

Exploring the Possibilities; Parents with Disabilities: Intro Episode

Marjorie Aunos ([00:06](#)):

Becoming a parent is a valued role in our society and one that is highly celebrated, except when you have a disability. When you have a disability, the first thing most people express is concern. And concerns sometimes leads to decisions that aren't in the best interest of the child or family. In most cases, support is the better option for all to envision a better future for these families. We as professionals need to be clear on what is possible and how we can make it happen. And that is what this podcast is all about. I want to show you how parenting can be done differently successfully. And I want to share with you the knowledge and tools experts in the field have come up with. In 2012, I was in a car accident and I lost the use of my legs and everything under my armpits. My son was 16 months old at the time, and I am his only parent. When I realized my condition would be permanent, that I would no longer walk, feel or move anything below my armpits, I got scared, not really about my future. I got scared. Somewhat might think that my spinal cord injury would somehow turn me into an incompetent parent of a rambunctious toddler.

Marjorie Aunos ([01:35](#)):

Hello. My name is Marjorie Aunos and I am a clinical psychologist and researcher who has dedicated her career to working with parents with intellectual disabilities. And in a weird twist of fate, I became a parent with disabilities myself. I already had established connections and friendships with a lot of the scholars who work in this field through a special interest research group. And because I know them, I was able to have them share their wealth of knowledge with us. Twice per month in partnership with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, I will be releasing a conversation I have had with one of them. We will speak about seminal research findings, the ones that have a direct impact on clinical and frontline work. I will also interview parents and adult children of parents with disabilities. Because sometimes in order to reflect and be open to new possibilities, we need to hear from people themselves.

Marjorie Aunos ([02:44](#)):

There is very little data about how many parents live with a disability. Because we generally don't ask those two questions together. Are you a parent? And do you have a disability? As if one and the other could not co-occur. Some studies have been able to estimate that 6% of American parents with a child under 18 have a disability themselves. They also estimate that 9% of children under the age of 18, have a parent with disabilities. And those numbers don't even include caregivers or custodial grandparents or even communities that do not consider themselves as disabled. The expressed concern about parenting capacity for parents with disabilities are many and have resulted in an overrepresentation of parents, particularly with intellectual disabilities in the child welfare system. This overrepresentation is striking and is shared across global Northern countries. For example, in Canada, we found that one in five children in child welfare has a parent with an intellectual disability. Across the globe between 40 to 80% of parents with intellectual disability, have their children being removed from their care. Sometimes with little to no evidence and without offering the support or services, we would offer a family headed by a parent without a disability.

Marjorie Aunos ([04:19](#)):

As professionals, we need to stay informed of new practices and we need to continuously push ourselves to gain new perspectives. This podcast will show you new and innovative ways to practice, to support and empower the families with whom you work, who are headed by a parent with a disability. Join me in discovering or rediscovering the incredibly important body of literature that has been built

since the 1980s. If you are a worker in child welfare, a new practitioner or someone with numerous years in the field, an early career researcher, a lawyer, or even a parent or child yourself, you will have a rare opportunity to learn directly from these experts. We all know that parenting is hard yet parents with disabilities, parent well with creativity and because we value teamwork and the concept of interdependence. Come hear about ways experts say we can best empower these families. And let's all learn together about how parenting can be done differently.

New Speaker ([05:31](#)):

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