CHALLENGES FACING PARENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND POSSIBLE PREDICTORS FOR SUCCESS AND SUPPORT
Mette J. Pedersen, PhD

CHALLENGES:
Socialization Experiences:
- Learned dependency
- Rewarded for obedience
- Not trained for self-sufficiency
- Loyal to kin
- Learned not to question authority
- Learned to fear authority figures
- Lack normal problem-solving skills
- Limited social skills
- Expect social relationship to be “unequal”
- Rely on a “benefactor” to make decisions
- Felt stigmatized and unwanted
- Learned to use cover-up techniques and compensatory behavior to conceal deficits
- Experienced harsh consequences when not meeting unreasonable expectations

Life Experiences:
- Deprivation and neglect
- Abuse and trauma
- Poverty, unemployment and lack of job skills
- Mistreatment at hand of “helpers”
- Overwhelming circumstances

Learning Style Differences
- Learning deficits such as processing or memory problems
- Limited functional academics such as reading and writing
- Limited ability to use problem-solving in complex or unfamiliar situations
- Difficulty keeping track of time
- Difficulty applying knowledge from one situation to another
- Difficulty discriminating

Which May Have Resulted in
- Low self-esteem
- Shut down out of fear
- Confusion and panic
- Inability to cope and comply
- Lack of trust
- Self protective defenses

[Excerpted from Green, N. and Cruz, V. (n.d.), “Working with Families with Children/Parents with Developmental Disabilities”, Metropolitan State College of Denver]
### Predicting Adequacy of Parenting by People with Cognitive Disabilities

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Mette J. Pedersen, PhD

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<th>Skill/Characteristic</th>
<th>Predictor</th>
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| Purposeful abuse of child | - *Abuse by mother with CD may be relatively rare*, but more common by another person associated by the mother (family, husband, partner, caregiver, etc.);  
- When abuse by mother has occurred, it may be a predictor of future abuse by the mother in absence of any parenting support or education. |
| Social interaction | - Social isolation is a limiting factor in parent with CD and child success;  
- *When mother has positive social network, positive outcomes are better supported.* |
| Healthcare and safety | - *Adequacy of healthcare and safety dependent on social network of support, including parent training.* |
| Decision making | - Decision making may be impulsive and rapid;  
- Mothers with CD with higher IQs tend to make better decisions;  
- Mothers with CD with higher IQs, who have other problems (mental illness, drug abuse, etc.), did the poorest, despite higher IQ. |
| Parent-child interaction | - Poor mothers with CD had less varied, more directive, interaction with child;  
- *Very little research in this area.* |
| Supports for parent learning | - Adequate reading level and recognition at 4th grade level or above;  
- IQ above 60;  
- Adequate mental and physical |
| Factors inhibiting parent learning                                      | • Staff inadequately trained or with judgmental or derogatory attitudes toward parents with CD;  
|                                                                       | • Educational materials and methods not matched to the learning style and needs of people with disabilities;  
|                                                                       | • Unavailability of interventions;  
|                                                                       | • Interventions that are center-based rather than parent home-based;  
|                                                                       | • Many care/education providers;  
|                                                                       | • Living with a person who is emotionally disturbed;  
|                                                                       | • No family support;  
|                                                                       | • Having more than one child;  
|                                                                       | • Having an older child with a developmental disability;  
|                                                                       | • Having a medical and/or emotional disorder in addition to CD;  
|                                                                       | • Reading level below 4th grade and IQ below 60;  
|                                                                       | • Having been institutionalized.  
| How to help parents maintain skills                                    | • Social support  
|                                                                       | • Longevity, duration, and frequency of the educational effort;  
|                                                                       | • Periodicity and comprehensiveness of the effort.  