

Introduction: Child on the rainbow: Real life stories of parents to children with disabilities

By Dalia Shlomy, Israel and Maree Foley, Switzerland

For many parents, the birth of a new baby brings joy and wonderment with the ensuing challenges of caring for a totally dependent new bundle of a person. However, “nearly 4% of parents receive distressing news about their child’s health” (Barnett, Clements, Kaplan-Estrin & Fialka, 2003, p. 184).

Understanding parents’ experiences of receiving a long-term health diagnosis of their infant and or young child, in relation to the diagnostic and prognostic nature of the child’s health challenges, is vital. It is vital because this understanding helps to ensure the practitioner optimally provides the conditions within which to provide a secure space for the parents, with their baby, to explore and grow together in their parent-child-family-community-relationships.

Moreover, as Carpenter (2005) states:

At the point of diagnosis of a child’s disability, a parent’s first question is hardly likely to be about the local early childhood intervention services. These families are frightened, disturbed, upset, grieving and constantly vulnerable. The role of the professionals involved with them is to catch them when they fall, listen to their sorrow, dry their tears of pain and anguish, and, when the time is right, plan the pathway forward. (p. 181)

The following two papers provide readers with a window into the experiences of parents to children with disabilities: their stories. The first paper is by Dalia Shlomy (Israel) who describes her journey as an initiator, group counsellor, and producer of the play, *Child on the Rainbow*, a play by parents of children with special needs (Shlomy, 2014). Link to watch the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjjjBelYpt4&t=17s>

The second paper, by Dalia Shlomy and Maree Foley with the parents, features the voices of the parents who participated in the group work and then who were actors in the play, *Child on the Rainbow*. The parents, whose children are now grown up,



reflect specifically, on the very early days of learning about the challenges their baby faced and how they adapted to parenting a baby with a diagnosis. This paper also includes a brief exploration of the Reaction to Diagnosis Interview (RDI) (Marvin & Pianta, 1996).

On behalf of the Perspectives team and the WAIMH community we are grateful to every parent who has generously shared their stories with Dalia, their local communities, and now with our global WAIMH community.

References

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