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Development of the Emotional Sphere of Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities in Theatrical Activities



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Abstract

The paper presents the experience of studying the emotional sphere of adolescents with intellectual disabilities (moderate and severe mental retardation) and its correction by means of theatrical activities. The study involved two groups of adolescents – those who speak and those who do not master it. The results of the study indicate the underdevelopment of the emotional sphere: difficulties in understanding the emotions of other people and the causes of their occurrence, insufficient expressiveness of emotional manifestations, the absence or inadequacy of emotional relationships. After correctional and developmental work using theatrical activities, positive dynamics in the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation of both groups was observed.

Keywords: Diagnostics; Emotional sphere; Adolescents with intellectual disabilities; Theatrical activities

Introduction

The problem of developing the emotional sphere of adolescents with intellectual disabilities is relevant, since the success of their social adaptation depends on its development. It is important to make sure that teenagers of this category can correctly determine the emotional states of other people, as well as give adequate emotional reactions in various life situations. In special psychology, studies were conducted on the development of the emotional sphere of children and adolescents with a mild degree of mental retardation [1-5]. While there are not enough studies devoted to the development of the emotional sphere of children and adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation. In a few studies of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation, as well as according to the observations of teachers working with them, along with significant underdevelopment of cognitive processes, there are violations in the development of personality and emotional-volitional sphere, which manifest themselves in aggressiveness, uncertainty self-doubt, inadequate self-esteem, passivity or impulsivity [1,4,6]. The relevance of the development of this problem is connected, among other things,

with the fact that there are not enough methods of correctional and developmental work with such children and adolescents in the arsenal of psychologists.

S.L. Rubinstein identified several levels of development of the emotional sphere in ontogenesis. The first is the level of organic affective-emotional sensitivity. At this level of functioning of the emotional sphere, there is a fixation of the presence or absence of opportunities to satisfy emerging organic needs (the appearance of pleasure or displeasure). At the same time, emotions are often insufficiently differentiated, their causes may not be realized. This level, as the human psyche develops and the mechanisms of emotional response become more complex, performs a subordinate role, that is, determines the overall emotional background. At the second level, emotions themselves appear when a person can clearly realize what caused the emergence of a emotion, their differentiation occurs in accordance with the areas - intellectual, moral and aesthetic feelings are distinguished. At the third level, emotions and feelings are generalized, they become more abstract, referring not to one subject, but to the whole sphere, often quite abstract [7].

Studies of the features of the development of the emotional sphere of persons with mental retardation have shown that there is a significant originality and a significant lag in its formation, which is manifested in a slow transition from the first level to the second, the impossibility of forming emotions and feelings of the third level [3,4,6,8,9]. At the same time, the more significant the intellectual impairment, the more the lag in the development of the emotional sphere manifests itself, manifested in simplified mechanisms of emotional response, that is, getting stuck on the mechanism of infection, in difficulties of arbitrary regulation of emotional states, misunderstanding of other people's emotions. Hence - the occurrence of affective outbursts of pathological severity, which do not correspond to the cause of their occurrence. The greater the degree of intellectual disability in adolescents, the more often and more vividly affective outbursts can be repeated, the more difficult it becomes to level them.

In children and adolescents with mental retardation, the external manifestations of emotions are not expressive enough, speech is intonationally poor, as a result of which even close people cannot always understand their emotions. The complexity of the requirements of society at the present stage of its development leads to an increase in the number of children with varying degrees of emotional immaturity with all variants of impaired development, especially with significant intellectual disabilities. Therefore, there is a need to develop and use new methods for the development of the emotional sphere of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities, one of the directions of which can be theatrical activities.

The purpose of our study was to study the influence of theatrical activities in the system of work on the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation. To do this, we assessed the state of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and mental retardation before and after correctional and developmental work; developed methods and techniques for using theatrical activities for the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents of this category. The following aspects of the development of the emotional sphere were evaluated: adolescents' ideas about the differentiation of emotions and their connection with facial expressions (LS Tsvetkova's technique), ways and possibilities of self-expression of emotional states (GA Volkova). emotional relationships of adolescents to peers, adults, younger children and animals [10].

The study involved 40 adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation between the ages of 14 and 18. According to speech development, adolescents were classified into two groups: the first included adolescents with significant speech underdevelopment, who practically did not use it in the process of communication. The second group included teenagers who were proficient in verbal speech, although their vocabulary was very limited, their own speech was slurred, with significant pronunciation errors. Work on the development of the emotional sphere with these groups of adolescents was carried out in a differentiated manner, using various methodological techniques that consider these features.

Examination of the state of development of the emotional sphere before the correctional and developmental work showed that adolescents of both groups have a significant underdevelopment of the emotional sphere, they are characterized by emotional immaturity, which manifests itself in difficulties understanding the emotions of other people, problems with the differentiation of emotions, fixation on polar emotions by sign. At the same time, the level of development of the emotional sphere is higher in adolescents of the first group who possess verbal speech, compared to the second: they have a higher percentage of completing tasks for each emotion. Teenagers from the second group, who practically do not know verbal speech adequately showed only certain emotional states - such as "joy", "sadness", understanding and reproducing complex social emotions is not available to them. Twenty percent of adolescents in this group were able to mimic emotions such as "anger", "surprise" only after they were shown by an adult, based on examples from everyday experience.

The results of the study of attitudes towards people (peers, younger children, adults) and animals indicate the inadequacy of emotional reactions of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation. In relation to peers, inadequate reactions were noted in adolescents of the first group in 50% of cases, in the second group – in 75%. They either showed no empathy for their peer at all, or gave an inadequate reaction (for example, they laughed when they fell). 35% of adolescents of the first group and 25% of the second gave a relatively correct reaction. The same trends were observed in younger children. The situation with attitudes towards adults was somewhat better - 60% of adolescents of the first group gave adequate answers to the proposed situations, although they could not always explain the reasons for their actions.

The situations with animals were clearer for teenagers of both groups: 80% of teenagers of the first group and 60% of teenagers of the second group showed sympathy to a drenched and shivering puppy in one way or another. They expressed sympathy for the animal with words, a faithful picture, or showed with natural gestures how sorry they were for the puppy.

The underdevelopment of the emotional sphere is due to both the level of functioning of the intellect as a whole (the greater the degree of its violation, the greater its negative impact on the development of the emotional sphere) and the level of speech development – adolescents who do not know verbal speech have more problems in the development of the emotional sphere. For the development of the emotional sphere, theatrical activity was used, since theater is a synthetic art form that combines word, music, scenery, which creates opportunities for the multifunctional application of its various aspects, on the one hand, and creates broad opportunities for the inclusion of children and adolescents, on the other. When developing the content of the program for the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation, we relied on the works of E.A. Medvedeva, O.E. Huhlaeva, O.E. Shapovalova. and others [2,4,11].

The tasks of correctional and developmental work were the expansion and enrichment of adolescents' ideas about emotions, feelings and ways of their verbalization; the creation of conditions for a careful attitude to the feelings and moods of another person, as well as for the development and maintenance of interest in adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation in theater and theatrical activities.

Corrective and developmental work was carried out in stages. During the first stage, motivation and interest in theatrical activities were formed, work was carried out to increase the range of ideas about emotions and about means of communication. To do this, teenagers' ideas about the theater, its structure and types, about theatrical professions were enriched, they got acquainted with the specific language of theatrical art. Correctional and developmental work was based on a variety of exercises, such as working with kinetic sand, analyzing fairy tales in a "new way", animating characters, etc. For example, in order to solve the problem of creating and maintaining interest in theatrical activities, through the organization of productive activities of teenagers, work was carried out on the creation of theatrical attributes. To do this, games and exercises "Journey into the world of theater", a competition for poster designers, "Mysterious crossword puzzle" were organized, conversations were held on the topics "What the theatrical props tell us", etc., [12-14].

At the second stage, work was carried out on the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents, the enrichment of emotional experience. At this stage, it is important to broaden the general horizon by presenting various information, to ensure the assimilation of the content of the plots, the actions of the characters, the characteristics of their character, to form a holistic view of the plot and the compositional structure of the work. The content of the classes was developed considering the age and psychological characteristics of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation.

The development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation with the help of theatrical activities includes the following areas of work: mastering the subjective position by adolescents; enriching the emotional experience of adolescents; creating conditions for the initiation of the experience of emotional experiences due to the ability to act in a gaming context, and in the future - to be able

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to transfer these skills to real life situations. In connection with the psychological characteristics of adolescents of this category, with the underdevelopment of all sides of their psyche, in fact, in the process of work, theatrical-gaming activity was used, in the structure of which all the components of the plot-role play were in the structure – the idea, plot, imaginary situation, content, taking on roles, substitute objects, interpersonal gaming relationships [9]. Such games develop according to a pre-prepared scenario or literary work (fairy tale, story), which makes it easier for adolescents with intellectual disabilities to get involved in the process.

The psychologist created conditions allowing teenagers to try themselves in various roles in accordance with their own desires and interests. Depending on the abilities and capabilities of teenagers, the psychologist included them in the game activity and helped in the distribution of roles (director, actor, decorator, decorator). At this stage, etude games, story-role-playing games organized by a psychologist were conducted. Participation in sketches and role-playing games allows a teenager to enrich knowledge about emotions and ways of their transmission (facial expressions, movements, intonation). At the end of this stage, a photo session "Faces of our Theater" was held, teenagers together with a psychologist pasted photos into an album, which was supplemented with new photos throughout the formative stage [15,16].

The aim of the psychologist's work was to enrich the emotional and sensory experience of adolescents through the development of various means of expression (color, movement, facial expressions, intonation, costume). For this purpose, games and exercises "Analysis of images of the main characters of famous fairy tales", "Live pictures" (animation of characters on a computer), video presentation of a fairy tale, preparation for a performance were organized. The psychologist together with the teenagers analyzed in detail the images of the main characters of famous fairy tales, such as "Alice the Fox", "Malvina", "Pinocchio". The psychologist drew attention to the personal qualities of the characters (kind, evil, cunning, funny), to their appearance, actions, expressive movements, emotions that arise in different situations.

At the same time, various situations were played out in which interest in people's emotional manifestations was formed, attention was drawn to emotions of varying complexity – joy, anger, surprise, resentment, sadness and others. As part of the game classes, teenagers with a psychologist analyzed the reasons that lead to the emergence of these emotional states in themselves and their peers. These situations were played out with the help of theatrical activities. It should be noted that the situation became more complicated gradually, since the theatrical experience of teenagers was very poor. The enrichment of the emotional sphere of teenagers occurred due to empathy, empathy, assistance in the play context of theatrical activities, which was activated through the creation of conditions that give them the opportunity to live different moods together with another person, a character.

In addition, it was necessary to correct the undesirable behavior of adolescents, negative emotions arising in some situations. The psychologist, together with teenagers, developed a "Piggy bank of good mood", where ways to change undesirable emotional states in oneself or other people (pictures, drawings, photographs, encouragement, approval of actions) were presented. Teenagers participated in problem situations of various complexity, based on literary plots, which demonstrated both ways of positive problem solving, leading to positive emotions, and negative ones, which led to adverse consequences and caused negative emotions. The psychologist conducted games and exercises for the development of voluntary regulation of emotional states, self-control (work with kinetic sand, breathing exercises, stress relief games, listening to melodic, soothing music, etc.).

The third stage is the direct implementation of theatrical and gaming activities, during which teenagers master the means of intonation and plastic expressiveness of various states of characters, primarily emotional ones, join the stage embodiment of images, with the ways of organizing the plot, the movements of the characters as the plot unfolds. At this stage, teenagers were involved directly in theatrical activities. The psychologist conducted conversations during which teenagers talked about their desires and preferences when choosing a work for staging. These may be familiar plots that have been worked out before or written specifically. So, in one case, a fairy tale was created in which the roles were spelled out in accordance with the capabilities and abilities of the teenagers involved in it. The next step was the distribution of roles (actors, designers, sound engineer). There were rehearsals where the same passage was played many times. Special attention was paid to the work on emotional manifestations, the use of expressive movements for this, the development of intonations corresponding to the characteristics of the character, his behavior in specific situations. All this contributed to the activation of the personal emotional and sensory experience of adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

The psychologist connected educators and parents of teenagers to the work. To do this, he taught teachers the use of game techniques in the process of extracurricular work, which contribute to the development of the emotional sphere in adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation, and in the future can be used in the process of implementing theatrical activities, provided them with methodological literature and manuals that give practical material that contributes to the development of the emotional sphere.

Consultations were held for parents on the following topics: "Features of the mental development of children and adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation", "Emotions of a child. Should adults pay attention to them?", "How to help overcome anger, fear, anger," etc. Parents need to reveal the meaning of emotional communication in the family, give an opportunity to practically get acquainted with the methods of

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organizing and using gaming and theatrical activities, introduce parents to the peculiarities of their emotional sphere.

The experimental group consisted of 20 teenagers, 10 of whom are proficient in verbal speech, and 10 are not. The control group, which was not included in the correctional and developmental work, also included 20 people, of whom 10 are proficient in verbal speech, and 10 are not. Correctional and developmental work with two different groups of adolescents was carried out in different ways.

Let's consider the peculiarities of the psychologist's work with teenagers of a group that owns verbal speech. During the first meeting, they got acquainted with the game character Piero, communication with whom took place in the video meeting mode. Piero offered to get involved in the solution and search for answers to his questions related to the theater and various aspects of theatrical activities.

This form of interaction interested teenagers, they were attracted by the game character himself, the possibilities of interacting with him, the peculiarities of his communication. This can be judged by the following statements: "This is a real Pierrot from the theater, he talks so beautifully in verse. I immediately guessed that he was from a fairy tale", "Yes, he is always a little sad." The teenager was particularly interested in the package, which contained "Pierrot's tips". In the process of reviewing the parcel, the children found a memory stick and made assumptions about its purpose: "This is a flash drive, we need to see what's there", "Exactly! He probably has a surprise for us. I'm already interested... turn it on soon", "There are hints!".

Together with the teenagers, the viewing of the video was organized. in which they learned about the origin and history of the theater in an accessible form for them, considering the peculiarities of understanding speech. Thus, having accepted the task, in the process of further joint discussion of the impressions received, the teenagers decided on a theatrical production. Having received the first individual task, the teenagers had to come up with their own version of the name of the theater by the next meeting and fill out the cards at home with their parents.

All teenagers from this group accepted the game task. The following statements in which they commented on their actions testified to the involvement and interest of teenagers: "I'll put it in my backpack so as not to lose it," "I'll come up with a name at home with my mom and ask her to write it, I can't do it myself," "I'll tell my mom at home where the theater came from and what Piero gave us for the task, I'll come up and draw it here."

Due to the peculiarities of the mental development of adolescents who do not speak, the work was organized differently. These teenagers received coloring cards with fairy-tale characters known to them, such as Little Red Riding Hood, Gray Wolf, Malvina and others, after which they had to choose the appropriate option and color the corresponding picture. With these teenagers, the psychologist completed the task on the spot so that they could observe their reactions when choosing a picture. For example, K.S. chose Malvina, showing us that she was beautiful. The psychologist asked: "Why didn't you choose the Gray Wolf?" the girl made a "grin" like a Gray Wolf, showing that he was evil and made it clear that she did not like him.

To maintain the interest of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation in theater and theatrical activities, a psychologist organized a game in which schoolchildren were invited to familiarize themselves with various theatrical attributes that would be involved in the production. Most of the work was carried out in pairs or subgroups.

In order to foster a careful attitude to the feelings and moods of another person, teenagers were offered to solve problem situations specially created by a psychologist. For example, certain characters had certain problems/questions that schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities had to solve. At the same time, the psychologist provided assistance, directing the children in the right direction, preparing special materials for them to find answers to the necessary questions. It should be noted that collective and creative forms of work stimulate adolescents to show empathy, empathy and assistance. At the beginning of the meeting, teenagers were invited to become spectators and get acquainted with theatrical professions, which were represented by game characters, their appearance was accompanied by a story by Pierrot, in which the significance of this profession in the theater, the staging of the play was revealed.

The children get acquainted with such professions as actor, director, make-up artist, graphic designer. Of interest was the opportunity to show and try yourself in each of these professions.

To do this, teenagers were invited to take part in the game "Casting", which was held in order to create a troupe of the theater "Pinocchio".

Teenagers were offered various forms of game tasks, sketches, improvisations, the implementation of which allowed them to expand their understanding of various game positions in this type of activity, to get acquainted with the main means of expression (makeup, color, intonation, pose, etc.), ways and possibilities of their use in various types of theatrical activities. Schoolchildren turned to the theater corner, selected the appropriate attributes in order to create an image of the corresponding hero, convey the mood of the hero. Thanks to such theatrical activities, teenagers with mental retardation could show various emotions, which allowed them to feel comfortable and natural in various situations.

The discussion of the impressions that were received by adolescents in the process of theatrical activity has a significant impact on the development of the emotional sphere in adolescents with mental retardation. As a rule, their own impressions affect their own choice of behavior of such children. Thanks to theatrical

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activities, adolescents are activated and develop emotional and sensory experience.

Thus, working with the materials of artistic works, with the "active" contact of adolescents with literary characters and participation in a joint discussion, based on personal experience, allowed to enrich the emotional sphere of adolescents, and also taught to show empathy, mutual assistance not only to the participants of the experimental group, but also to other people.

For teenagers who do not speak, the psychologist prepared special individual questionnaires. They took the questionnaires home so that their parents could fill them out. After discussing the issues and conducting an interview at home on their own, the teenagers were asked to present its results in the form of a joint project with their parents "The mood of my family", "Why Mom smiles", etc. To assess the effectiveness of the impact of correctional and developmental work using theatrical activities on the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation, a control experiment was conducted using the same methods as at the ascertaining stage. The results obtained indicate that adolescents of both experimental groups have higher indicators of emotional attitude towards peers, adults, younger children and animals. In the course of the survey, many students who, before the correctional work, could not explain how a person should act in a given situation, began to give correct answers and offer solutions to conflict situations. Teenagers of the experimental group who speak, after the formative experiment, began to better understand the conditions of other people. For example, answering the question "Is it possible to make noise when mom is resting?", they said: "No, she's tired. I was at work.". Those teenagers who did not speak well also began to better understand the emotional states of other people. When answering the same question, natural gestures were used - they put their fingers to their lips, making it clear that it was impossible to make noise when mom was sleeping. Many teenagers from the group who speak and some teenagers from the group who do not use speech for communication showed higher results of emotional attitude to animals. Few of them remained indifferent to the soaked puppy, they showed sympathy in different ways - some wanted to take him home, others wanted to find him a home.

While adolescents from the control groups who did not take part in the formative experiment were still indifferent to the proposed situations. At the same time, twenty percent of them gave inadequate reactions in the proposed situations where sympathy was required: "let him cry", "that's what he needs", the same number of teenagers in the control group who do not speak refused to perform tasks. After conducting a formative experiment, adolescents began to differentiate emotions better by external expressions, by facial expressions. This was also manifested in graphic images of emotions – many teenagers who speak have become better and clearer at drawing the characteristic features of certain emotional states, and those who do not speak can find and recognize the corresponding emotional state faster. It should be noted that recognizing the emotion of "surprise" still caused difficulties for both groups of teenagers, many needed helps in the form of.

In general, the adolescents of the experimental groups were more active, showed greater involvement in the process of completing tasks. Adolescents from experimental groups were better able to identify emotions if they were associated with their personal experience, with those emotional states that were analyzed or experienced by them in the process of theatrical activity. Adolescents from the control groups most often did not accept the help of an adult, they could adequately find cards only with images of polar emotional states (joy, sadness).

Generalization of the results by all methods showed positive dynamics in the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation of both groups. Thus, in the group of those who speak, a high level of development of the emotional sphere after the formative experiment was recorded in 40% of adolescents, which is 20% more than in the control group. In adolescents who do not speak, a high level was observed in 20 percent of cases, whereas in the control group there were no such.

The average level of development of the emotional sphere was revealed in 40 percent of adolescents of both experimental groups. A low level of development of the emotional sphere was revealed in 20 percent of teenagers who speak, whereas in the control group this level was in 40 percent. A low level of emotional development is typical for 30% of adolescents who do not speak, whereas in the control group this level is typical for 60%.

Thus, the analysis of the results of the control experiment showed that the use of theatrical activities has a positive effect on the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation. Positive dynamics in the development of the emotional sphere, understanding the emotions of other people were noted by the people around them - both educators and parents, which positively influenced the interpersonal interactions of adolescents, the psychological climate in study groups.

Results

The results of the analysis of the control experiment showed that due to the inclusion of adolescents with intellectual disabilities in theatrical activities, their emotional and sensory experience has changed qualitatively in the following directions: it has been enriched, the range of emotions has expanded, the adequacy of the use of external means of expression using natural gestures, facial expressions and pantomimes. In addition, an important direction of the development of the emotional sphere is the complication of the mechanisms of emotional response, which in this case manifested itself in the development of the ability to sympathize, empathize with different people and animals, the possibilities of arbitrary regulation of their own emotional states and the adequacy of their manifestations in different everyday situations have increased.

Conclusion

Theatrical activity is advisable to use for the development of the emotional sphere of adolescents with intellectual disabilities, as the result of this will be an increase in the quality of their interpersonal interactions and will lead to an increase in the level of social adaptation.

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