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## Sport for All

Antonio Ascione and Umberto Conte

*University of Napoli "Parthenope"*

### *Abstract*

*Sport is a human activity that is based on educational values, social and cultural rights. For this reason it must be accessible to all, respecting the different aspirations and abilities of each one. Italy has produced a lot of strategies and projects aimed at the integration and support of persons with disabilities in sports, so, sport is for everyone. Today everyone can and should play sports.*

*Physical activity produces mental strength and promotes the development of logic and intellectual abilities, becoming a way to grow up. Development of individual potential and integration into contexts full of meaningful relationships, make the role of physical activity and sport a fundamental element in the life of a person with disabilities. Sport by definition is inclusion, promoting optimum living conditions and a good system of relations. Through the inclusion of sport, in fact, people with disabilities can feel themselves part of the community and its relationship network. Nowadays everyone can play sports, having the chance to engage in various disciplines; Sport for All is a way to overcome the disable / non-disable duality by promoting possibilities for integration and inclusion. Sport as an important educational tool that, through targeted actions, becomes a fundamental tool of emancipation and growth.*

**Keywords:** Disability, Sports, Integration, Inclusion.

Sport is a human activity based on social, educational and cultural values. It is fundamental for integration, for the acceptance of differences, and for the respect of the rules; it must be accessible to all, respecting the different aspirations and abilities of each one. In recent years Italy has produced a lot of strategies and projects aimed at the integration and support of persons with disabilities in sports, hence, sport is for everyone. The practice of physical activities for people with disabilities is a means of individual development, rehabilitation and social integration.

"Sport must become a major force that allows disabled people to search and restore their contact with the world around them and consequently their value of respected citizens". These are the words used by Sir Ludwig Guttmann, about half a century ago to draw attention to the world of disability, and it represents a

starting point for all subsequent interactions with physical activities and sports.

Today everyone can and should play sports, physical activity produces a physical and mental strength and promotes the development of logic and intellectual abilities, thus becoming reason for emancipation and growth. Physical activity thus becomes a highly effective educational and rehabilitative tool, especially if the fun aspect is preserved.

Development of individual potentiality, talent boost, acquisition of skills and integration into contexts full of meaningful relationships, make the role of physical activity and sport a fundamental element in the life of a person with disabilities who have the opportunity to find elements of success and personal development, practicing a potentially beneficial activity.

In addition to improved physical fitness, cognitive development, and socialization, there are: improved self-esteem and autonomy.

The concept of sport for all refers to the benefits of sport, extending it to as many people as possible by introducing so, the notion of inclusion, leading to the recognition of a right as a form of fight against exclusion.

To walk the streets of social inclusion means placing the issue of disability in the social dimension of citizenship, because it affects all those involved in the social life within a given context: to include means to give someone the chance to be citizens to all intents and purposes. The goal of inclusion is to promote optimal living conditions and a good system of relations; through inclusion, so, people with disabilities can feel themselves part of the community and its relationship network.

During his experience, the disabled person find himself coping with many difficulties both on a personal and social-affective level.

Sport acts on individual abilities, encouraging the development of innate skills and acquiring new and different ones; through sport, therefore, the disabled person can get involved and experiment, learn to control their bodies, develop a sense of self-awareness and self-confidence, find unexpected skills and experience self-efficacy: these are all elements contributing to the development of self-esteem and a positive perception of themselves.

Sport activities are so important in everyday life, representing a great educational and psychological value. There are, in general, several aspects and benefits that may be associated with physical activity. The first aspect is the physiological one that allows people to strengthen body and muscles, to increase and improve balance, enriching the physical aptitude in general. The second aspect is the psychological one that allows to fuel confidence, increasing self-esteem and self-image. The third and final aspect is the social one, which contributes to the achievement of autonomy and integration of the disabled in the community extended beyond their family.

Within the sporting context the instructor is an important figure and a reference for disabled athletes, or just for people with disabilities who decide to undertake a sport. Although everyone is able to work with disabled people, to become good professionals, certain personal characteristics are needed.

- Empathy: putting yourself in the other, thinking like they do, appreciating their results, respecting them, sharing the assets including them in the group, that is, make them an active part of the group.
- Ability to adapt to different situations.
- Ability to instill calm in stressful situations.
- Constance: Results can also arrive after a long time.
- Ability to listen.
- Motivation.
- Ability to take initiative.
- Dynamism.
- Being extroverted and friendly.
- High self-esteem.

The instructor must also be aware of the possibilities of the people he works with, adapting as well as possible in each of the situations that he has to face; the strengths of disabled people must be stimulated, thus increasing their confidence in their skills. Listen to the needs of disabled people, their interests, their concerns and/or confusion, pay attention to relationships, feelings, and the different ways in which this can be expressed.

The instructor will use a particular teaching method depending on the participants, their personal characteristics and the context in which he operates. He will have different responsibilities depending on the method used and the type of people that he finds. In general we can say that there are two main trends: the Governing method and the active method.

The inductive/steering method is generally used when all that needs to be communicated follows its hierarchical structure. The instructor defines the objectives and the resources that will be used to perform the task; the participant will follow the instructions; the evaluation of results will be done at the end. This method is suitable for large and homogeneous groups. The instructor must possess the ability to "demonstrate" the technical content of the exercises with movements adapted to ensure that participants can repeat them correctly.

In deductive/active method targets must adapt to the characteristics of the participants, facilitating participation. The instructor's work, in this case, adapts to each person's ability, allowing to move forward with personal rhythms and times, reaching, thus, different levels of learning. He can constantly provide information

to the participant, informing the group about their progress, solving problems when they arise; guiding the learning process in all of its evolutionary forms.

A nice qualified staff is required to perform to the best any activity. In addition to the instructor specialized for people with disabilities, it is essential to have "supports". The presence of a specialized person appears to be necessary for a given type of activity. In addition to the coach qualified in working with people with disabilities, the sporting operators are also very important.

The sport assistant is essential when working with groups of people with disabilities; this figure helps the instructor to recover the various materials and to prepare athletes for the activities. The assistant must have a basic knowledge of the theoretical aspects of the training. He must be able, at any time, to carry on the training plan and, where the coach was absent, to act on his behalf.

Sport for people with disabilities provides a full range of activities suited to the capabilities of each, beginning with the phase of psychomotor development, through expressive physical movements, culminating finally in sports at a competitive level. In this area we find a very diverse set of sporting events, similar for all sports, used in almost all the regulations set out by the international federations of different sports, making only minor adjustments; they are supported by a set of specific sports tests, developed for certain types or groups of disability.

Today, there are many examples of sports designed specifically for people with disabilities, which aim, in addition to a physical improvement, to foster greater integration and greater awareness of their abilities. These can be divided into three main areas: individual sports for people with disabilities, team sports and integrated sports.

Among individual sports for people with disabilities we can cite athletics, cycling, horse riding, judo, swimming, wheelchair fencing, wheelchair tennis and table tennis. All these sports allow players to express themselves as a protagonist, feeling competent in the actions carried out, rebuilding their identity, promoting a better relationship with their body, strengthening their strategies through self-efficacy.

As for team sports for people with disabilities such as goalball, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball and torball, they have the aim to strengthening all the physical and psychological aspects specific to each athlete, but above all to promote socialization, cohesion and fellowship within the same group, claiming the construction of a large home network.

The integrated sport, finally, is by definition an educational sport that aims at creating a culture of integration, acceptance and appreciation of diversity among young people with disabilities and disabled people through sport, respecting and promoting creativity and socialization among the participants. This sharing arises

from the need for a regulation that would standardize and adapt the capabilities and potential of different abilities. All athletes, disabled and non-disabled, can build and promote together, through sport, a culture of integration and solidarity enhancing, rather than highlighting the diversity.

The starting point is that today everyone can play sports, being able to engage in various disciplines; sport for all is, therefore, the ability to integrate and be included reducing the dualism of disability/non-disability, creating conditions and opportunities to understand and deepen their "equality" and "diversity", laying the foundations for a "cohabitation" of relational growth. "Sport is synonym with social inclusion, an extraordinary strength that each of us can take" (Oscar de Pellegrin).

The meaning of these words leads us to the understanding of the importance of integrated physical and sport activities' promotion. Through actions tailored to the capabilities and needs of the disabled person, they become an important educational tool for his evolutionary process. In fact, sport for the disabled, as well as promoting cognitive development, becomes reason of emancipation and growth, because the comparison with others, verification or immediate perception of one's own components, and refinement of self-regulatory capacity, are tools able to structure an environment rich in possibilities and significant stimulation. The development of individual potential, the increase in capacity and acquisition of skills, and the integration into contexts full of meaningful relationships, make the role of physical and sporting intervention extremely valuable for disabled people. In this way, they have the opportunity to find elements of success and personal enhancement, practicing a particularly beneficial activity with high motivation and fun. Physical activity for the disabled persons can become the exaltation of their abilities. Inclusion allows everyone to experience pleasure and satisfaction in the commitment and efforts made.

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