Educational Opportunities for Parents of Children with Behavioural Disorders for Fair Travelling

RTA

According to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2018), the number of children with special needs in Latvia is growing every year: In 2010, there were 7859 children with disabilities, whereas 8153 children with special needs were registered in 2017, of which about 95% live in families. After the child receives the disability diagnosis, the parents try to adapt to the situation, learning to adapt and promote their child's development regardless of disability. Still, parents often feel insecure and unsure of their ability to satisfy the child's physical, psychological, and educational needs.

Parents of children with special needs are characterized by hypercare and hiding the child from society and not visiting public places, thus depriving the child of various social impressions. In this case, the child develops slowly, does not feel calm and secure, he/she is unsociable and unconfident. In a situation where parents of children with special needs believe that they are at fault for the child's health problems, they tend to use incomprehensible, often radical treatments that can be detrimental to the child's health and development.

Researchers (Hill, 2001; Reio, Fornes, 2011, Lundahl, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2006) have concluded in their studies that parents of children with special needs require more advanced knowledge and skills regarding the development of special children and that these parents often feel the need for social support, which is accessible not only in person but also remotely (in the e-environment), thus providing the parents with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for overcoming and eliminating insecurity, providing support and managing parental stress in promoting the development of a child with special needs.

The digitalization of the educational environment is accelerating in the world, which determines the use of various digital teaching aids, information technologies, social networks and learning platforms in the learning process. Information technologies and digital tools are used to find, compile and present information. They are used for communication, data acquisition and processing, and generating new knowledge.

The 21st century is characterized by wide access to information through a variety of technologies. The education of this century is based on the three pedagogical principles: personalization, participation and productivity. Scientific research has shown that the application

of technologies in education changes the learning process both psychologically and socially (Prensky, 2001). Skillful use of technologies can facilitate learning, but the individuals' ability to use information technologies, search, find and analyze information is still insufficient.

Digital learning takes many forms, which are seen as tools and strategies for achieving educational goals. At a basic level, it includes online tools and resources for classrooms, hybrid and blended programs that combine online and on-site learning, and online schools. (Watson, 2019)

National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM, 2016) note that education for parents with special needs children is based on the following:

Social learning theory. Promoting positive behaviour in the relationship between parents and their children is emphasized in the learning process. Parents learn to understand and react to the hints of their child and to pay more attention to the child's needs. As a result, the improvement in the health and behaviour of special needs children can promote positive attitude of the parents, as well as reduce parental stress and increase parental input in the development of special needs children.

Skills-based interventions approach. The acquisition of the different skills of solving health problems can help improve the behaviour of special needs children, the relationship between the parents and the children, as well as reduce stress (for example, parents of special needs children are taught how to improve safety at home or to recognise trauma symptoms and react to these).

Learning and consultations. The learning goal for children with special needs is to help families to better understand their child's emotions and needs, improve the connection between the parents and the child, as well as improve the child's behaviour and stability.

Unfortunately, there are not many digital tools in Latvian that can help parents of children with special needs, but there are some support services offered by municipalities, as well as parent forums. There is a number of tools available in English, such as Cognoa - a healthcare company that assesses and supports children's development. This application can be used as a free of charge evaluation tool. If parents have questions or concerns about their child's development, they can fill out a questionnaire or take a short video showing the child's natural behaviour at home. This data is then sent to experts for analysis and feedback. Although it is still not a substitute for a full-scale assessment, Cognoa has proved to be quite effective in diagnosing children aged less than 13 months. (Cognoa, 2020)

The website of Cognoa (https://cognoa.com/parents/)
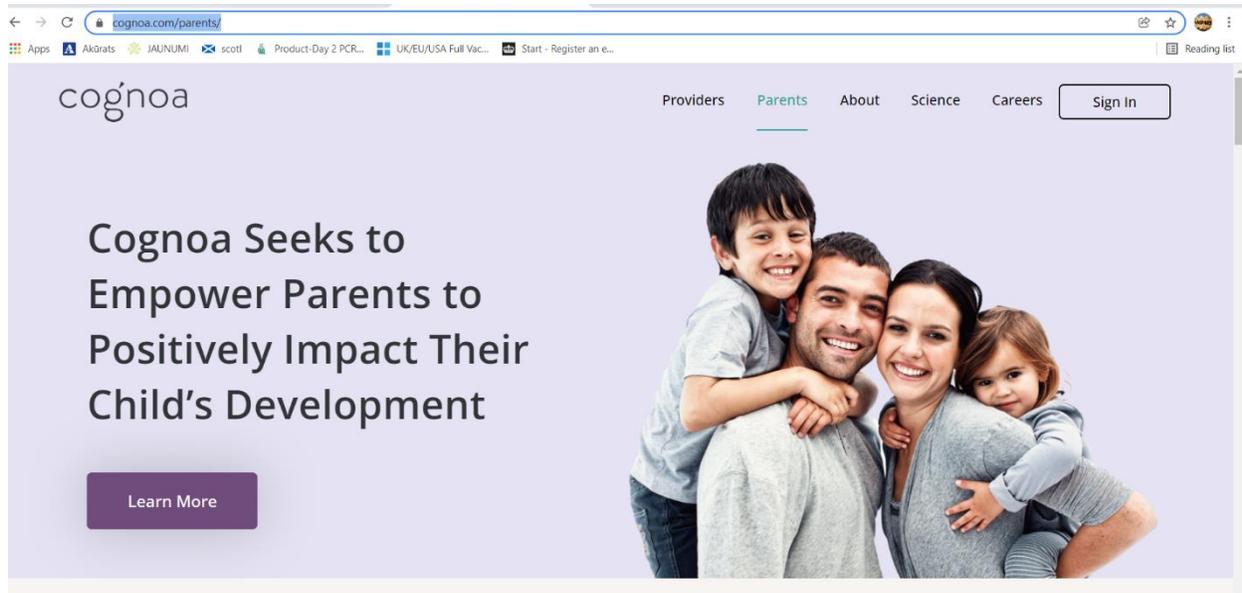
Parents of children with special needs find that a weekly schedule visualizer or "Visual Schedule Planner" (https://www.goodkarmaapplications.com/visual-schedule-planner1.html) is a very useful program, whose aim is to provide a structured environment for children and adults with anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, acquired brain injuries, learning challenges, hearing impairments, and other special needs by visually displaying their day, upcoming week or month. Such assistance is usually very useful for children, helping them to acquire important skills in the video modelling process, such as personal hygiene, behaviour in a hotel or on public transport, and others (an appropriate video can be associated with each scheduler's event).

The program "Visual Schedule Planner" https://www.goodkarmaapplications.com/visual-schedule-planner1.html

By using mobile devices on a daily basis, children acquire positive cooperation skills with their parents, which is a key factor in helping parents of children with special needs to understand their needs better and help them acquiring the necessary skills. Nowadays, with the rapid development of digital technologies, many mobile device applications have been created that focus on meeting the needs and problem-solving of children with special needs; there are also routes created in Latvia that can be used by people with special needs.

The website "Mapeirons" contains information about available places not only in Latvia, but also in other countries.
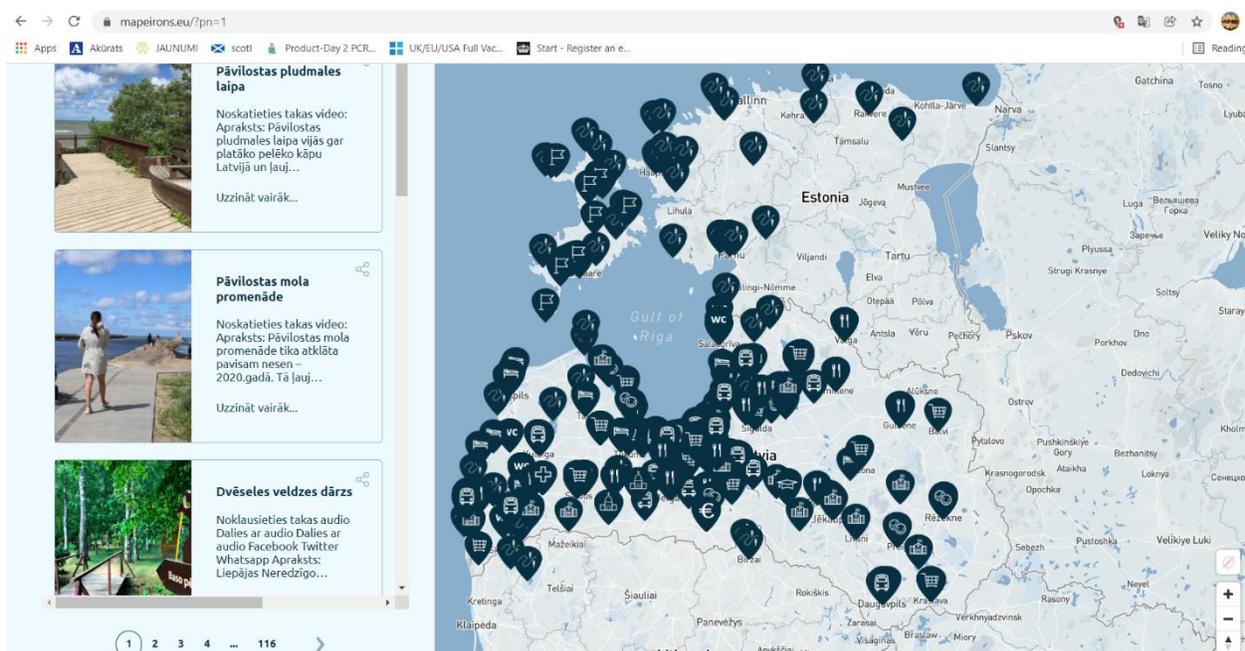
The environmental accessibility map created by the Latvian Association of people with disabilities and their friends "Apeirons" (https://mapeirons.eu/?pn=1)

Integration of Children with Behavioural Disorders into Society, which Promotes Successful Travel
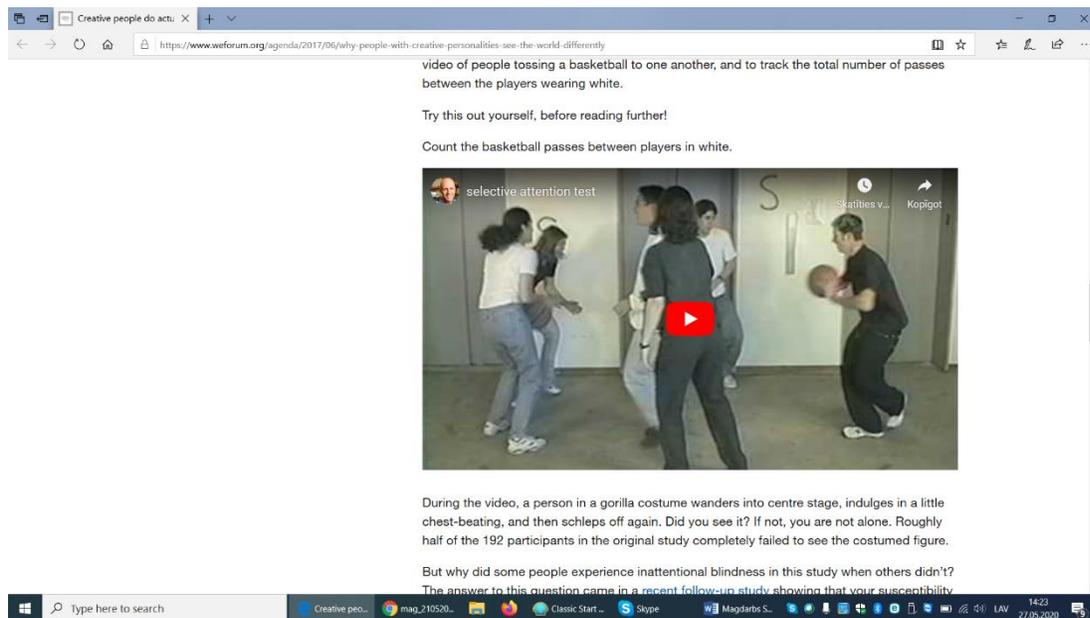
Children's behavioural disorders and communication difficulties are most often manifested in the following ways:

1. Destructive communication (aggressive behaviour that endangers other children and/or adults),

2. Destructive behaviour (violence against animals, misappropriation, damage or destruction of property belonging to other people, etc.),

3. Defiant communication (oppositional behaviour, openly refusing to follow the rules or justified demands of parents and other adults, deliberately annoying others, provoking conflicts, etc.),

4. Non-compliance with the rules (use of uncensored words, non-compliance with rules and requirements, wandering, use of intoxicants, school absenteeism, etc.),

5. Insufficient self-regulation of behaviour and communication (inability to change thoughts, feelings or actions to achieve meaningful goals, inability to resist sudden excitement or unwanted drives, impulsivity and inability to concentrate for a long time).

The assessment of a child's behavioural problems and communication difficulties is based on observing the child's behaviour. It is not possible to assess a child's behavioural problems

objectively using strict quantitative indicators, as undesirable manifestations of a child's behaviour are individual, context-dependent, while the interpretation of behavioural observations is influenced by the observer's experience and relationship with the observed child.

In order to promote cooperation skills, parents of children with special needs can watch a video, after which they must answer questions.

The frame from the video (https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/whypeople-with-creative-personalities-see-the-world-differently)

In the video, several activities take place in parallel, which allows us to conclude that it is not possible to use such an amount of activities when working with children with special needs. The participants of the courses expressed the opinion that mutual cooperation is important for their children not only at home, but also in society and social networks. Taking into consideration the current situation with the spread of COVID-19, other children are currently learning from home and do not meet in public places, so cooperation and communication in the digital environment is developing; it allows children with special needs to feel equally socially active.

The participants of the cooperation network (individuals, groups, organizations) involved in the provision of child support, together with all the mutual relations in the network, form the structure of the cooperation network in Latvia.

The structure of the cooperation network in Latvia

There are several parents' associations in Latvia, where participants can get help, information, simply talk about their pain and understand that they are not alone and it is much easier to solve problems together.

Children with an autism spectrum depend on a specific daily regimen and show resentment and protest against the change. They have a tendency to engage in the same activity, which is characterized by an intrusive interest, such as putting objects and small things in a line, sometimes in a certain order according to their size, color, and shape. There is an interest in an object or thing, figures, body part. There may be an addiction to something that is inseparable and is always carried with them. It is often difficult to travel with such a child.

Experts recommend the use of sensory integration therapy to deal with such situations.

Sensory integration is:

 • a dynamic process that allows a child to influence and adapt to events in a constantly changing environment;

 • Incoming information is processed with different intensity and significance;

 • Tasks are shaped in the same way as everyday life, which requires a series of increasingly complex, tailored responses based on sensory perception;

 • Positive experience helps to shape the child's growth and development and promotes the further development of communication.

There is a solution for every situation. Preparation and self-confidence are important. It is advisable to carefully review the itinerary, destination and technical assistance. One has to prepare for a longer trip in time and plan all the nuances.

Additional Literature

Methodological Recommendations for Support Groups, Work of Support Groups for the Integration of Children and Young People with Special Needs and Risk Groups http://iic.lv/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Metodiskie_ieteikumi.pdf

Diagnostic Material for Diagnosing Children's Behavioural Disorders and Communication Difficulties for Specialists Involved In Providing Support to Children with Behavioural Disorders and Communication Difficulties in Educational Institutions, Care Institutions, Family Courts and Municipal Institutions https://www.bti.gov.lv/lv/media/900/download

Cooperation Network for Counselling Support for Children with Communication Difficulties and Behavioural Disorders https://www.bti.gov.lv/lv/media/909/download

Methodology for Reducing Aggression and Violence and Promoting Social Inclusion of Children with Behavioural and Communication Difficulties
 https://www.bti.gov.lv/lv/media/985/download

Informative Material for Parents Raising Children with Autism https://registri.visc.gov.lv/specizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/esfpr/VISC%202.4%20-%20informativs%20materials%20vecakiem%20-%20autisms.pdf

Movement Activities for Successful Adaptation. Playing with a Clown Clave https://e-biblioteka.liepu.lv › magazine › download

12 Ways to Support Families of Students with Disabilities
https://blog.brookespublishing.com/12-ways-to-support-families-of-students-with-disabilities/

Supporting Parents with Disabilities and Their Families in the Community https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch13

Supporting Families with Children with Disabilities https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/SCWD_2FCD.pdf

The Family Support Program houses the Family Support Network™ of North Carolina University Office https://www.ipfcc.org/bestpractices/profile-vidant.html

North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance https://www.ncdsalliance.org/

Child and Family agency https://www.tusla.ie/

Australia - Help for Families Having Children With Autism or Other Disabilities https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/services-support/services-families/disability-services-family

Best Special Needs Apps for Kids
https://www.educationalappstore.com/best-apps/5-best-apps-for-special-educational-needs

Applications for the Development and Integration of Children with Behavioural Disorders

Apps for Autism: Using Game Mechanics to Learn and Grow. https://www.gamification.co/2012/07/23/apps-for-autism-using-game-mechanics-to-learn-and-grow/

Application for the Development of Fine Motor Skills and Attention https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=se.appfamily.balloonpopfree

Application for the Development of Concentration and Attention Retention https://apps.apple.com/us/app/poly4u-3d-poly-sphere-puzzle/id1448154972

VIDEO

Planning a Family Holiday with Children with Special Needs https://lv.traasgpu.com/gimenes-brivdienas-planosana-ar-berniem-ar-ipasam-vajadzibam/

Sensory Integration - Theory and Practice, Exercises for Children, Pros and Cons https://lv.tierient.com/sensora-integracija-teorija-un-prakse-vingrinajumi-berniem-plusi-un-minusi/

Usefulness of Multisensory Rooms for People with Dementia https://www.slaugivita.com/news/195/119/Multisensoro-istabu-noderiba-personam-ar-demenci

Sensory Integration Therapy and Autism https://lv.approby.com/sensoralas-integracijas-terapija-un-autisms/

Multifunctional Center "Solis augsup" *(eng. - Step Up)* https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=507173246671469

Video about a Child with Autism https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9Bey4F9ENA

NICU program The Brooks Family https://www.fsncc.org/fsncc-videos

Parents' Stories about working with Children with Autism https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-services/therapies-interventions/finding-early-intervention-for-autism

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