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Life Challenges



educational board game about sexuality



1. Who is this innovation for?

Life Challenges board game is a didactic tool that can be used during classes on broadly understood human sexuality for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The game can be employed during educational and rehabilitation classes at **special needs schools for individuals with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities**.

Following institutions are also suggested candidates for the game:

- general access schools;
- general access schools with special needs classes;
- special needs schools for students with mild intellectual disabilities;
- occupational therapy workshops;
- social welfare centers;
- community social welfare center;
- other NGO-run institutions that benefit individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Age of participants: 16+

2. What social problem does it address?

Life Challenges social innovation was created in response to the search for tools helping develop social competences of adults with intellectual disabilities, especially awareness of their own sexuality, fulfilling needs resulting from it, as well as tasks associated with adulthood.

Remigiusz Kijak,¹ researcher in this area, stresses that “lack of sex education for intellectually disabled individuals comes with many dangers. It can lead to many risky

¹ R. Kijak, 2011.



photo: Aleksander Trafas

situations, including contagion with STDs, or a risk of sexual abuse.” Daria Mejnartowicz² added to the argument by stating that “one third, or one fourth of the mentally disabled population going through puberty falls victim of sexual abuse – rape, or acts of incest.” What’s important, “a common result of lack of proper education is an unplanned pregnancy. Women with intellectual and mental disabilities tend to fall victims of sexual abuse more often than healthy women.”³

Nobody should have their access to education and information limited, including holistically understood sex education and necessary and useful information allowing one to be a fully participating citizen and providing equality in his or her private, social and political life.⁴

“Properly conducted sex education could support a general development of individuals, while the knowledge and skills themselves could help shield and protect, diminish, or outright remove the possibility of negative experiences. Individuals participating in sex education become more aware of their own sexuality, which allows them to display it in socially accepted manner.”⁵

3. Description

Where did the idea come from?

A group of students from the Department of Pedagogical Sciences at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń decided to design a tool that would support building awareness of one’s sexuality, its needs, and social roles among individuals with intellectual disabilities. Their goal was to provide an opportunity for a more responsible and conscious planning of an adult life and ability to avoid many problems and abuses in the sphere of one’s sexuality. The **Life Challenges** board game was designed in collaboration with specialists in the field of sexology and special needs pedagogics, as well as will help of

² D. Mejnartowicz, 1995.

³ R. Kijak, 2011.

⁴ WHO Regional Bureau for Europe and Health Education Federal Bureau, Sex-ed standards... 2012, p. 21.

⁵ A. Lewko, 2016.

members of the target group – teachers and special needs students, who functioned as experts during the design phase. This innovation fills the gap on the Polish market of didactic materials designed for classes in broadly understood sex education for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Essence of the innovation

Life Challenges educational board game is a didactic tool for teachers/therapists designed to use during sex education classes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

A manual and a rulebook for the mentor accompany the game and describe in detail the process of utilizing it. The rulebook can be an additional help during the class. The goal of the game is to expand the knowledge and skills within the broadly understood area of human sexuality.

Individual cards contain questions for the players. They draft tasks according to three levels of difficulty and answer questions. On each level of difficulty there are questions from seven different thematic categories (51 questions in each category):

- sexual identity;
- sexual awareness;
- sexual behaviors/intimate behaviors;
- sexual relationship;
- emotional relationship;
- sexual violence;
- parenthood.

Gameplay is an opportunity for increasing self-awareness about one's feelings and needs, as well as learning to make conscious choices, shaping attitudes of mutual respect and openness and strengthening of a positive attitude towards one's sexuality.

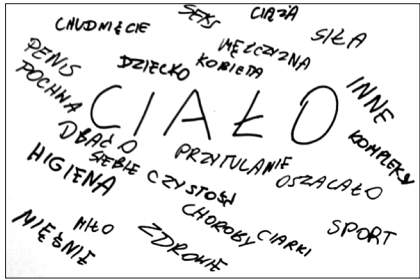
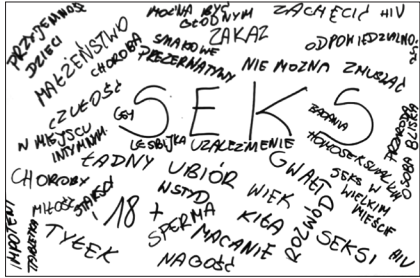


photo: Aleksander Trafas

Innovation step by step

Due to open question format, the players have a chance for an open discussion during the game. The so-called difficult issues are introduced in a natural way, without causing unnecessary tension.

GOAL OF THE GAME: The goal of the game is for the players to collect six tokens in at least three categories. By answering questions and collecting tokens players can discover the level of their competences in each of the seven categories. The mentor is overseeing the entire game.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS: The game is designed for 2–4 individual players, or pairs.

THE MENTOR: A teacher, a therapist, supporting teacher, or any other individual with pedagogical qualifications for working with intellectually disabled individuals can be the mentor. Before the game begins he or she should familiarize themselves with the rules and the mentor's rulebook, as well as question cards.

GAMEPLAY TIME: It depends on the time necessary for answering questions by the players, as well as potential discussion that might follow. The mentor decides about the time individually. The game can be stopped and continued after a break. Suggested time is 90 minutes.

COMPLETING THE GAME: The game ends when one of the players collects six tokens. The mentor can end the game at any point, based on the needs and emotional state of the players. The game ends with a summary performed by the mentor.

IMPORTANT: Proper use of the game requires respect and dignified approach to the issues it discusses. The role of the mentor is to lead the game in a way that leaves no players feeling hurt, embarrassed, or humiliated.

What a woman should do to take care of herself during her period?

When is it appropriate to give someone a hug?

How to take care of your personal hygiene?

Is it difficult to be a man?

What does a person in love feel?

Is it ok to peep?

If your period is late, does that mean you're pregnant?

Who is allowed to touch your genitals?

How people in love can spend time together?

What are the symptoms of pregnancy?



The formula of a lecture, or a presentation, becomes boring for the students after a while. In this case each of the participants had an opportunity to participate directly. I'm glad we're getting the game and I'm definitely going to use it.

teacher at a school that participated in testing

*The game allows to transfer knowledge in an accessible way, but it can't be a one time thing. I'm all for having the **Life Challenges** at our place permanently. The game is a good tool for working in this area. Its particular elements allow to adjust the level of difficulty, themes, or the style of the game to individual needs of a group.*

occupational therapist WTZ, sex educator from the Polish Association for the Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Participants in Occupational Therapy Workshops who played the game:

Mr. Patryk: The questions were good and helped to fill the gaps. Sometimes I felt a little embarrassed.

Mr. Łukasz: It was fun. I learned you can go on dates.

Mr. Krzysztof: I liked the game because we could play it as a group.

Ms. Aurelia: I liked that it was about love and sex.

Ms. Dorota: I learned that you can kiss.

Mr. Sławek: The best part was about hygiene.

*I wish for all pedagogues, psychologists, therapists, educators and instructors who work with individuals with intellectual disabilities to try **Life Challenges** and begin a didactic change in sex education dedicated for that group.*

Ph-D Ditta Baczała, prof. UMK

TESTING PHASE



IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The costs

The game can be downloaded for free at www.wyzwaniazycia.pl

The costs of printing the game at a specialized printer vary depending on the number of copies. If you're interested in collaboration with us, or in renting the game – please contact us! Implementing the innovation (once you have the game) is cost free. The game can be used for years, due to its large number of questions and different ways you can use it.

4. Who's behind it?

An Informal group – students of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

Klaudia Wos – special needs pedagogue (specialty: education of individuals with intellectual disabilities: oligophrenic pedagogy, 2nd year student of 2nd degree studies in pedagogy (educational pedagogy with focus on addiction prevention), sex educator, summer camp educator, therapist on rehabilitation retreats



Celina Kamecka-Antczak – political scientist, philosopher and special needs pedagogue. PhD candidate at the Pedagogy Sciences Department at Nicolaus Copernicus University. Together with CEO she has been leading workshops in civic education at special needs schools for the past 3 years and in the past year got involved in sex education. She completed trainings in Snozelen method, Sherborne developmental movement method and Social Skills Training.

Sandra Wojtas – 3rd year student of special needs pedagogy with specialization in oligophrenic pedagogy, summer camp educator, organizer of international exchange programs between individuals with physical disabilities and healthy individuals.

Mateusz Szafrński – special needs pedagogue (specialization: education for intellectually disabled individuals – oligophrenic pedagogy with speech therapy; occupational and rehabilitation counseling); sex educator, PhD candidate at Pedagogy Sciences Department at Nicolaus Copernicus University. Leads educational programs for intellectually disabled individuals.

Krystyna Popowska – student of special needs pedagogy of 1st degree at Nicolaus Copernicus University, TEB attendee, summer camp educator, cultural animator, social skills coach.

Anna Pawlak – Pedagogy Sciences Department graduate (specialization: pre-school and early school pedagogy) and special needs pedagogy (specialization: oligophrenic pedagogy) at Nicolaus Copernicus University. She has completed a two-stage sign language course. Works as a teacher and a therapist at a preschool.

5. Contact information

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