Social participation of persons with visual impairments: Guides, pathways and milestones

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Introduction

Social participation develops along certain pathways. Successful pathways have in common that the person can count on support by parents, partners or others, that the person has a sense of self-efficacy or self-determination, and that the person can gradually build up experience and skills by 'testing the waters'.

The results of the longitudinal study of Kef showed that adolescents and young adults with Visual Impairments (VI) experience difficulties on one or more areas of social participation, like leisure activities, relationships and work/education. These difficulties seemed to be related to, or caused by, external, environmental factors (e.g. negative responses from others) and internal, personal factors (e.g. self-esteem, acceptance of impairment). In order to successfully participate in society they need to overcome barriers, barriers within themselves, or barriers within their environment. This can be facilitated by Mentor Support, which will be developed, implemented and tested using a RCT-design.

Objectives

1) Improving support for successful social participation of adolescents with VI by developing, implementing and testing Mentor Support

2) Charting pathways towards successful and non-successful social participation of adolescents and young adults with VI.

Design

1. To improve support for successful social participation: developing Mentor Support and testing the effectiveness using a RCT-design with pre- (T1); post- (T2) and follow-up (T3) measurements:

Condition 1: Care as usual + mentor with VI
Condition 2: Care as usual + mentor without VI
Condition 3: Care as usual (control group)

Mentor Support will consist of:
1. Selection and training mentors
2. Matching mentor-mentee pairs
3. Intervention-phase of 12 months:
   * Monthly activities on the area of leisure activities work/education and relationships
   * Email supervision with mentors and mentees
   * Supervising meetings with mentors
4. Evaluation

2. To chart pathways towards successful and non-successful social participation: adding a new cohort and analyzing data on our national longitudinal study (started in 1996).
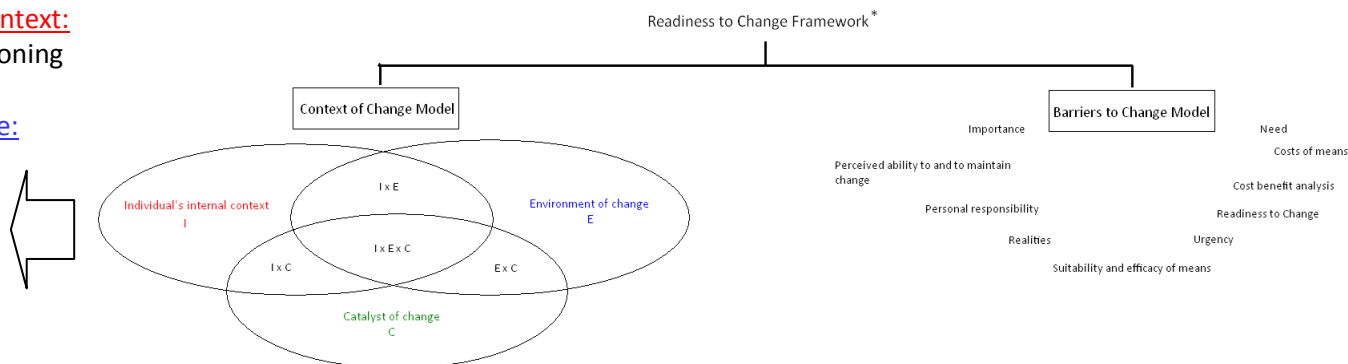
Individual's internal context:
 * Psychosocial functioning

Environment of Change:
 * Leisure activities
 * Work/school
 * Social network

Catalyst for change:
 * Mentor Support activities
 * Mentor as role model
 * Mentor as experience-expert

*Burrowes, N., & Needs, A. (2009). Time to contemplate change? A framework for assessing readiness to change with offenders. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 14(1), 39-49.

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