

FITNESS TRAIL

TOOL-KIT FOR LIFELONG EDUCATION OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM

Fitness Trail(FT) is a trail with approximately 1500 a 2000m situated in a field with trees or in a park

Objectives

- To know how to follow a trail
- To promote physical activity
- To relate body functioning with physical effort
- To promote social interaction and the contact with nature

Equipment

Along the way there are sign posts (normally 10 to 12) located along the trail
The places where the placards are placed are named the stations

People involved in the activity must stop in each station and do the exercise explained in the picture

Each piece of equipment has guidelines on the placard:
It explains how to use the equipment and the number of times the user must do the exercise to achieve the goals



The stations are numbered 1, 2, 3.....

The placard in the 1st station describes the characteristics of the trail: the distance among the stations, the plan with the situation of the different stations and the pre requisites for the trailers in the area of health

The placard in the last station proposes exercises to relax, suggests the users to return to the trail whenever they can



The users

The users of the trail may be children or adults and they may either walk or run from station to station, according to what is settled in the beginning.

The FT is a good educational resource for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) coached by professionals

It may also be used with families or friends as a recreation or sports practice or just as a way to enjoy nature.

People with ASD may improve group interaction, communication, motor and cognitive skills.

Human resources

There will be 3 sessions for FT awareness and the trail has been planned for 8 to 10 persons with ASD - different levels of functioning with a trainer or a member of the family or a friend

Organization of the work session

1st session Preparation of the trail

The trainer explains to the group what to do and how much time they must spend on the trail (no more than 45 minutes)

The group will be split in small groups of 2 or 3 persons according to the level of competence of the participants

Each group will walk (or run if previously determined) along the trail

During the march the trainer is showing the objects and the details of the environment: a beautiful little flower, the size of a tree ...

This attitude of the trainer will be similar along the 3 sessions.

He must explore the interests of the



participants even if they have to stop during the trail



At the end of 1st session the participants describe what they have done and put questions to the trainers. The groups are reorganized according to the experiences of the 1st session

2nd session – To relate body functioning with physical effort

Objectives

- To feel the rhythm of the heart beating
- To feel the rhythm of the respiration
- To relate both to the physical effort
- To improve the perception of the effort capacity

The trainer must be careful about all the exercises that can imply a risk to the participant
It is important to control the risk

The trainer asks the participants if they feel their heart beating and the rhythm of respiration growing after running and if they understand it as a consequence of the effort they made



To feel the rhythm of the respiration they must put one hand on their chest

3rd session

Objective

Reinforcement of the competences acquired in the 1st and 2nd sessions

The participants run again through the trail. They try to improve their performance in every station with the help of the trainer. They repeat the exercises trying to complete the number written in the



Evaluation of the process

With all the participants sitting in a circle the monitor or the monitors: discuss the experience and promote the exchange of opinions. The participants tell about the exercises and the stations they liked best and the difficulties they found in the trail.

The participants analyze their performance and tell about the acquisitions they made:
new knowledge
new competencies
new interests

The evaluation is essentially formative



José Lúcio Espinheira Gomes
APPDA-Lisboa Portugal

Setembro de 2008