

Cognitive change and effective parenting of disabled children

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Purpose: This paper addresses the importance of cognitive change in parents of disabled children within a society that views disability negatively. It explores how attitudes to disability identified by a social model of disability might translate to parent views of their disabled child and how this might impact on parenting. Implications for the management of behaviour problems that are frequently reported in this population are discussed.

Background: Utilisation of social support systems is well documented in the literature as being a significant factor in parental coping and adjustment to having a disabled child. However less attention has been focused on the role of psychological factors and on cognitive change in particular.

Method & Key Points: Perspectives from a social model of disability are examined as to their possible impact on parental expectations and child behaviour. It is argued that because of the negative views of disability prevalent in our society, cognitive re-framing is needed in order that parents of disabled children can carry out effective parenting in a way that promotes social inclusion both for the disabled child and the family.

Conclusions: It is important for educational psychologists to help families identify where their beliefs about parenting their disabled child may constitute barriers to effective parenting and social inclusion. Possible areas for cognitive change and intervention are suggested.

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