

Realistic development opportunities for a child with an acquired brain damage

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Article about Children and apoplexy and other acquired brain damages. Hjernesagens publisher 1999.

When you face a child with a newly acquired brain damage, it is often very difficult very difficult to guess, how good or bad the prognosis is.

Take advantage of what the child can

On the specific level, you should first and foremost tackle the functions and skills, which the child can handle currently, so you start to stimulate and activate in these areas, where the child do something, in order to keep the mood and the desire to something with the child.

When you play with or stimulate the child, you can try to offer something that is a bit harder and a bit more complex than what the child usually can, to pay close attention to, if the child can handle the new. If the child seems interested, it is a sign that the offered then can be used as a new stimulation area, but if the child seems uninterested, it appears that something in the offered cannot be processed by the child's brain at the moment.

The brain is a big factory

The brain is a very complex organ, where various part of the brain maintains different sub processes, while many complex skills collect "pieces" different places in the brain.

In popular terms you can therefore experience the brain as a big factory, where what it produces is the experience of reality. Depending on which part of the brain that is damaged, it will be different parts of the function area of the brain factory that is affected.

Immediately after damage has just happened, large brain areas will be put out of order. During the first year after the acquired brain damage function of the brain is changed spontaneously, so some brain areas again begin to work, while others are permanently out of order.

Preserved and lost functions

It is often difficult to guess, which skills spontaneously return, and which skills you should try to build up again based on the intact features, which are back in the brain. It is different from brain area to brain area, if you can get "substitute coverage" by making compensating strategies that builds on the function up in a new way, or you may accept the damaged nerve tissue contains some functions that is so specific that other brain areas cannot go in and take over.

All the nerve cells that the brain contains are built while the child is a foetus. Thus, after a brain damage new nerve cells that can replace the destroyed nerve tissue cannot grow.

The consequence therefore often becomes that the child, who has gotten an acquired brain damage would have gotten limited his/her development opportunities to a greater or lesser extent. In severe cases you see that the child gets stuck in his/her development or bombed back to a functionality level that is similar to a much younger child.

At less pronounced damage the result often is that the child regains the function, he/she had before the acquired brain damage, while it subsequently develops slower than previously in several or fewer areas depending on the extent of the brain damage.

Development of the brain

Different parts of the child's brain mature and are put into use in childhood. Therefore a small child that gets an acquired brain damage can risk that the damage hits brain areas that has not yet begun to work. Therefore, it may appear as if the acquired damage has not had any permanent effect. Sadly, there is a risk that the consequences of the damage first are seen at a later date, when the damaged brain areas should begin to work.

The gloomy perspective is therefore that you first can know which consequences the acquired brain damage has had, when the child reaches well into puberty. A given insurance case should therefore first be ended, when the child has ended his/her schooling and has completed a vocational education.

System and structure in everyday life

When the child's brain is going to function worse, the child has more need for others helping him/her with getting system and structure in his/her everyday life. Children with acquired brain damages therefore have more need for frames, rules and supporting adults than normal functioning children of the same age. It therefore becomes an ongoing task for parents and others around the child to find a balance, where one intervenes and helps, when there is need for it and withdraws, when the child can handle the things.

Intellectual and social skills

Often it turns out that children after the acquired brain damage have an easier time picking up intellectual skills than social skills, because intellectual skills can be divided into smaller bites, where you then can work with them separately. In the social field it is harder to train defined functions. When you play with your best friend, you must be aware of everything in the situation at once.

Thus it becomes difficult and strenuous for children with acquired brain damages to play freely with other children, while it is easier, if the togetherness is centred around a defined activity, such as going to something together, or by an adult participating in the free play as a kind of big sister or big brother, who helps with arranging what to do before the play begins, as well as intervene and stop the play, when the agreed upon rules are exceeded.

Fatigue and easily distracted

Many children with acquired brain damages run faster tired than other children. It is therefore important to gradually get a feel for, how much the child can handle, in order to stop while the play is good, whether it is about excursions, games or social activities.

Some children, who have had a very long unconsciousness period in connection with the brain damage can subsequently get sustained damages in areas located in the brain stem, so the child becomes easily distracted, because he/she react to everything that happens around him/her. This child therefore resembles an ADHD- child.

Since the child does not have any control over the fact that his/her attention is drawn to and fro, it is important to offer this child an everyday life that is very controlled and delimited, so there is only the stimulation present in the situation, which is necessary to activate and develop the child.

Concentration, planning and control

Other children are in the situation that their forehead areas are damaged, so they have troubles with concentrating, planning and control their own reactions, rein in their emotions and aggressions as well as learn from their experiences. Such a child can be easily misunderstood by strangers, so they think that the child is ill-mannered and boundary pushing. This child is not developed by reprimands or rewards. The child should rather be pushed gently in the right direction, while the learning should operate on capturing the child's immediate motivation.

When these type of children go into meltdown you must not argue, but instead stop the conflict by starting to talk about something else or deal with something new, thus distracting the child.

Joy of progress

When you see progress in one or several field in a child with an acquired brain damage, it is important to rejoice together with the child over this and take advantage of the newly acquired skills rather than hurrying forward to a higher requirement, because there is so much that the child lacks to learn.

Most children with acquired brain damages will quickly find out, if the reward for a well-executed to is an even bigger challenge, then the child loses the desire to learn and to show, that he/she has learned something new.

Parents must support each other

As parents you will from time to time stand in the situation that you lack places to seek advice and guidance, as the child with acquired brain damage experience and react differently than a normal child.

It therefore requires strong and resourceful parent to keep fighting, so the child can get good development opportunities, while always reminding yourself and others that it is with the desire of the child, which should run it all. Thus the everyday life should first and foremost be adjusted to the child's abilities, so there are many successes and few defeats.

The essence of my suggestion to parents of children with brain damage is:

Fight for your children – try to find like-minded parent that you can have contact with, so you can support each other and bet on that you and other people in the child's everyday life give the child challenges, but that you at the same time also hurry up to slowly push on the child's development, so the child gets a positive perception of themselves and their opportunities.