

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****FORMING A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE IN ADOLESCENTS WITH
DISABILITIES WHEN PLAYING SPORTS**

Gerold Leonidovich Drandrov (a)*, Dmitry Nikolaevich Syukiev (b),
Vladimir Danzanovich Burlykov (c), Elzyta Borisovna Burlykova (d),
Savr Nikolaevich Marsunov (e)
*Corresponding author

- (a) I.Y. Yakovlev Chuvash State Pedagogical University, 38, K. Marx Str., Cheboksary, Russia, gerold49@mail.ru,
(b) B.V. Gorodovikov Kalmyk State University, 11, Pushkin Str., Elista, Russia, syukiev.dima@mail.ru,
(c) B.B. Gorodovikov Kalmyk State University, 11, Pushkin Str., Elista, Russia,
(d) B.B. Gorodovikov Kalmyk State University, 11, Pushkin Str., Elista, Russia, elsa1502@mail.ru,
(e) B.B. Gorodovikov Kalmyk State University, 11, Pushkin Str., Elista, Russia, marsunov.savr@mail.ru

Abstract

One of the main objectives of modern education is creating conditions to actualize personal self-understanding and self-development mechanisms. Attaining this objective is especially important for teenagers with health limitations. They are in a specific social situation of mental development and thus have low values of a positive self-image indicator. Foreign psychologists are of an opinion that sports not necessarily lead to positive personal development. Thus, the goal of our work was to create techniques for organizing sport activities in a way that significantly increase the efficiency of forming a positive self-image in teenagers with health limitations. The method of component-wise evaluation was taken as a foundation for estimating the development of the positive self-image. A teaching experiment was conducted involving a control (21 persons) and experimental (17 persons) groups of 14-years-old adolescents with impaired vision. In the beginning and after the experiment, indicators of positive concept of self were measured in the teenagers. A comparative analysis of the indicators was performed with the Student's *t* criterion. Experimental technique for formation of a positive self-image is unraveled from the direction of pursued objectives, content, forms, methods, methodological approaches, organizational means and psychological mechanisms by which sporting activity influences the processes of self-understanding, self-acceptance and self-development. Its application provides increased efficiency in forming various components of a positive self-image.

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Keywords: Adaptive sports, adolescents with health limitations, concept of self, methodology



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1. Introduction

A strategic goal of the modern education is forming a personality with a positive concept of self, capable of self-understanding, self-development and self-actualization (Andreev, 2015; Feldshtein, 2005; Maslow, 1987; Stolin, 2007). According to Stolin (2007), the objective of both family and school is not in a direct influence over the personality of a developing person in order to get the results, but in creating necessary conditions to actualize self-understanding and self-development mechanisms.

A successful solution of this task is especially significant for adolescents with health limitations. They are in a specific social situation of mental development. Vygotsky (2003) formulated a proposition on systemic structure of defect, where a defect in one organ of the body (e.g., blindness) leads to significant changes in personal development. He noted that “a child, whose development is complicated with a defect is not just less developed than their normal peers, but developed in a different way... A direct corollary of a defect is a reduced social position of the child; the defect manifests as a social dislocation” (Vygotsky, 2003, p. 82). These propositions of Vygotsky’s concept of features of mental development accompanying a defect were essential for our research.

We performed a review of scientific and methodological literature in order to form our own understanding of the personal positive self-image as a set of goals prompting a person to activity aimed at transformation of self, which are determined by knowledge of self and emotional-sensuous attitude to self. The positive pole of the self-image manifests in directionality of the goals that constitute its content to self-development in the form of external self-affirmation, self-improvement and self-actualization.

Adolescents with health limitations may be divided into two polar groups according to the positivity of their self-image. For the adolescents with a positive self-image it is typical to demonstrate readiness to taking responsibility in hardships, active behavioral style, confidence, stress resistance, aim to transform themselves. Representatives of another group have low self-esteem, low level of self-respect and self-acceptance, high personal anxiety, reduced interest in life, lack of clear idea of their future, insecurities, increased frustration and rigidity. They are in need of special conditions to form the processes of self-understanding, self-attitude and self-development.

The results of a conducted series of experiments witness to the fact that such conditions are spontaneously created during sporting activities.

In particular, it has been established that members of the Russian national Para-Olympic swimming team with injuries of the locomotor apparatus differ from healthy athletes (Masters and Candidate Masters) by having higher indicators of actual self-evaluation of their character, self-confidence, self-value and unity of purpose. They have enough freedom of choice to build their life in accordance with their goals and ideas of its purpose. On the other hand, they have relatively low indicators of emotional self-acceptance in their actual form in present, they are less linked to the image of actual self and due to that try harder to change for the better (Drandrov et al., 2014).

In another research, that covered two groups of adolescents with vision deficiency – involved and non-involved in sports – it has been revealed that self-image of adolescents not involved in sports is characterized by a lower self-evaluation than that of adolescent athletes, lack of confidence, social passivity and social timidity, low indicators of ability to define and formulate life goals, low values in interest to life and Self control locus (Siukiev & Drandrov, 2015).

Foreign sports psychologists (Irish et al., 2017; Jasmin & Ginis, 2018), basing on their own research, came to a conclusion that “sports may be a positive experience for people with health limitations, but sports may also marginalize the person”. Thus, we proposed that just being involved into sporting activity is not enough and it is possible to significantly improve the efficiency of the formative process of the positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations involved in sports, if selection of content, means, methods and methodological approaches in organization of training and competitive activities takes into account qualitative diversity of its formation and psychological mechanisms of emotional identification, personal reflection of self-development in adolescence.

2. Problem Statement

In the UN Convention of the Right of Persons with Disabilities» (UN, 2006), priority directions of social policy aimed at persons with disabilities include increasing the level of their social integration, creation of optimal conditions for creative self-development. Sporting activities, with their atmosphere of cooperation and healthy competition are an efficient method for solving this task (Jaarsm & Smith, 2018). In the European Charter for Sports for Everyone: Persons with Disabilities (Aupam, 1987) and in the Development Strategy of physical fitness in the Russian Federation for the period of up to 2020 (RF Government, 2009), sporting activities in adaptation sports are considered on the one hand, as an efficient means of physical rehabilitation, strengthening one’s health and maintaining physical abilities, and on the other hand, as a condition for their social adaptation and personal development. Implementation of humanistic direction of the adaptation sports is especially important during adolescence, a period in person’s development that is especially sensitive to pedagogic influence (Eriksen, 1967; Nikitina et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the review of literature has shown that the questions of managing the development of a positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations during sporting activities have not been a subject of a separate scientific study. It determined social-practical and scientific relevance of the research problem, which is to find an answer to the question: How should we organize competitive and training activities of adolescents with health limitations in order to increase the efficiency of forming a positive self-image?

3. Research Questions

The subject matter of the study is the process of forming a positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations during sporting activities. Within this area, there are:

1. content, means, methods and techniques pertaining to organization of training and competitive activities, that is, methodology
2. positive self-image as a personal characteristic of adolescents with health limitations.

4. Purpose of the Study

The research objective was creating a methodological technique for organizing competitive and training activities that significantly improves the efficiency of the process that forms positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations.

5. Research Methods

In order to attain the research objective, we drew upon methodological propositions of cultural-historical mental development, psychological activity theory, humanistic psychology, works of Russian and foreign psychologists dedicated to development of personal self-image, modern understanding of educational potential of sporting activities, pedagogical theories of personality formation, theories and techniques of adaptive fitness and sports.

Within the psychological content of a positive self-image, we identify three interacting components: cognitive (a set of knowledge about oneself); emotional (emotional attitude to the image of self); behavioral (readiness to transformation of oneself as a personality). Thus, the method of component-wise (criterial) evaluation was taken as a base for assessment of the development level of one's self-image; it assumes dividing the assessment into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral component and independent assessment of each of them.

In order to determine the development level of the cognitive component, we measured indicators of two criteria: self-assessment and self-respect.

This technique was used to determine indicators of openness, self-confidence, self-management, reflected self-attitude, internal proneness to conflict. Arithmetic average of these indicators characterizes the personal level of self-respect.

The development level of the emotional component was determined by self-sympathy criterion, using techniques from self-attitude studies. The self-value, self-acceptance, self-affection and self-accusation indicators were measured. The self-sympathy development level was determined from arithmetic average of these indicators.

The level of behavioral component development was determined by two criteria: Purpose-in-life orientations and self-confidence. The Purpose-in-life orientations were measured with a PLO technique. The following indicators were determined: life purpose, interest – emotional saturation of life, Self control locus, Life control locus.

The self-confidence indicators were measured with the Self-Confidence Test. The following indicators were determined: self-confidence, social courage, initiative in social contacts.

In order to provide practical justification to increased efficiency of formation of a positive self-image in adolescents with impaired vision on the basis of our technique, we arranged and conducted a formative pedagogical experiment with two groups of adolescents with impaired vision, who were 14 years of age by the beginning of the experiment.

The experimental program was to the full extent completed by 38 persons. Out of them, 21 students of Cheboksary Adaptive Sports School (Chuvash Republic) formed the control group, and 17 students of Elista Adaptive Sports School (Republic of Kalmykia) formed the experimental group;

participants' experience with sports was from 1 to 2 years. Sporting activity of the experimental group adolescents was organized with considerations for our technique aimed at forming a positive self-image. Adolescents in the control group participated in sports without our technique.

In the beginning and after the completion of the experiment, indicators of positive concept of self were measured in all participants. Comparative analysis of group averaged indicators of the positive self-image was carried out with Student's parametric t-criterion.

6. Findings

We identified the main characteristics of sport as an activity that define its high educational potential for the task of forming a positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations.

Sporting activity creates favorable conditions for meeting human needs in self-development in the form of external self-assertiveness, self-improvement and personal self-actualization.

Internal process-related motivation of the sporting activities (need for motor activity, communication, competitive and cognitive motives) strengthen the immediate interest of adolescents with health limitations to life as a sequence of events in the sporting environment, the events being both those of their own behavior in the sporting environment and events of interior life in sports.

Sporting activity assumes that the adolescent, as a subject, creates a perspective of goals that shall define individuality of their life journey.

Sporting activity is performed in a specific atmosphere of publicity, competitiveness and cooperation, thus creating favorable prerequisites for self-understanding and self-acceptance of adolescents in the Self – Others system during interactions with other participants of the sporting activity through the mental processes of introjection and projection.

Internal contradiction of sporting activity serve as a prime engine for self-development, prompting and directing activity of the adolescent with health limitations to overcoming internal obstacles through committing acts of positive personal meaning.

Evaluation of competition results with a common regulatory scale allows comparing their results against other sportspersons and with their own results of the past, thus performing the processes of self-acceptance and prediction of their life journey.

Attaining competitive success facilitates increased self-esteem, one's level of aspiration, self-respect, self-sympathy, self-confidence, Self control locus and Life control locus.

We had previously developed a technique for formation of a positive self-image in adolescents with impaired vision during their sporting activity aimed at attaining the following objectives:

- forming adequate self-esteem, aspiration level and self-respect;
- forming a positive emotional value-based attitude to one's self-image;
- forming purpose-in-life orientations to self-development
- forming self-confidence;

In accordance with the person-centered approach, the technique was implemented with accounts for individual features of both development level and content of the adolescents' positive self-image, as determined by pedagogical observation and psychological testing.

The above-mentioned objectives were attained through adolescents' absorption of two intertwined subject matters: a mental image of their own self and a mental image of the sporting world at the rational, emotional-sensual and motivation-behavioral levels.

We used two main forms to organize the educational process for adolescents involved in sports: competitions and training sessions (both practical and theoretical). Their synergistic application created organizational conditions necessary to adolescents to master understanding of oneself and the world of sport, to form a positive emotional attitude to self and own sporting activity, self-confidence and purpose-in-life orientation to self-development.

Sporting activities of adolescents were organized involving three groups of educational methods to form positive attitudes to one's self-image:

- methods of persistent, systematic, trustful and free communication of adolescents among themselves and with the trainer
- methods of pedagogical and psychological contact between the trainer and the adolescent personality, addressing the latter's consciousness, feelings and will.
- methods of independent organization of sporting activity

The above-listed methods were implemented on the basis of two psychological mechanisms to organize the trainer's action onto personality of a young athlete: "top-down" (directly addressing consciousness and feeling) and "bottom-up" (creating a set of conditions during the sporting activity that unconditionally require a certain attitude to one's self on behalf of an athlete). Selection and application of methods, methodological techniques and organizational means during competitive and training activities were made with accounts for qualitative distinctness of psychological mechanisms of self-understanding and self-development during the adolescence.

1. Forming cognitive and emotional components of the positive self-image. Community service becomes a leading cause during adolescence. Due to that, formation of cognitive and emotional components of the positive self-image started from application of psychological identification mechanisms within the system Self – Others during the interaction between the adolescent and other subjects of the sporting activity, primarily with teammates and competitors. The following methodological techniques were applied:

1. Comparison of self and generalized Other. Communication between the adolescent and other athletes influences their subconsciousness through indirect infusion and forms a positive self-attitude. For example, joint performance of the same or different training tasks whose results may be directly compared or qualitatively measure and assess using a certain scale. A variant of this technique is a deliberate comparison of self with a favorite athlete by meaningful personal characteristics and behavioral features in situations with conflicting meaning (upward comparison), or a comparison of self and an athlete of one's group whom the adolescent does not want to resemble (downward comparison).

2. Understanding other people. Providing characteristics of their peers in sports, their personal features, peculiarities of emotional and will organization, temperament, abilities, athletic performance, the adolescent then transmit these characteristics to self. For example, the athlete is suggested to predict behavior of their teammate in life situations with conflicting personal meaning, define their hierarchy of the most important value orientations.

3. Controlled projection. This methodological technique allows directing the adolescent's self-attitude onto a different person in such a way that the nature of this feeling does not undergo changes. For example, the adolescent is suggested to answer a number of questions concerning peculiarities of attitude and behavior on behalf of their peer and then on behalf of oneself, with subsequent comparison between the variants.

4. Activation of subjective experience through dramatic identification, for example, by imagining oneself in a situation of defeat and describing one's thoughts and feelings, remembering and describing an optimal mental condition of engagement readiness to competitions, conducting self-assessment of feelings, activity and mood.

5. Social-psychological training sessions allows obtaining information on oneself from other participants, where such information is perceived as less painful than during a real-life situation. The group, being a certain mirror where each participant is reflected, intensifies understanding of oneself and others.

Actualization and development of self-understanding and self-acceptance processes with prevailing use of psychological mechanism of personal reflection were conducted within the framework of a Self-Self system, applying such methodological techniques as self-observation, self-analysis, self-evaluation and self-acceptance.

Forming the behavioral component of the positive self-image. The content of the behavioral component of an adolescent includes attitudes to self-development as the level of external assertiveness (in the Self–Others system) and self-improvement (in the Self–Self system).

Appearance, establishment, development and functioning of attitude to self-development provided for solution of the following tasks:

- firming motives for attaining success and self-improvement;
- creating a system of operational, intermediate and outreach goals in one's sporting activities;
- forming a confidence in sufficiency of one's abilities to attain the goals.

Formation of the behavioral component was performed on the basis of systematic management of condition and behavior of the athletes in different situations sporting activities through changing and stabilizing the athlete's attitude to self-development in the form of external self-assertion and self-improvement. It was done on the basis of modeling situations with conflicting personal meanings during the training and competitive activities. In such situations, one side of the conflict is an aspiration to attain success and/or motive for self-improvement, and the other is represented by various internal obstacles (fear, other motives, physical loads, etc.).

Educational activity of trainer (upward or downward) directs the adolescent's mental activity towards realization and emotional experience of internal contradictions between various sides of personality and encourage to committing actions with positive personal meaning. Commitment of an action is an elementary step that contributes to formation of the attitude to personal self-development in the form of external self-assertion and self-improvement.

During the educational training activity, the following served as interior obstacle, preventing commitment of actions with conflicting meanings:

- various mental (tiredness, monotony, mental overload, frustration, fear, indifference, finishing pain syndrome) and functional (fatigue, hunger, hypothermia, thirst, illness) states;
- physical exercises (coordination complexity and biodynamic characteristics);
- social and psychological conditions (relations with trainer, partners, competitors, supporters, family members);
- climatic and weather conditions;
- mental qualities of personality (interests, value orientations, character traits, abilities, features of temperament).

During the training *activity*, the following methodological techniques were used to form the self-development motive in the form of external assertion and self-improvement:

- 1) identification (by adolescents in communication with trainer) of internal personal obstacles that determine conflict nature of training situations, with explanations of causes for selection this action or another;
- 2) participation together with the coach in creating a prospect of operational, current, stage and outreach goals of sporting activity, related to external self-assertion and self-improvement;
- 3) keeping a sporting journal with recording of attained results;
- 4) display of successful competitive results and actions in the close environment of social peers;
- 5) participation in motivational training sessions for causal schemes and personal causality and achievement motivation;
- 6) constant self-encouragement for each step in the direction of a planned goal;
- 7) involvement in communication with an athlete aspiring to success and athletic improvement;
- 8) application of competitive and gaming techniques, creating situations of attaining success;
- 9) modeling the situations of sporting activity where the result may and should be obtained by an adolescent due to their own efforts with subsequent evaluation with a regulatory measurement scale;
- 10) double prediction of personal development;
- 11) getting acquainted with techniques of mental self-defense, which are applied to keep self-esteem, self-respect and self-sympathy but lead the adolescents away from resolving objectively existing contradictions between their actual and ideal selves;
- 12) modeling (during competitive activities) of situations with conflicting personal meaning, where the adolescent had to choose between contradicting propositions. For example, a fair play attitude and an aspiration to win no matter what, personal win or success of the whole team, or that of a mate.
- 13) informing about all the sides of competitive activities with the aim of acting upon the adolescent's decision on action with a positive personal meaning.

Results of the pedagogical experiment. In the beginning of the experiment, indicators of a positive self-image did not have significant differences between the control group and the experimental group.

Comparative analysis of indicators of the positive self-image revealed in adolescents of both groups after the experiment showed (Table 1), that the teenagers from the experimental group involved in sports with our technique, had an advantage in indicators of their *actual self evaluation* 6.80 over 5.11 with $P=0.001$).

Table 1. Indicators of self-esteem of actual and ideal self and aspiration level in adolescents after the pedagogical experiment, points ($X\pm\delta$)

Self-esteem indicators	Self-esteem indicators		P
	Tested groups		
	Control n = 21	Experimental n = 17	
Actual Self	5.11±1.07	6.80±1.39	0.001
Ideal Self	8.30±0.76	9.21±0.86	0.001
Aspiration Level	3.18±1.29	2.41±0.74	0.03

They also had higher indicators of *self-esteem of an ideal self* as a whole (9.21 over 8.30 points with $P=0.001$). In comparison with the control group teenagers, they had relatively *low aspiration level* as a whole (2.41 against 3.18 points, with $P=0.03$). It witnesses more to an adequate level of aspiration, rather than undervaluation. Thus, sporting activities with accounts for our technique leads to improving self-assessment of ideal and actual self and more adequate level of aspiration.

Indicators of another criterion of the cognitive component of a positive self-image, self-respect (Table 2), did not show significant difference between the group after the experiment (29.14 against 28.71 points with $P=0.60$). Exception is the indicators of internal Proneness to Conflict, which were significantly lower in the experimental group (5.00 against 5.76 points with $P=0.05$) and openness indicators, which were higher in adolescents of the control group (6.67 against 5.76 points with $P=0.04$).

No significant differences were identified in the indicators of self-sympathy (Table 2) – they amounted to 23.14 and 23.24 points with $P=0.94$. An exception is the indicators of self-accusation, which were lower in the adolescents of the experimental group (5.88 against 6.29 points with $P=0.06$).

Table 2. Indicators of self-respect and self-sympathy in adolescents after the pedagogic experiment, points ($X\pm\delta$)

Parameters of self-respect and self-sympathy	Tested groups		P
	Control n = 21	Experimental n = 17	
Self-respect Indicators			
Openness	6.67±1.56	5.76±0.81	0.04
Confidence	6.05±1.02	5.76±0.81	0.36
Self-Management	6.38±1.28	6.88±0.90	0.19
Reflected	5.81±0.93	5.29±1.32	0.17
Self-Attitude	5.76±1.00	5.00±1.33	0.05
Internal Proneness to Conflict	5.76±1.00	5.00±1.33	0.05
<i>Self-Respect</i>	29.14±2.57	28.71±2.35	0.60
Self-Sympathy Indicators			
Self Value	6.48±1.25	5.94±1.43	0.23
Self-acceptance	5.90±1.37	6.18±1.69	0.59
Self-affection	6.29±0.85	5.88±1.45	0.30
Self-accusation	5.52±1.03	4.76±1.35	0.06
<i>Self-sympathy</i>	23.14±2.29	23.24±4.43	0.94

The research results given in Table 3 witness to the fact that after the experiment the teenagers of the experimental group had higher indicators of maturity of purpose-in-life orientations: Life purpose indicators (30.41 against 26.38 points with $P=0.03$); Interest to life indicators (30.71 against 26,86 points with $P=0.01$); Self control locus (20.82 versus 18.43 points with $P=0.05$).

Table 3. Indicators of Purpose-in-life orientations and self-confidence in adolescents after the pedagogic experiment, points ($X\pm\delta$)

Purpose-in-life orientations and self-confidence parameters	Tested groups		P
	Control n = 21	Experimental n = 17	
	Purpose-In-Life Orientations		
Life purpose	26.38±5.37	30.41±5.16	0.03
Interest to life	26.86±4.78	30.71±3.32	0.01
Self control locus	18.43±4.04	20.82±2.75	0.05
Life control locus	27.24±4.98	29.65±4.09	0.12
<i>Purpose-in-Life orientation</i>	98.90±16.58	111.59±12.43	0.01
	Self-confidence		
Social initiative	20.81±2.64	23.59±4.62	0.03
Social courage	22.57±3.20	25.12±4.54	0.05
Confidence	23.86±3.10	25.94±4.49	0.11
<i>Self-confidence</i>	67.24±5.27	74.65±10.50	0.01

General evaluation of maturity of the purpose-to-life orientation in the experimental group was also significantly higher than that in the control group, 111.59 versus 98.90 points with $P=0.01$). One may conclude that sporting activities organized with considerations for our technique is a significant factor in formation of purpose-to-life orientations.

Organization of sporting activities has a significant influence over formation of self-confidence in the adolescents of the experimental group; after the experiment, this indicator in the experimental group reached 74.65 points, versus 67.24 points in the control group ($P=0.01$). They demonstrated higher indicators of social initiative (23.59 versus 20.81 points with $P=0.03$) and social courage (25.12 versus 22.57 points with $P=0.05$)

7. Conclusion

Generalizing the research results, one may conclude that sporting activities with psychological and pedagogical support on the basis of our technique significantly influences formation of a positive self-image in adolescents with health limitations. This is due to its features that include: sporting activity creates conditions for satisfying personal needs in self-development; process-related motives of the sporting activity strengthen the direct personal interest to sport life; sporting activity is related to formation of a goal prospect; the sporting activity creates conditions for self-understanding, self-acceptance and self-development in the Self–Others system; internal contradictions of the sporting activity serve as an engine for self-development; evaluation of competitive results allows implement self-acceptance and self-prediction for one’s life journey; attaining competitive success facilitates self-understanding, self-acceptance and self-development.

We had developed a technique for formation of a positive self-image in adolescents with impaired vision during their sporting activity, which is aimed at forming: adequate self-assessment, levels of aspiration and self-respect; positive emotional value-related attitude to one's self-image; purpose-in-life orientations to self-development; self-confidence. Solution of these tasks is obtained by the adolescents through absorption of the content of the mental image of their self and the mental image of the athletic world at rational, emotional-sensuous and behavioral levels during training and competitive activities.

Cognitive and emotional components of the positive self-image in our technique were formed on the basis of psychological mechanism of identification using such methodological techniques as comparison of self and generalized Other; understanding other people; controlled projection; activating subjective experience through dramatic identification; social psychological training sessions; psychological mechanism of personal reflection with application of such methodological techniques as: self-observation, self-analysis, self-assessment, self-acceptance.

The behavioral component of the positive self-image that includes attitude to self-development in the form of external assertion (in the Self–Others system) and self-improvement (in the Self – Self system) was formed on the basis of committing acts in simulated situations with conflicting personal meaning during the sporting activities.

The results of the pedagogical experiment allows stating that organization of competitive and training activities of adolescents with impaired vision on the basis of our technique provides a significant improvement in development levels:

- cognitive development (increased indicators of self-assessment of personal characteristic of actual and ideal self; reduced aspirations, reflected self-attitude indicators and internal Proneness to Conflict with preservation of self-respect as a whole);
- emotional development (preservation of self-sympathy);
- behavioral development (purpose-in-life orientations: Life purpose, Interest to life, Self control locus, Life control locus, self-confidence: social initiative, social courage, confidence).

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