saturday at a fixed time in the rented rooms of the Central Sports Club of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The duration of the training session is 60 minutes.

Due to my project I see the results now: children adapt well in groups, their socialization is much better, behavior and discipline becomes much better in competitive relays. The proprioception, visualization and coordination works on trainings.

We have a group on Facebook, where we share with our parents the results and impressions, we invite mothers to individual trainings, to joint family trainings, and to field trips and photo shoots.

### **Limitations and strengths of the study**

Many understand that physical activity is vital for a healthy lifestyle for all people, it reduces the risk of heart diseases, diabetes and obesity, and what is especially important - physical development provides many benefits for people with autism. This leads to improved communication and socialization, cognitive abilities, sensory and behavioral changes.

Exercises, sports, Adaptive fitness - help to be more:

- independent (in group training, in a team, in the locker room, in communication),
- disciplined (when performing independent tasks, listen to the coach, communicate with peers, prepare a sports bag for training),
- confident (doing all the tasks assigned + encouragement, winning the relay race)
- conscious in his body (feeling the body when performing tasks).

12 Advantages of Adaptive Fitness:

1. Reducing maladaptive behavior
2. The increase in long-term concentration of attention to the tasks implementation.
3. Gaining confidence, independence
4. Getting rid of toxins from the body, improving health
5. Improving mood from depression, anxiety
6. Improving discipline
7. Improving the development of speech and academic skills
8. Reduction of echolalia (verbal repetition of phrases or words)
9. Reduction of stimming (waving hands, jumping in one place, self-torture, which are the usual behavior in autism).
10. Awareness of your body in space,
11. Meaning of body parts
12. Adaptation and socialization

As I see now, classes on my system Adaptive Fitness are very effective for developing strength, attention, coordination, socialization, physical and psychological health. The combination of physical exercises, loads, training in a group for children and mothers and creating a special atmosphere - give positive results.

### **Practical\Social value**

When you work with people with autism, they learn – by observing the ones beside them, repeating after you - you need to be an active model, teacher, inventor of interesting and relevant sports tasks.

I recommend:

- 1 Daily physical activities
- 2 Healthy food
- 3 Being an active example to your child.

<https://www.mhgc21.org>

Take a closer look at the needs and abilities of the child, enter physical activities into child's and your schedule.

Never give up and believe in what your child can do and you can be its leader!! Autism affects each child differently. Find the kind of activity that your child likes and needs for his health.

The motivation of parents to attract a child to such activity is the active actions of the parents themselves! Instead, you get a socialized, adapted to the life child with improved processes in development. Implementing these powerful concepts can create healthy minds and bodies that are vital for the growth and development of our children.

Motivation of children - group workouts with peers - socialization, games with other children, positive, encouragement (emoticons, fruits, treadmill, favourite game), positivity from the process of training.

It works! (And it clicked!)

### **Originality\Conclusions**

Future and prospects - there is! Physical development is a chance for autism!

Parents that are interested can direct themselves and their child to learn the specifics of cooking, medical ("Good Doctor" series), coaching activities, and be a sports blogger promoting healthy lifestyles.

1. Create inclusive sports centres - it will gain a healthier society, friends, active participants adapted to life. This could be a boxing gym, a gym, a hall for choreography, rock climbing, roller tracks, tennis courts, hippotherapy, a swimming pool, a healthy food, restaurants, and spa services.

2. Promote a healthy lifestyle - it will attract more friends and improve the quality of life for others.

The world of activities and sports fantasies is diverse! Teach yourself and your child to move! With any schedule, you must engage in physical activity and make it a daily goal. For most people, exercise is just talking. Healthy active parents - healthy children!

Physical development and training should be part of your life! Raise the skills of a healthy lifestyle for a healthy society and the future!

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