



New Trends  
in Psychology

## Stimulation through Play for Children with Special Needs

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*Motto:*

*“The game is the only atmosphere in which the psychological being can breathe and consequently can act. To ask ourselves why the child is playing means to ask ourselves why he is a child, we cannot imagine childhood without his laughter and games.”*

Eduard Claparede

**Abstract:** The world unfolds progressively in front of the child, through sensory and motor experiences. At this stage of development the child can often be vulnerable. A child with special needs may not be as eager to try new experiences or stimuli as a regular child. He may not even play and, without stimulation, his condition does not improve through daily experiences. When a child's development is delayed or slowed down due to deficiencies or an abnormal environment, the first years of life are not enough for a child to become aware of his body or to feel safe with or without other people - for example, to start to develop their autonomy.

**Keywords:** special needs; game; psychotherapy; exercises; learning; methods; recovery

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## **Introduction**

Stimulation through movement aims to go through a structured program containing physical activities that lead to the psychomotor development of the beneficiaries. A wide range of activities has a substantial role in their physical and mental development.

### **General examples (exercises and games)**

#### *Personal presentation exercise using the ball.*

All participants sit together in a circle and pass the ball from one to another, each participant must come in the middle of the circle. I roll the ball on different parts of the body to stay in constant contact with it. The movements must be as slow as possible and the space must be used to the maximum. At one point, a person who plays “freezes” and says his name. Then the next person enters the circle, takes the ball and continues the personal presentation.

#### *Personal presentation exercise using the circle*

All participants sit in a circle, each person in turn enters the middle and using a plastic circle will dance slowly in that space. When the person in the middle thinks that the dance is over, he starts to circle the floor, saying the name of the person who will enter the middle. The person must move quickly to catch the circle before it touches the floor. The others continue to dance, until all participants, in turn, enter the middle of the circle.

#### *Pair exercises Using the ball and the circle*

This exercise takes place in pairs. One person will hold the circle and the other will hold the ball. Against a musical background, the two people will dance together, always maintaining eye contact. At some point, they will change the objects they have without interrupting the dance. The workspace must be used as efficiently as possible, and the body movements must be smooth but at the same time ample. It is important for them to control their breathing to avoid getting tired. At the end of the dance, the two people find a suitable time to “freeze” in a statuary position. Then two more people take the ball and the circle and continue the exercise.

#### *Using two small balls*

This exercise is done in pairs, each person holding a small ball in his hand. Listening to music, participants will begin to dance, carefully holding the ball in their hands.

Using as much space as possible and slow but ample movements, dancers must maintain constant eye contact and non-verbal communication. At some point, the two people will change the balls by rolling them on the floor. Then they will start dancing again until another pair takes their place and the balls.

*Shape and movement using the elastic*

As before, we need to have a relaxing background music. In the next exercise we need 3 participants. We will use a simple and circular elastic. The 3 players will hold the elastic in 3 points, keeping their arms outstretched. The 3 people move in an already established space producing different shapes. In order for these shapes to be kept in a static position for a few moments, there must be good coordination between the players. In turn, each player must maintain a static position while the other two move to create different shapes. Then 2 people will hold the elastic, and the third person will perform different movements. The other people in the group will play this game as well.

*Dance in pairs using veils.*

Against a relaxing musical background, two people dance holding the ends of a veil. The pair must synchronize their movements as well as possible, so as to sway the veil using as much space as possible. At the same time 2 other pairs can join the dance trying to cooperate and use another veil. By covering as much space as possible by coordinating the movements of the 3 pairs together with the swaying of the veils, a very original dance is obtained. The more variously colored the veils, the more attractive the activity will be.

The goal is to develop interpersonal relationships, body awareness, meet social and emotional needs, and stimulate physical development. Exercise, movement and games are important for physical development and coordination but are also means of communication, outdoorization and leisure. When we use activities that involve movement we become aware of how physical activity contributes to socialization. Children are encouraged to watch, imitate, listen and respond. The gym equipment consists of: wooden machines and sponge machines covered with plastic wrap.

**The role of gym equipment:**

- development of eye-foot coordination;
- development of manual forceps;
- development of basic walking skills;

- development of lateral movement;
- developing balance and gait;
- developing the right foot placement angle for young children;
- developing balance;
- gradual development of coordination and locomotor skills for all age groups; • development of climbing, balance, and crawling skills, etc.

#### Stimulating children with special needs through play

Stimulation through play aims to go through a structured program containing recreational activities that lead to the harmonious development of beneficiaries in physical, mental and motor Next we will present the value of the game; why we need to recover lost gaming experiences and we will describe the methods by which early lost experiences can be recovered later in life. This recovery of lost experiences can be done in the context of a formal program supported by trained people. Many of the ideas that will be presented are basic - such as telling stories - and are familiar to us because they are based on our childhood experience. Even without a formal program, you can use some of the ideas in this handbook to enrich the play experiences of children and adults in your care.

One of the basic rights of the child is that of play and recreation. But sometimes in institutions children spend a lot of time doing nothing; I'm just sitting.

In these institutions, the need for play should be a first necessity (after the basic ones: food, heat, clothing). Play should be the child's most important activity in the first years of life, and, like any other dominant activity, is a major formative experience that helps the child adjust to life. The game develops the child mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. The game starts from the first months of life with a special importance in the child's development. The simple "cu-cu bau" game is one of the first stimuli. Playing with the hands and fingers, the songs develop such an important attachment for the small child and lead to the development of language. Storytelling and storytelling develops the imagination and ability to describe scenes and situations outside the immediate experience of the child or adult.

By the age of three, a child who is stimulated in a supportive environment is ready for the play of imitation. Children begin to play with the adult and then with other children. Children who do not have this valuable period of their development subsequently have great learning difficulties and seem to suffer from a nervousness

that prevents them from getting involved in a creative project. They have low confidence in other people and have a lower vocabulary of words and ideas. Regardless of age, play is fundamental to communication. It relieves stress, stimulates creativity, and for children is a safe environment for expressing feelings, exploring relationships and confessing desires. Thus, play stimulation is included in their practices by more and more elementary school counselors and private practice therapists. Children's language lags behind their cognitive development, and they communicate through play what they understand from the world around them. Thus, toys are perceived as words, and play as language. The main purpose of using game stimulation is to achieve the maximum development of the remaining potential of the beneficiaries.

**Main Objectives of Stimulation through Play:**

- strengthening basic motor skills;
- strengthening manual skills;
- increasing personal autonomy;
- development of general motor skills;
- developing the capacity to discriminate;
- development of spatial and temporal perception;
- developing the ability to identify objects / animals / colors / shapes;
- increasing the ability to concentrate, - eliminating absenteeism during activities;
- stimulation of perceptual abilities;
- increase cognitive acquisition;
- developing the ability to identify the existing relationships between objects;
- increasing communication capacity;
- the disappearance of some verbal stereotypes;
- increasing the degree of sociability;
- emotional support and provision of rules to follow;
- developing the ability to perform tasks with other children;
- increasing the degree of emotional security;

- stimulating creativity.

### **The Beneficial Effects of the Game**

- the beneficiaries have the satisfaction of doing something themselves, it gives them the feeling that they have control of these actions and they reconstitute normal aspects of life.
- beneficiaries have the opportunity to meet other children; children often offer each other support and company.
- Anxiety, confusion and fear can be experienced with the help of imaginative situations through play, e.g. "Thieves and guards", accidents, ambulances.
- beneficiaries can be involved in the role play in which anxiety can be expressed without restriction.

Learning through play is a very accessible approach for children and people with disabilities and can become a pleasant experience. They LIVE the game, not just AUD about the game. Unstructured play can be enjoyable and offer the possibility of emotional expression, but too much play of this kind can be unstimulating. The structured game with specific goals is stimulating and can lead to safe achievements. The game is also creative and is an opportunity to test flexibility. Adult involvement can be educational and can stimulate thinking and promote different points of view. Some consider play to be an intellectual activity, others a pleasant, enjoyable activity.

### **The Need to Recover Childhood Experiences**

If the child did not have a satisfactory start, it is necessary to return to the initial experiences, not in the same way as in infants, but in a close way to live similar experiences, to give them chances to play and experiment. They need encouragement to participate in creative games, through songs and games. They need stories.

The game remains for the mentally handicapped an important component of the recovery process, because it offers movement, pleasure, release of emotions, human contact, removal from isolation and makes communication possible. Play is one of the activities through which the child learns to know the real world. As the child develops, he learns that play involves social relationships between people.

In his games the child reflects the life and social activity of the adult, because this is his living environment. From an early age, the child feels the need for active communication with those around him, first of all with the parents who take care of him, buy him toys and play with him. In his games the child specifically imitates the life and activity of adults. At this age, children's knowledge and skills are limited. This contradiction between the child's desires on the one hand and the real possibilities on the other hand is resolved through play.

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