

Research Highlights

Topic: Self-Determination

Wehmeyer, M. L., Kelchner, K., & Richards, S. (1996). Essential characteristics of self-determined behavior of individuals with mental retardation. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 100, 632-642.

BOTTOM LINE

Approximately 400 individuals with mental retardation completed a number of assessments measuring characteristics that are believed to be associated with self-determination, such as making choices and decisions, solving problems, being assertive, feeling in control, and having an understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses. Significant differences were found in individuals with high levels of self-determined behavior and individuals with low levels of self-determined behavior. Those who showed more self-determined behavior tended to score higher on assessments measuring the characteristics described above than those who showed fewer self-determined behaviors.

TIPS

- Offer as many opportunities as possible for making choices and decisions, setting goals, and self-advocacy, because people with disabilities do not necessarily get as many opportunities to show that they know how to do something as people without disabilities.
- Provide a good model for individuals with disabilities by speaking up for yourself, asking interesting questions, and overtly considering options and consequences for what you choose.

KEY FINDINGS

- Significant differences are seen between individuals who engage in high and low levels of self-determined behavior.

KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- Individuals who engage in high levels of self-determined behavior tend to
 - ◆ have more opportunities to make choices and decisions
 - ◆ have a realistic understanding of their abilities and limitations
 - ◆ be better problem solvers
 - ◆ be able to assert themselves in an appropriate manner
 - ◆ feel that they have control over what happens in their life
 - ◆ feel that they have the skills and knowledge to achieve their goals
 - Severity of disability is not necessarily related to the degree of individual self-determination.
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METHOD

- 407 individuals with mental retardation from 10 states completed the research instruments used in this study.
 - The instruments asked questions about topics believed to be related to self-determination, such as autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization.
 - Based on measures of self-determined behavior, the participants in this study were divided into groups with high self-determined or low self-determined behavior. These two groups were compared on their responses on the assessments related to autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization.
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RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Wehmeyer, M.L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., & Bolding, N. (1999). Self-determination across living and working environments: A matched-samples study of adults with mental retardation. *Mental Retardation*, 37, 353 - 363.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., & Bolding, N. (2001). Enhanced self-determination of adults with mental retardation as an outcome of moving to community-based work or living environments. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 45, 1-13.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., & Metzler, C. (1995). How self-determined are people with mental retardation? The National Consumer Survey. *Mental Retardation*, 33, 111 - 119.
- Wehmeyer, M.L., & Schwartz, M. (1998). The relationship between self-determination, quality of life, and life satisfaction for adults with mental retardation. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 33, 3-12.

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