

Between Loneliness and Belonging **'Krembo Wings' during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Introduction

'Krembo Wings' is a national youth movement for children and adolescents both with and without disabilities that aims to promote shared inclusive activity that engenders a sense of belonging. The heterogeneous encounter taking place in the movement contributes to raising social sensitivity and a familiarity of its members with the full spectrum of communities in Israeli society. The movement seeks to provide a foundation to allow its entire membership to take part in accessible and specially-tailored activities that address the emotional and social needs of those participants with disabilities.

The unique nature of informal education allows a variety of groups in society to acquire a sense of belonging, mutuality and partnership through meaningful and value-based social activity. Belonging is defined as a positive connection that represents a person's fundamental need to be part of a group, and is perceived as basis for social involvement. Mutuality is an important and usually essential step to creating a sense of belonging (Ganor, 2016).

Conversely, Loneliness is defined as an unpleasant sensation due to which a person senses emptiness and alienation. This perception is characterized by a lack of satisfaction from social relations or a perpetual frustration from such relations. The feeling of loneliness relates to the perceptions and feelings that reflect ongoing sadness and a negative prior experience of the individual in a social environment. Loneliness intensifies in situations of crisis and stress in general, and in particular when a person faces an existential void and struggles to confide in others and to be assisted by them. People report a loss of enthusiasm and joy during states of crisis, which can lead to a sense of an absence of energy and lowered motivation to act - which in turn amplifies the feeling of loneliness (Shwartz, 2006). Additional research shows that the feeling of loneliness is an integral part of the lives of people with disabilities - in most cases due to their subjective sense of being different (Hyman, Ullnik, Eden, 2014).

The dilemma between loneliness and belonging has intensified in the beginning of 2020 with the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization. This declaration has led to a state of emergency in the entire world, including in Israel. This state of emergency included restrictions and regulations designed to suppress the spread of the disease, with social distancing being the prominent principle among those.

The requirement for social distancing has directly affected the 'Krembo Wings' movement, forcing it to cease in-person activities in its branches, and was therefore required to develop and adjust its activity framework in line with new regulations.

This paper presents the findings of research conducted during this complex period in 2020-2021. The first part of the research is applied, dealing with investigating the quality of life and the participatory experiences of members with complex disabilities in the 'Krembo Wings' youth movement. The research examined members' views as to their sense of belonging and its influence on their quality of life during COVID-19. In its first part the research was based on a parents questionnaire filled out by parents of members with complex disabilities. The second part of the research examined the views of members with and without disabilities in relation to the influence of their involvement in the movement on their quality of life and to the significance they attribute to this involvement. Among other things, they were questioned in regards to their sense of loneliness. This part of the research was based on self-administered questionnaires. these studies represent the basis for this paper, which will deal with experiences of both loneliness and belonging in youths during COVID-19 using questionnaires filled out by different groups of movement members.

Belonging and Mutuality

Belonging is a basic need of the human spirit and is the foundation of our existence. Each one of us is already a part of something prior to their entry into the world, since someone “thought” us into existence, wanted us and created us (Ganor, 2016).

The need for societal belonging is considered in psychology to be a basic human need. It is integral to a person's intimate desires and is a main motivator for action. A person seeks to be close to others and maintain a meaningful connection with them that will provide affection and love (Adler, 2009).

Belonging is perceived as both a basis for and product of social engagement. When a person senses they are a part of a social environment, they become more active and take part in it experientially. This influences their internal emotional system and their behavior. They strive to be close to others and maintain meaningful connections with them. Belonging is a positive personal connection, the need of which represents the human being's need to sense inclusion in a social group. According to the taxonomy of needs conceived by Henry Murray - achievement, power and belonging are directly related to the motivation and welfare of the human being (Chapman, 2010).

In order to satisfy the need for belonging we require frequent positive interactions with the same group of people, and a warm, stable and long-term framework in which to conduct these interactions.

Mutuality is another important step in creating a sense of belonging. Mutuality breeds security and a sense of fairness in relationships, and is essential to management of relationships between people in public contexts, in organizations and in various social circumstances. It has been found that the positive feelings of joy and happiness, as well as an increase in the positive experience of quality of life, are tied to an increase in the degree of belonging and mutuality. The level of happiness in life is tightly bound to the number of meaningful inter-personal connections that a person has. Conversely, people who experience loneliness report feelings of misery and depression. In order to create a sense of belonging and mutuality, one must nurture consistent and permanent connections, since encounters between people outside of a context that breeds belonging do not address the need for a mutual connection. It has also been found that group connections are particularly effective during states of distress, since external threats increase group cohesion (Baumeister, 1995).

Belonging is expressed in children and youth in their capacity to be present and active in a social group, to meet friends and to react to them. The continued presence of an active community in their lives contributes to their feeling of belonging to the world. Through this community they feel alive, real and even present in their own lives. Regular activity, deriving from cooperation and proactivity, grants participants an opportunity for meaningful change in their lives, and for most of them this is a critical moment in life (Chapman, 2010).

Youth Movements - Belonging, Cooperation and Mutuality

Informal education is defined as organized and systematic educational activity taking place outside of the formal education system, providing unique educational patterns to a variety of groups in society, with the intention to achieve defined educational goals - such as acquiring knowledge and skills and ideological education (Klavinski, 2011). These activities contribute to the consolidation of identity, the expression of self, an ongoing sense of fulfillment, belonging and social experience.

A youth movement is an informal educational organization for youth that is run by youth. A youth movement has a defined “raison d’être” and its members participate voluntarily. A youth movement, as an informal organization of adolescents, mainly deals with educational efforts based on that same ideological “raison d’être” at the core of its conception.

'Krembo Wings' is a movement for children and youth with and without disabilities who take part in shared, inclusive activity which engenders belonging. According to Gilor, Klavinsky and Kfir (2015), such activity enables people - with and without disabilities - to find meaning in their lives. People with disabilities tend to participate less often in informal activities due to personal and environmental barriers. That being said, teenage boys and girls with disabilities do seek social and physical activity. Their top priority is activities that include community involvement and that invite the creation of new friendships. They search for activity that will provide them quality of life, and therefore needs to be challenging, enticing, with a social aspect, and characterized by inclusion shown by other participants. For them, a youth movement is an opportunity for them to belong to a community (Gilor, Klavinski, Kfir, 2015).

Inclusive activity of this nature addresses the need of youth with disabilities to meet with their peers without disabilities and to experience shared activities. The inclusive activities also allow the other group (children and youth without disabilities) to meet with their peers with disabilities, so that the two groups may create one group of belonging stemming from their shared activity (Cohen, 2004). The group fulfills important social and emotional needs, such as the need for socialization or the need for attention and affection. Belonging to the group allows achieving goals and performing tasks that would not be possible to do alone, such as acquiring general knowledge and experiences, as well as developing skills. Thus, belonging to an informal group can influence a person's self-image and the way they define themselves. The more a person takes part regularly in groups that carry meaning to them and to society - so does their self-esteem improve (Lahman, 2000).

'Krembo Wings', as an informal education framework, addresses the need for belonging and mutuality and provides all its members experiences of inclusion, proactive activities, challenges and opportunities to advance, as well as presents them with figures and role models to imitate. Through the various courses, members - with and without disabilities - may strive to advance to different responsible roles in the movement and gain experiences of independence.

Experiencing Loneliness - "it is not good that the man should be alone..."

The feeling of loneliness is associated with emotions and perceptions that reflect ongoing sadness and negative experiences of the individual in social frameworks. This perception is characterized by

a lack of satisfaction from social connections or an ongoing frustration from such connections (Hyman, Ullnik, Eden, 2014).

Experiencing loneliness may negatively affect both a person's internal world and their social behavior. Research indicates that people who report a sense of loneliness often also report shyness, low social skills, an absence of emotional stability and lacking confidence. The literature differentiates between interpersonal loneliness and experiencing emotional loneliness. Interpersonal loneliness is expressed in the absence of functional social connections, geographical isolation and a scarcity in human interactions. The experience of emotional loneliness relates to the person's experience as to the depth of connection with others and to their sense of belonging. In people with disabilities, the experience of loneliness is amplified due to their ongoing struggle with the sense of social belonging generally: the feeling of social-environmental alienation of a person different to those around them, who senses they cannot be understood. This is expounded by existential loneliness, which may be accompanied by acute anxiety and a sense of alienation stemming from a low level of interaction with others, the feeling of a scarcity of shared values with the social environment and a lacking sense of belonging (Dor Haim, 2013). Conversely, empirical research conducted in recent years has found that a person who senses they are being listened to may reach higher achievements in work and attain greater emotional welfare (Ben Aryeh, 2020).

Another reason for the intensity of the experience of loneliness among people with disabilities is the fact they are being labeled by their social environment, and this labeling leads to the absence of social listening directed at them. Listening does not feature merely passive presence while a person speaks, but requires active gestures from the listener (Kluger & Nir, 2010). This state can go as far as triggering existential loneliness. Existential loneliness is the fate of all human beings, however, a person's ability to recognize their loneliness and express it may help them manage it healthily; conversely, in people with disabilities the capability of expression is often curtailed, they rarely share their feelings, and dealing with the existential void is particularly threatening to them (Dor Haim, 2013).

The literature indicates that expressions of loneliness in times of crisis can be identified on several levels. On the emotional level, people in crisis nearly always feel a decline in their mood, a sense of emptiness and purposelessness; people report losing enthusiasm and joy, and all this leads to a feeling of an absence of energy, lower motivation to act, anxiety, fits of rage or nervous and aggressive behavior, in contrast to their usual way of being. On the cognitive level, people in crisis struggle to

focus and perform complex cognitive tasks that require skills of thinking, memory, creativity and problem-solving. In addition distortions in thinking can be observed, such as a pessimistic outlook and a decline in self-esteem and confidence in personal skills. The significance of past achievements also declines greatly, with people “getting it into their heads” that they are vacuous, incapable and talentless. On the behavioral level, crisis is expressed in a considerable decline in levels of activity. In adults this decline will be expressed in the areas of work, family and social obligations and leisure activity (Shwartz, 2016).

In states of pressure and crisis, the feeling of loneliness that people with disabilities experience intensifies. When social and physical spaces are restricted, daily challenges become existential and contribute to the amplification of fear and anxiety. Those feelings grow significantly when a person with disabilities needs to deal with enforced social distancing due to extraordinary circumstances, such as isolation, lockdowns and social contact prohibitions. Under these circumstances it is desirable to maintain consistent communication remotely, in order to ease the difficult feelings that accompany enforced isolation and the breaking of routines, in order to provide listening, which constitutes an essential ingredient in a person’s development (Dor Haim, 2013).

'Krembo Wings' - Creating Together Place and Meaning for Everyone

The 'Krembo Wings' youth movement was established in 2002 and today operates 83 branches all over the country. There are currently 7000 members, 2565 of which are pupils and 4435 tutors. Children and youth with and without disabilities participate in the movement, and integrating these two worlds in all realms of life takes place by instilling ideology and defining a practice of adjusting the environment, educational approach, conduct, guidance, accompaniment and support to the unique needs of every member, both pupils and tutors. According to the educational model of the movement, the inclusion and belonging of people with disabilities in daily activities involves changing policy and practices in order to identify and remove conceptual, physical and communication barriers, which hinder the ability of individuals to fully participate in society (Kobi, Boaz, Zeiger-Kober, 2017). The movement aims to provide the infrastructure to achieve equality for children, youth and adults with and without disabilities, to together create a meaningful heterogeneous community for all members - through shared leisure activity.

The guiding educational principal in the movement is “inclusion and belonging” - meaning integrating all youth, and in particular those with disabilities, in all activities, institutions and subjects, and in the community’s social fabric. This perception seeks to void the perceptual, social and mental barriers that exist in society and in the various systems in the country, that make it harder for people with disabilities to fully integrate in society and the workforce (Timor, 2013). The roots of the perception of inclusion of the movement stem from the societal model of disability, on which the movement’s education vision is based. The societal model sees social, cultural and physical barriers as a factor that limits the human being’s active participation and ability to function in wide and various life areas in society and the economy; therefore these barriers, which translate into manifold limitations for people with disabilities, must be neutralized (Shakespeare, 2016).

Shared activity in the movement is based on a model that suggests that if we provide to adolescents from the general population and adolescents with disabilities the conditions for a direct encounter and the skills to accept the unfamiliar other, the views of participants will change and their behavior towards the other will also change accordingly.

The Coronavirus Crisis (COVID-19)

In the beginning of 2020 the COVID-19 disease caused by the coronavirus spread across the world. On March 2020 the World Health Organization declared the disease as a global pandemic, and estimated that a considerable percentage of the world’s population would contract the virus. Due to this, many countries all over the world declared a state of emergency and announced restrictions and guidelines that aimed to apply the principle of social distancing, which were designed to slow the spread of the disease. As a result, individuals and entire families stayed isolated at home and did not attend work, school and leisure activities. This quickly affected the footing of children and youth on the social, educational, behavioral and emotional levels, and narrowed the ability of the various authorities and educational frameworks (both formal and informal) to locate children in states of distress and to provide them with help.

Emotionally, a pandemic can directly affect the wellbeing of children. They may experience emotional distress and anxiety from the existential threat they are exposed to, as well as secondary anxiety as a reaction to their parents’ distress and the ways the latter respond the manifold stressors. According to data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2020), 8.25% of parents have reported their children’s emotional wellbeing worsened due to the pandemic. A report by the

Psychology-Consultation Service of the Education Ministry exposed that during the first week of the pandemic, over 50,000 appeals were received from pupils and parents: 13,261 appeals dealt with loneliness and sadness, 9,586 with anxieties and distress, 8,612 with family tensions, 519 with suicidal tendencies, and 19,738 appeals dealt with situations of children at risk. Children making appeals told of various anxieties: “What is going to happen to me?”, “if I catch the virus will I die?”, “what will happen to grandma and grandpa?”, “will we no longer have any money?”, and also, “I’m not a member of any groups and nobody calls me.” (Arazy, Sabag, 2020).

According to Shwartz (2016), three factors influence the likelihood of successfully dealing with crisis: personality structure - cognition, characteristics, behaviors and perceptions; the intensity of the crisis as a subjective experience; and environmental support - addressing basic needs and emotional support.

Support from the environment is one of the most meaningful factors, since it is based on an external force and the environment’s readiness to collectively assist the individual (Shwartz, 2016). This insight has led the management at 'Krembo Wings' to change the nature of the movement’s activity and adjust it to this challenging time.

“Krembo Corona”

In the middle of March 2020, the 'Krembo Wings' movement was forced to cease its activity, like many other organizations. Members found themselves stopping routine activity for an unknown period of time. The organization’s management came to a principal decision that activities will resume online, with maximal adjustments made for populations with significant functional disabilities. In light of these decisions the “Krembo Corona” website was established, designed to address occupational needs - in the spirit of the movement - of members with and without disabilities, to hold regular social meetings with members and keep them as close as possible to the movement’s activity routine, in order to help them deal with the effects of stress and crisis. Following this, the movement received authorization to perform house calls, which were conducted in two ways:

1. Personal tutorship, during which tutors and coaches met with pupils in the open air: outside members’ houses, in parks and playgrounds.
2. “KremBus” - senior members, in collaboration with local authorities, rode a bus that ran between members’ houses to meet with them outside their houses for short social activities.

These activities were carried out in order to keep contact with members and their parents and to create a sense of belonging to the movement during this challenging time.

Additionally, the movement maintained direct and continuous communication with the local authorities it is active in, and made sure that senior members, ages 14-21 (with and without disabilities), take part in a volunteering framework local authorities established for their communities: food supplies packing, tutoring children of essential workers, connecting with community elders and more.

The purpose of activity in the movement during this time was to create social support and to try to keep a routine of online encounters, to provide a social group setting and maintain connections between members. When society deals with a crisis that develops from unexpected events - as was the case during the corona outbreak - the feelings of stress and anxiety we are forced to deal with, along with the disconnect from our familiar life routine, exacerbates the difficulty. Out of a desire to create the best coping process possible, the movement collated a variety of tools to help members in dealing with the situation and to radiate a more optimal attitude to the situation. When a person accepts assistance from an outside source in dealing with crisis, they are playing an active part in their own coping process. External assistance can ease coping and optimize it (Shwartz, 2016).

This type of activity is defined as transferring resources from one person to the next in order to elevate the sense of personal welfare, particularly in states of crisis. Social support carries great significance in states of crisis, and protects the individual from feelings of victimhood and inferiority (Hyman, Ullnik, Eden, 2014).

Alongside expressions of frustration that accompanied periods of isolation at home, a concern was raised that some members would also experience emotional and functional regression. It was therefore decided to perform an in-depth research probe among movement members in order to compile a reliable and updated situation report, to deepen the relevant knowledge and prepare accurately for upcoming crises. In fact, this probe replaced previously scheduled research, as will be explained below.

Research During COVID-19

In 2019 it was decided at 'Krembo Wings' to conduct in-depth research among all members (with and without disabilities) and their parents. The research sought to determine the degree of quality of life and general satisfaction of members, the connection between a member's experience of participation in the movement and their general quality of life, and the experience of participating in the movement as indication of social popularity and the level of connection of members to the movement. To this end a research team was established that consisted of professionals from the Ono Academic College, "Mashav" Applied Research Company and professionals from "Krembo Wings". In order to include in the research the complete spectrum of members, the research team developed a short, reliable and current questionnaire that was accessible to all members.

The coronavirus period brought new and unexpected challenges to the team working on this research and it could not have been carried out as planned. Therefore, the work was adjusted to the times and current conditions.

This research examines how processes of belonging influence the feeling of loneliness among 'Krembo Wings' members (with and without disabilities) during the pandemic. As mentioned above, this period saw online activity carried out alongside house calls and occasional face-to-face activities, in small groups in the open air, under Purple Badge restrictions - including social distancing, face masks and the avoidance of physical touch.

Methodology

The research was conducted in collaboration with the Ono Academic College and the "Mashav" Applied Research Company.

The first part of the research was done in collaboration with the occupational therapy course at the Ono Academic College as led by Dr. Naomi Parziger and was carried out in the beginning of the pandemic, during the first lockdown (March-April 2020). In this part of the research parents of 22 members with complex disabilities who regularly attend movement activities participated. During this time activities were carried out online.

These members were 8-22 years of age (15 boys and 7 girls). This research group included various complex impairments, as follows:

27% - physical impairment
36% - communication impairment and autism
13.5% - cognitive impairment and Down syndrome
9% - communication impairment with intellectual disability
9% - physical impairment with communication impairment
4.5% - impairment caused by a brain tumor

Parents were asked to respond to a questionnaire based on 39 statements on the following subjects:

- Member's sense of meaning and general quality of life.
- Member's quality of life and meaning in relation to "Krembo Wings".
- The experience of participation in the movement, social popularity and the member's level of connection to the movement.

Responses were ranked from 1 to 5: 1 = not at all, 5 = very much so.

In the second part of the research 144 members with and without disabilities participated, 7th grade and above (ages 13-17), who are active in 42 different branches across the country, from whom 31 (21%) are high-functioning members with disabilities. The average age of participants is 15.7 and they hold various roles in their respective branches:

72 (50%) - tutors
47 (33%) - team leaders
11 (8%) - coaches
3 (2%) - members
11 (8%) - other roles

Members responded to an online questionnaire independently and without mediation to various statements on the subjects of social popularity, quality of life and life meaning, inclusion and acceptance of the other and social skills.

Research questionnaires also addressed the members' feelings of loneliness, through statements that touched on quality of life and life meaning generally alongside statements that dealt with **the influence of the movement** on these aspects. In addition, their reaction to the influence of the movement on their self-esteem and feeling of being socially accepted was examined.

Further aspects that could be deduced from as to a sense of belonging vis-a-vis loneliness dealt with feelings that indicate crisis, mood deterioration, emptiness and lack of purpose.

Findings

From the first part of the research several findings arise that reflect the influence of the experience of participation on general quality of life and the experience of loneliness in particular.

1. A distinct positive relation was found between the member's experience of participation and their general quality of life. The more a member participated, the higher their quality of life was found to be, and vice versa. $r=0.47$, $p<0.05$
2. A distinct positive relation was found between support and social popularity and general quality of life. The more social popularity was indicated, the higher the general quality of life, and vice versa. $r=0.51$, $p<0.05$

In addition, the connection was examined between the participation frequency of members with disabilities in meetings during this time and their level of satisfaction with their quality of life. The following findings arose on this subject:

1. A positive relation was found between participation frequency and the member's experience of involvement (social popularity + connection to the movement). $r=0.48$, $p<0.05$
2. A distinct positive relation was found between the experience of participation and the sense of social popularity. $r=0.51$, $p<0.05$

In this part of the research it was found that 68% of participants reported that taking part in movement activity during this time directly affected lowering the sense of loneliness of members with complex disabilities.

Findings summary:

66% of parents reported that the movement positively affected quality of life and life meaning for their child to a large or very large extent.

| Contribution of the movement to feeling | Large and Very Large Extent | Average |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Overcoming feeling loneliness | 68% | 3.8 |
| Feeling of peace and calm | 55% | 3.5 |
| Feeling of joy | 77% | 4.0 |
| Feeling hope towards the future | 52% | 3.4 |
| Sense of meaning in life | 62% | 3.6 |
| Overcoming feeling sadness | 64% | 3.7 |
| Sense of doing interesting things in life | 64% | 3.7 |
| Enjoyment with things they do | 64% | 3.6 |
| Feeling of gaining respect from others | 77% | 4.0 |
| Feeling they have things to give and contribute | 59% | 3.5 |
| Feeling there are things they are good at | 68% | 3.8 |
| Feeling they are gaining appreciation from others | 82% | 4.1 |
| Feeling they are capable to learn and do new things | 73% | 3.9 |
| Contribution of the movement to sense of quality and meaning in life | 66% | 3.7 |

The findings from the second part of the research support the findings from its first part:

- * 84% of respondents report that activity in the movement helps them in overcoming feelings of loneliness to a large or very large extent.
- * 85% of respondents report that activity in the movement helps them overcome feelings of sadness to a large or very large extent.
- * 83% of respondents report that activity in the movement contributes to the sense that they are gaining respect from others.

- * 89% of respondents report they feel members in the movement display affection and care towards them.
- * 88% of respondents report they have friends in the movement they can talk to.
- * 87% of respondents report feeling loved and wanted.
- * 94% of respondents report that activity in the movement adds joy to their lives.
- * 90% of respondents report that activity in the movement gives them a sense of hope towards the future.
- * 96% of respondents report that activity in the movement contributes to feelings of joy from things they do in life.

1. A distinct positive relation was found between the member's experience of participation and their general quality of life. The higher the experience of participation - the higher the quality of life of members, and vice versa. $r=0.32$, $p<0.01$
2. A distinct positive relation was found between social support and popularity and general quality of life. The higher popularity - the higher quality of life, and vice versa. $r=0.31$, $p<0.01$.
3. A distinct positive relation was found between the contribution of the movement to self-esteem and general quality of life. The more self-esteem is boosted following activity in the movement - so quality of life rises, and vice versa. $r=0.35$, $p<0.01$

Influence of the Movement on Quality of Life and Life Meaning - Findings of the Second Part of Research

Summary of findings:

89% of respondents report that the movement affected positively their sense of quality of life and life meaning to a large or very large extent.

| Statements | Large or Very Large Extent | Average |
|---|----------------------------|---------|
| Activity in the movement helps overcoming feeling loneliness | 84% | 4.2 |
| Activity in the movement contributes to peace and tranquility | 75% | 4.1 |
| Activity in the movement adds joy to life | 94% | 4.7 |
| Activity in the movement gives sense of hope towards future | 90% | 4.5 |

| Statements | Large or Very Large Extent | Average |
|---|----------------------------|------------|
| Activity in the movement contributes to sense of meaning in life | 94% | 4.7 |
| Activity in the moment helps overcome feeling sadness | | |
| Activity in the movement contributes to sense of doing interesting things in life | 94% | 4.6 |
| Activity in movement contributes to sense of joy from things you do in life | 96% | 4.6 |
| Contribution of the movement to sense of quality and meaning in life | 89% | 4.4 |

In data distribution a comparison was made between findings from members with disabilities and those without disabilities. The distribution shows that in the area of quality of life and life meaning there is a distinct, albeit not large difference, between members with impairment (3.8) and members without impairment (4.0), $p < .05$ (sample error 10% \pm); in other areas no distinct or significant difference was found between members from those two groups.

All data shows that activity during this time helps youth (with and without disabilities) to deal with the experience of loneliness and to maintain a sense of belonging.

Discussion and Outcomes

The 'Krembo Wings' youth movement was found in order to address the social isolation of children and youth with disabilities - including complex disabilities. During its first years of activity the organization reached the conclusion that there is space for developing a community built from the entire spectrum of society and its parts, dedicated to children and youth both with and without disabilities. In 2015 the movement's vision was phrased: "together creating space and meaning for every human being", and it is in that spirit that the organization works to create a social system that promotes values of belonging, mutuality and equal social opportunities for children and youth with and without disabilities, in a heterogeneous community that is meaningful to all its members.

With the coronavirus outbreak, the movement aimed to maintain its members' social connection through the time of crisis - and found a way to allow members to preserve a social framework that is compatible with the circumstances of social distancing and a rapidly changing reality. This activity allowed participants to deal with their feeling of loneliness and instability and to preserve high-level

belonging to their community. It is apparent that the movement found the way to keep its presence in the lives of members and influence the following parameters: peace and tranquility, joy, sense of hope, sense of meaning in life, reduced sadness, creating interest and enjoyment. All these are reflected in the research under “sense of quality of life and meaning in life.”

Findings in both parts of the research show that consistent and stable participation of members in the movement strengthens the feeling of popularity and reduces feelings of loneliness, in particular during challenging times. It can therefore be deduced that this also takes place during more ordinary times.

Maintaining continuous activity in the movement, staying active, collaborations, daily schedules and organization - whether through online activity or in-person encounters - have positively influenced the satisfaction of members from their quality of life, as well as dispelling feelings of loneliness, despite the pandemic restrictions and frequent lockdowns.

The two parts of this research present a unique picture. In the first part, based on reports from parents, a distinct positive relation was found between the experience of participation of the member and their quality of life, as well as a positive relation to the sense of social popularity. The second part shows that among research participants, the 'Krembo Wings' members who take part regularly and consistently in the movement's activities, there is no distinct difference between members with disabilities and members without disabilities. It appears that both groups experience belonging, mutuality and meaning in life and in the movement similarly. Respectively, it may be deduced that the entire 'Krembo Wings' membership (with and without disabilities) similarly experience belonging and mutuality in the movement, and also experience and apply equality of social opportunity in the movement during challenging times.

The literature indicates that people with disabilities are more prone to experiences of loneliness (Dor Haim, 2013). However, a comparative study conducted by the Haruv Institution (2020) during the pandemic pointed at a considerable reduction in positive feelings and children's satisfaction with their lives, and a reduction in the degree of freedom and independence.

The variety of creative activities that the movement produced in this critical time, as much as circumstances allowed, represented a meaningful resource to receiving social support and increased the sense of belonging of the entire membership.

In the unstable reality in the state of Israel, where children and youth are exposed to moments of crisis frequently, there is an increased need to prepare for such moments of crisis and to protect the opportunities for social interaction that this research highlights. It is important to build diverse programs in youth movements and social organizations that can be adjusted according to changing conditions; programs aimed at maintaining physical activity, routine, consistent social connections, listening and finding solutions to difficulties expressed by youth generally and youth with disabilities in particular.

Research findings show additional research is needed, to examine the influence of activity in youth movements such as 'Krembo Wings' on feelings of belonging, mutuality and meaning in life during ordinary times as well, and how it influences the experience of loneliness, the sense of fulfillment in particular and quality of life in general. Another point relates to members with complex disabilities, who due to the restrictions of the times were represented by their parents and not independently. The additional research will make use of a unique tool developed by the research team, aimed at allowing members with complex disabilities to participate independently.

To our minds, there is great importance to conducting applied research using accessible and adjusted tools that represent the worldview of 'Krembo Wings' - that every person has the right to represent themselves, their opinions and feelings in an independent way that is tailored to their capabilities. Everyone's opinion is critical and equally important, and everybody - in our vision - has the right and the obligation to create together space and meaning for every human being.

