



Children and Disability: Special Challenges Facing Families

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Brain Injury Association of Quinte District
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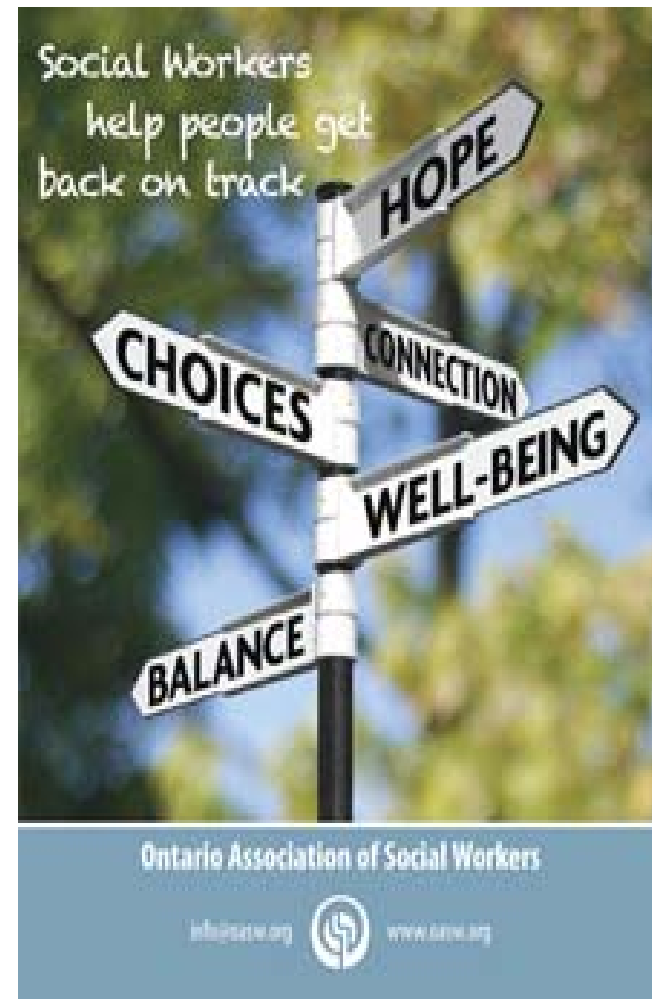


The Social Work Consulting Group

Counselling and Rehabilitation Services

The Role of Social Work

- Help people deal with day to day problems and overcome barriers that prevent them from leading meaningful and productive lives.
- Offers hope. Grounded in practical problem solving expertise.
- Unlike other professions, social workers work with the individual within their environment.



Eco-Map

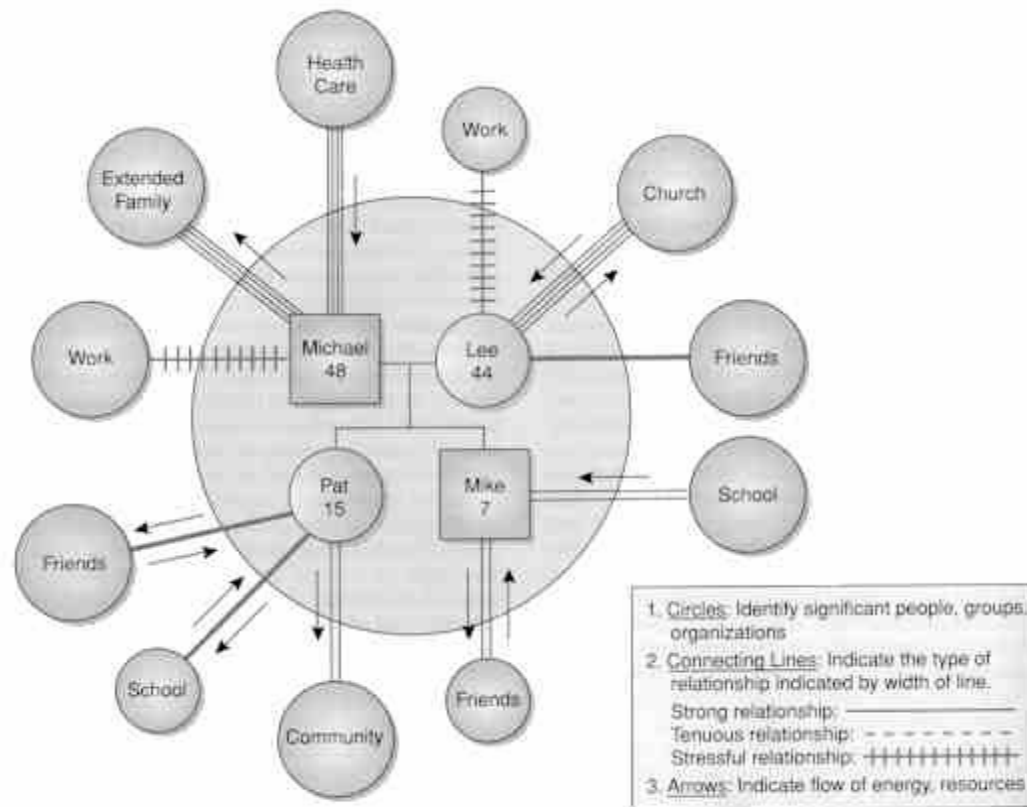


FIGURE 9-2. Family ecomap.

What is disability?

- A **disability** may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental or some combination of these.
- Disability refers to a functional limitation.
- Severity of disability – Impact on family functioning.

**Attitudes
are the Real
Disability**

Severity of Disability

Mild: Includes children whose disabilities require special services but who have substantial areas of normal functioning.

Moderate: Includes children who are markedly deficient in at least one area while functioning normally in others.

Severe: Includes children with disabilities that pervade most, if not all, areas of functioning.

Seligman & Darling 1997



Children as Separate from Disabilities

- Define “disabled” as differently abled.
- Each child has unique challenges as well as unique gifts.
- A disability is only one aspect of a child and does not define all of who they are.



Challenges Facing Families: Factors to Consider

- Severity of the injury
- Family and individual coping capacity (strengths and limitations)
- External supports
- Culture and Ethnicity (stigma)
- Socio-economic status

Challenges Facing Families

- Emotional/Psychological Crisis
- Grief and mourning
- Lack of control
- Change in family relationships, roles and responsibilities
- Mental Health and self care
- Spiral of losses (separation, financial, friends)
- Life transitions & Future planning (interrupted, slowed or stalled)

Grief & Mourning

- Denial – Shock, confusion, numbness, disorganization, helplessness
- Bargaining – If I work harder, my child will get better
- Anger – Acknowledgment of the reality of the circumstances
- Depression – Once anger dissipates, depression can set in.
- Acceptance

Stages of Grief – E. Kubler-Ross

Acceptance

- Parents are able to discuss their child's shortcomings with relative ease.
- They evidence a balance between encouraging independence and showing love.
- They are able to collaborate with professionals to make realistic short and long term plans.
- They pursue personal interests unrelated to their child.
- They can discipline appropriately without undue guilt.
- They can abandon overprotective behavioural patterns toward their child.

○ Seligman & Darling 1997

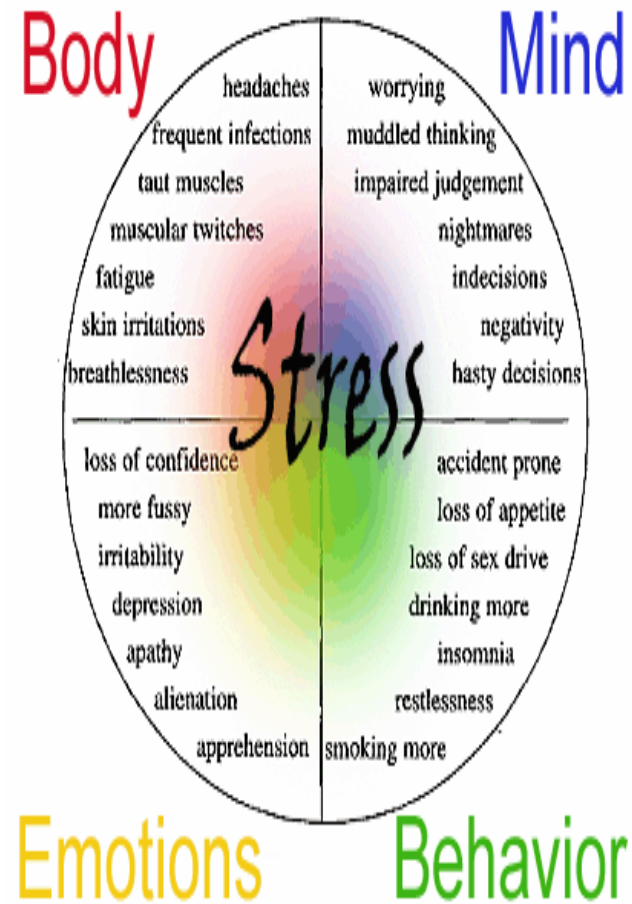
Changes in Family Relationships, Roles & Responsibilities

- Chronic burden of care – the challenge of always being there.
- Focus on other family members (spouse, siblings) is reduced.
- Siblings may have increased responsibility (chores, care). Survivors guilt. Increased worries.
- Contact with extended family, friends, neighbours may be reduced.
- Increased isolation.



Stress & Family Adjustment

- Higher levels of STRESS.
- Limited ability for parents to attend to their own needs.
- Increased anxiety, depression and sleep disturbances.
- Feelings of guilt.
- Loss of meaning and connection to the world.



The 13 Item Stress Test

- | | | | |
|-----|------|-------|--|
| 1. | TRUE | FALSE | I have a lot to do. |
| 2. | TRUE | FALSE | I have more to do than I can handle. |
| 3. | TRUE | FALSE | I'm not being productive. |
| 4. | TRUE | FALSE | I'm trying really hard but getting nothing done. |
| 5. | TRUE | FALSE | I'm feeling unhealthy. |
| 6. | TRUE | FALSE | I can't afford to take breaks or time off. |
| 7. | TRUE | FALSE | I'm pushing myself too hard. |
| 8. | TRUE | FALSE | I don't sleep very well. |
| 9. | TRUE | FALSE | Too many people are telling me what to do. |
| 10. | TRUE | FALSE | I am not treating people the way I want to be treated. |
| 11. | TRUE | FALSE | I feel totally exhausted. |
| 12. | TRUE | FALSE | Nobody is happy with what I do. |
| 13. | TRUE | FALSE | I can't stand living like this. |

Scoring: the more True responses your circle, the greater the pressure you're feeling

Becoming an Advocate

- Learning and adjusting is a continuous process.
- Celebrate successes.
- Navigating systems (medical, rehabilitation teams, school, community).
- Being the “expert” of your child.
- Moving from disempowered to empowered.
- Protecting your child. Transitions from childhood through to adulthood.

Thank You!

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