Parent reactions to a disability diagnosis

This is a transcript of the Raising Children Network video available at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities_parent_reactions_video.html. Parents of children with a disability talk about their reactions to the diagnosis.

Katrina [mother of four, one with a disability]: I had a great pregnancy, good labour, just delighted that we had a little girl... um, after having two boys, and all of a sudden she's whipped away, and they're saying, 'Oh, there's a problem, we're just going to get a doctor to have a look at her.' And um... next thing we knew she was in an ambulance. We had no idea that we'd spend the next, you know, six or seven years in and out of a hospital with all sorts of different types of surgery. Orthopaedic surgery, neurosurgery, bladder surgery, renal failure. Sort of, you know, you name it and she's probably had it. I guess I look back and, you know, thought about what had I eaten, drunk, been in contact with, before I was pregnant with Hannah, but no, no, I was really quite comfortable that I'd done all the right things during my pregnancy, before my pregnancy, and um, you know, we had so many other issues we had to deal with that I definitely wasn't blaming myself or Bruce. You know emotionally, it was harder to come to the fact that, you know I was working almost fulltime before Hannah was born that, and I loved my job, that I had to give up...that Hannah was going to be it. That I would have to stay home, and I wouldn't have a choice about it. That probably was the hardest part, that our lifestyle was going to change, so we could look after Hannah.

Narelle [mother of three, one with a disability]: Even though I had a funny feeling there was something wrong with my child even before I had her, once I knew, yes, there's something wrong, I just was fighting it for quite a long time. I couldn't accept it, I remember saying, 'But I don't want to be the mother of a disabled child.' And I had this... doctor who used to come to visit me, and we'd talk quite a lot, and that was a... revolved around that, me accepting that that is how it was, and I had to sort of, just sort of swallow it and move on, but it took me quite a long time.

Anne-Marie [mother of three, one with a disability]: We had Ella diagnosed when she was three months old. I think that at the beginning, when you have a beautiful little baby, and all you do is care for your baby in the way that you care for any baby.

Ethna [mother of two, one with a disability]: Your baby is still your baby... you know, it's a tiny baby, how can you envisage what's going to happen in the future? You can't, you don't know what the future's going to hold. So you just get on with it and do your best.

Katrina: Every child, every baby is an individual whether they have a disability or completely able-bodied. You need to treat each child, um... as a little individual. Because they all have their own, you know, special talents that will shine through in the end.