Mothers’ Voices: Coping with their Children’s Initial Disability Diagnosis

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Purpose
The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate 6 mothers’ experiences of their children’s disability diagnoses.

The Article
For most parents, the diagnosis of their child’s disability thrusts themselves into a world that is strange and foreign. Parents must learn new rules, requirements, decisions, and even a new language to successfully navigate this new world. In the beginning, parents may face obstacles because they cannot readily access pertinent and accurate information from professionals assisting with the diagnosis. This qualitative study investigated 6 mothers’ experiences during their children’s diagnoses. Many factors contributed to each mother’s experience, such as, time of diagnosis, degree of stress, and coping styles. These factors were explored in ways that provided for the depth of their stories to be portrayed. This study was conducted to determine what, if any, coping strategies mothers recalled using when receiving their children’s diagnosis of disability. To cope with their children’s initial diagnoses mothers describe their use of both palliative strategies (denying, questioning, and wishful thinking) and problem-solving strategies (searching for information, seeking social support, reframing, and seeking spiritual support).

What this Means for the Field
Becoming aware of a child’s disability diagnosis is a critical process for families. This study indicates an increase need of awareness for professionals to understand parents’ need for information and support at the time of their children’s initial diagnosis. It is vital for professionals to accept families where they are in the coping process and understand that the strategies they use to cope serve an important function in assisting them to come to terms and move to finding supportive services for their child.

Citation

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