Module 5: Intellectual Disability

Learning about Intellectual Disability

What is an intellectual disability?

When a person has an intellectual disability (ID), this means that they have a reduced capacity to learn and apply new skills. They may have difficulty understanding new or complex information and so may require extra help with learning new things. Young children with ID may experience delays in development – learning to sit-up, crawl or walk for example. Some people with ID may have problems with communication and developing and maintaining relationships with other people. People with ID may also have problems interacting with their environment – this is known as social or adaptive functioning. (WHO, 2019)

Impaired adaptive functioning means people with ID may find it difficult to cope with some aspects of life, such as:

- Work

- Education

- Caring for themselves

- Day-to-day tasks

- Personal hygiene

- Cooking

- Cleaning

- Doing the grocery shopping.

Image credit: https://imgbin.com/png/hWqs89Rj

What behaviours are typical of people with ID?

The term ID refers to a broad range of conditions, so behaviours vary from individual to individual. There are some common behavioural traits that many people with ID exhibit. These include:

- Impulse control difficulties
- Challenges in controlling or regulating emotions
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Anti-social tendencies.

A lowered ability to understand and follow social rules might mean a child with ID would have problems with the concept of turn-taking while playing with other children or waiting in line at a bus-stop or in a queue.

Challenging behaviours

Some people with ID may exhibit what are known as 'challenging behaviours.' These can include aggressive or violent behaviours that can cause injury to themselves or others, and anti-social behaviours such as stealing. These behaviours can cause a good deal of distress to parents and care-givers and can create significant challenges for service providers (Inoue, 2019)

Studies suggest between 10% and 40% may engage in challenging behaviours. Children with severe intellectual disabilities, ADHD, autism, sensory impairment or mood disorders are more likely to be affected. Additionally, the problem may be compounded by lower levels of support and access to services.

Concerns

The majority of people with ID are cared for by a family member – usually a parent, but sometimes a sibling – in the home. Caregivers are more likely to be a female relative than a male relative – although this is not always the case. Depending on the intensity of the care needs, and on whether there are other health issues (also known as co-morbidities), this can sometimes be a full-time, or almost full-time, job.

Common concerns of the caregiver may include:

- **The health and well-being of their loved one**
- **The safety of the individual**
- **Social inclusion**
- **Self-care**

Image credit: Nathan Anderson on Unsplash

With the right supports, there is no reason why a person with an intellectual disability cannot actively be included and participate in society.

What can be done?

- As the needs of people with ID will vary from individual to individual and condition to condition, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing strategies to help the person you provide care to.

- Nevertheless, there are certain steps that caregivers can take in assessing the needs of their loved one and deciding how best to care for and support them.

Image credit: https://imgbin.com/png/2UKx86AD

Strategies that might be useful include:

- Adopting a person-centred approach

- Routines

- Minimising challenging behaviours

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Do you want to learn more?

Our interactive Resource Pack will give you information about

- concerns that you as caregiver might have
- what can be done
- useful tips how to handle the burden of care
- how to avoid stress and burnout
- how to deal with your emotions
- acceptance of the disorder
- and more!

You will also find exercises and activities for YOU and for the care receiver!

More information is available in the Resource Pack:
https://developfc.csicy.com/?page_id=11708

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT
STRATEGIES AND TOOLS TO PROMOTE CAREGIVERS MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH