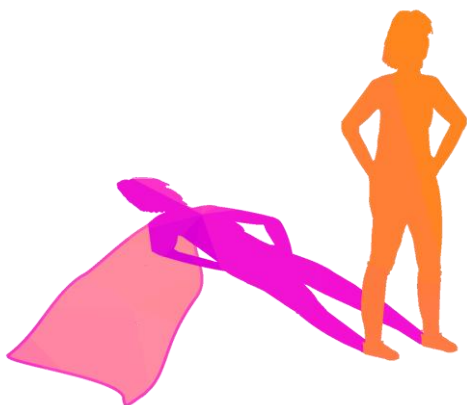


Empowerment Around Disability

Research findings for mothers (Bourke-Taylor PhD©)



This fact sheet reports on research findings that identified empowerment around disability as key to maternal stress (Bourke-Taylor, 2019). Learning about and adjusting to disability and how your child is managing in daily life is an ongoing process that may involve different phases. At times mothers say they feel empowered around meeting the additional responsibilities that disability places on them. At other times, mothers express feeling overwhelmed and disempowered, or even distressed and worried. The journey of mothers (refer to Fact Sheet 1–Set 1) may impact a mother's ability to manage in the early days, or later. A sense of empowerment over the demands and responsibilities associated with disability is something that is personally felt. Empowerment goes beyond coping. Empowerment brings feelings of being in control and confident to address issues as they arise. Most mothers identify with feelings of disempowerment before they reach a state of feeling empowered.



What is empowerment around disability?

Empowerment can include:

- understanding your child's disability
- understanding your child's needs within family and daily life
- coping with problems related to disability (i.e. a customised toilet seat or sourcing specialised equipment)
- finding information
- knowing how to help your child
- knowing that you can manage problems and find solutions.



Why is it important to feel empowered?

Empowerment brings a sense of confidence and resourcefulness. Feeling empowered can result in better decision-making and locating the help that you or your child may need. Research with mothers shows that those who feel empowered around disability have better health and well-being.

So what can I do?

Whatever you are currently doing for your child and family, such as locating and retaining services, or teaching your child skills, are evidence that you are becoming an empowered mother. New knowledge and skills that you acquire helps your child and family. Your hard work and time spent in such tasks are building blocks that will lead to empowerment. Other mothers can be great mentors, and can help you navigate your journey and become empowered. Associations that advocate for children with a disability and their families are also useful.



Another key aspect of empowerment is being able to cope with problems and find solutions. Therefore, it is important that you talk to someone that you trust—a friend or professional, or join a reputable organisation that helps families like your own.

Being empowered around disability and feeling in control of your situation is one way you can feel less stressed everyday.

Visit our website at <http://www.healthymothers-healthyfamilies.com/> for references and more information.

If this fact sheet has raised any concerns, please seek medical advice from your local GP. Alternatively, please call LifeLine on 13 11 14 or Carers Australia, who can provide short-term counselling and emotional support for carers and families, on 1800 242 636.