

Marathon running with a visual impairment: challenges, benefits, achievement

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Első dia Dick Traum

the first ever runner to complete a marathon with a prosthetic leg at the 1976 New York City marathon. His unique achievement encouraged Terry Fox, and later an infinite number of individuals with different disabilities, to get actively involved in long-distance running.

Második dia

Benefits of regular PA (physical activity) for individuals with disabilities:

- physiological benefits: improved general health, necessary strength provided for daily activities (e.g. blind parent carrying baby, no pushchair used; ready to walk, no car in everyday transportation etc.)
- - Psycho-social benefits: boosts self-esteem, multiplies social interactions and social participation, helps accept the disability.

Harmadik dia

Thanks to regular PA:

- Overall quality of life increased,
- - plays a crucial role in habilitation and rehabilitation processes.

Negyedik dia

Reasons for running with a VI

What are their motives for running?

What barriers do they face during training and races?

How can they overcome those barriers?

Do family and friends influence their participation?

What (physiological/psychological/social) benefits of regular running do they experience?

Ötödik dia

Method

Qualitative research (semi-structured interviews)

Sample

9 Hungarian marathon runners with VI (7 male, 1 female; 29-51 years; 2 total blindness, 7 low-vision)

hatodik dia

Family background

Parents: no involvement in regular PA

Hetedik dia

Skills

'Everyone knows how to run, it's instinctive and there's nothing to see' (31-year-old male respondent).

Nyolcadik dia

Motivating factors to start running:

- longing for a good body shape,
- - importance of a healthy lifestyle,
- - wish to find an inclusive community and new friends,
- - desire to prove, primarily to themselves, and to non-disabled people, their ability to complete a marathon.

Kilencedik dia

Feedback from family/friends/colleagues

'If I say, I lifted 25 kgs in the gym twice as many times as before, people say great, but it's nothing special. But if I tell them I've run a marathon, they just say wow, congratulations, that's amazing.' (33-year-old male respondent).

Tizedik dia

Biggest challenges

To plan training with sighted guides

To have enough training hours with a guide – treadmill used extensively

To navigate in crowded street races

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References

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12. dia

Thank you for your attention.