

Child with mental disabilities and support of their development

BAZALOVÁ, Barbora. *Dítě s mentálním postižením a podpora jeho vývoje*. 1. vyd. Praha: Portál, 2014. ISBN 978-80-262-0693-4.

(book review)

Reviewed by Martina Hubištová

In every society, we hardly find two of the same individual. Each person is an individual with unmistakable personality traits and characteristics. In this regard, no person with disabilities is an exception.

Birth of a child with mental disabilities represents a difficult life situation for parents. Parents who were expecting the birth of a healthy child, creating a vision of the future, are suddenly facing many unsatisfactorily answered questions related to the future of their disabled child.

The book is a great help not only for parents of disabled children. It offers readers, and especially parents, current theoretical knowledge about mental disability. All findings are supplemented by the results of researches, case studies, practical experience, and insights of experts and parents. Much of the book is devoted mainly to information on how you can support the development of children with mental disabilities the best.

The book includes the topics which, according to the author of the monograph, parents of children with intellectual disabilities should encounter such as:

- the status of the family in society,
- the phase of coping with the birth of a disabled child,
- siblings of children with mental disabilities,
- inclusive education.

The author is also dedicated to specific practical problems including e.g.:

- a game of a child with mental retardation,
- socialization,
- adaptation,
- development of self-care,

- development of communication skills,
- visual and auditory perception, etc.

The book was published in 2014. Its author, Barbora Bazalová, is a docent at the Department of Special Education of the Faculty of Education at the Masaryk University in Brno, a special pedagogue and author of a range of articles and publications in the field of special education.

The publication is divided into five major chapters providing a general and brief knowledge overview about the problems of mental disability and a countless of case studies.

In the first chapter, we are introduced to the terminology of mental disabilities, syndromes associated with mental retardation (Down Syndrome, Prader – Willi Syndrome, Williams Syndrome etc.) and autism spectrum disorders. Mental disability can take many forms. Mental disability is seen as a term encompassing a variety of intellectual deficits, including light deficiency, which cannot yet be described as mental retardation, comprising of cases of brain damage in the postnatal period and diseases like dementia. Emphasis is placed on the proper use of terminology. Special attention is devoted to autism spectrum disorders. The recent period has seen an increase in the incidence of autism spectrum disorders worldwide. It is a spectrum of disorders in each individual manifests itself in various forms and changes over time.

The second chapter discusses the diagnosis, development and support of disabled child. Some types of mental disability can be diagnosed as early as the prenatal period starts, before the birth of a child. If you know what to look for, detection is relatively simple. Diagnosing a child with mental disabilities is very important. If we know in which area the child has a problem, what the child needs, it is possible to apply an early intervention. The method of intervention is chosen with regard to the prognosis, possibilities of family and the region. In the development of various areas of children with intellectual disabilities it is always good to bear in mind that they need to experience success and they need to feel that they are good at something and that they can be successful. We should offer them an intense sensory perceptions and demands that should correspond to the mental level of children and their enhanced fatigue. Great emphasis should be placed on creating social habits, independence and adaptation strengthening.

The next chapter presents the basic topics in the lives of families with children with mental disabilities. The family receives a different social identity, there may be changes in the organization of family life, it can change the economic situation of the family, etc. Parents are not often prepared for the birth of a child with a disability and when they are informed about a diagnosis they need a psychological help. Great part of the chapter is also devoted to siblings of children with mental disabilities,

who are often exposed to great psychological strain. However, if you choose the right educational forces, the situation does not need to represent such a big psychological strain, it prepares them for life and makes them stronger.

The fourth chapter presents therapeutic intervention for children with intellectual and multiple disabilities or children with autism spectrum disorder. When selecting interventions, it is important to take into account the specifics of disability and individual peculiarities of the child.

The last chapter deals with the education of children and pupils with mental disabilities. The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights and there should be no differences relating to all of the citizens of our state. The author believes that inclusion is not for everyone and the situation always needs to be assessed individually. The basic rules for integration include e.g. education of participants, change of attitudes, willingness, financial support (of state, countries, and cities), legislative support, individual approach, teacher's assistant, etc.

At the end, there are few recommendations that parents can follow after the birth of a child with mental disabilities. The author emphasizes the importance of an individual approach, cooperation with all professionals working with the child, and of course, the importance of proper and timely intervention in the early life of a child with mental disabilities. This right and timely intervention determines the future development of the child and indeed the life of the whole family. Possibilities of the brain in the early stages of a child enable the development of compensatory mechanisms that are in some areas problematic. However, if the devotion to the child during this period is poor, neglected, the potential for further development of a child with mental disabilities is often reduced, sometimes even impossible.

Mgr. Martina Hubišťová
Institute of Special Education Studies
Faculty of Education
Palacký University
Žižkovo nám. 5
771 40 Olomouc
Czech Republic
e-mail: Hubistova.M@seznam.cz