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Paper 63 – Pecha Kucha

Sensitively developing a sensory story: creating leisure opportunities for people with profound learning disabilities

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Abstract

A recent Mencap Report; *Empty days, empty lives* found that people with a learning disability consistently spend their time doing solitary activities that use little energy or follow activities chosen by parents/carers. Research suggests that leisure and recreation for people with Learning Disabilities yield rewards in terms of providing the individuals with quality experiences and intrinsic satisfaction. Recreation may also have an enhancing effect on one's health or on the culture of a given community.

This paper reports on a case study of a teaching and learning approach to help students on a joint nursing and social work programme explore their role in creating opportunities for leisure and to develop their skills in using sensory stories to engage people with profound learning disabilities. The students had to agree on a story line and work on devising different sensory stimuli which could be used to stimulate and encourage individuals with profound learning disabilities to interact with the materials and content of the story. The students had to have a coherent rationale for their proposed piece of work, underpinned by supporting theoretical perspectives. Diverse theoretical perspective from the creative arts to social psychology formed the basis of the rationales for their projects.

The students used materials that were readily available to create different textures, tastes, smells and sounds to bring the sensory stories to life. The skills they developed included problem solving skills, creativity, planning and engagement. They learnt that it did not have to be costly to develop sensory stories and that involving the individuals with profound learning disabilities in the planning and development of the stories can promote choices, decision making and enjoyment for the individuals. The session was evaluated positively in that it increased students' knowledge and skills for communicating with people with profound learning disabilities.