Charting A Reasonable Dream
for a Child or an Adult
with Moderate-to-Severe Disabilities
including Autism

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To those who view this slideshow
or those who attend a presentation
of which it is a part…

I am speaking directly to parents,
with the hope that this will serve
as a guide for practitioners
as they do the same…

Patrick McGreevy
Let’s begin with two definitions...

A Reasonable Dream
includes expectations based on empirical
evidence (your child’s performance),
awareness of the range of
skill and behavioral repertoires
often associated with specific
conditions or syndromes,
and a proper interpretation
of the scientific literature
A Dream that is not Reasonable

Includes expectations that are not empirically-based (not based on your child’s performance), not based on an awareness of the range of skill and behavioral repertoires often associated with specific conditions or syndromes, not based on a proper interpretation of the scientific literature, and that often result in lack of progress or the acquisition of skills that are not useful.

Charting a reasonable dream for your child or your adult child with a disability begins with an examination of your expectations...
These expectations are shaped by information from a variety of sources:

- Physicians
- Psychologists
- Teachers
- Care Providers
- Advocates
- Behavior Analysts
- Research Studies
- List Serves
- Chat Rooms
- Organizations
- Conferences
And, these expectations
…and this dream
may change

If your 2-8 year old child
has been described as having autism,
these initial expectations
and your initial dream
‘may’ include some or all of the following¹:

full or partial, academic inclusion
in a regular classroom,
continued academic progress,
graduation from high school or the equivalent
and, an undergraduate or graduate degree

¹ which may have been directly influenced by Lovaas, O.I. (1987). Behavioral treatment and normal educational and intellectual functioning in young autistic children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 55*(1), 3-9.
These expectations suggest…

A developmental curriculum, such as the VB-MAPP

And

Early and Intensive Behavioral Intervention

The VB-MAPP guides instruction through a sequence of language, social, and pre-academic skills that parallels what occurs in typically-developing children, and that prepares children for pre-academic and academic settings
As long as your 2-8 year old child continues to receive high-quality intensive behavioral intervention and continues to make significant progress on the VB-MAPP

Your expectations and your dream should be considered reasonable

If, on the other hand, your child does not continue to make significant progress on the VB-MAPP even with high-quality, behavioral intervention...
...and, if your child is not experiencing generalization across settings or people, is not exhibiting ‘novel’ responses (responses you never taught), and is having difficulty making discriminations, understanding abstract concepts, and acquiring intraverbals (answers to questions) without scripts…

As difficult as it may be…

“and it may be…”

It may be time to gradually change your expectations and your dream to something more reasonable…
such as...

enrollment in a special education program, partial, social inclusion in a regular classroom, graduation from high school or the equivalent, and skills that may result in employment, supported employment, supported living, a greater degree of independence and community participation, and an improved quality of life.

notice that these expectations do not include...

full or partial, academic inclusion in a regular classroom
These expectations suggest…
A gradual change to…
A functional skills curriculum, such as
and
Continued behavioral intervention
or instruction in school guided by behavior analysts

guides instruction through a series of functional skills, including – speaking, listening, social, daily living, leisure, vocational, academic, and tolerating skills – that prepare learners to…
effectively interact with others, function more independently in residential and vocational settings, and actively participate in community activities
If your 2-8 year old child has been described as having autism, but is also known to have a pervasive developmental disability, such as Down Syndrome, Angelman’s Syndrome, Microcephaly, Rett Syndrome, PDD, or PDD-NOS, that almost always results in moderate-to-severe disabilities… or

If your child is known to have a moderate-to-severe developmental disability but has not been described as having autism

Reasonable expectations, ‘from the beginning’, include…

Early and intensive behavioral intervention, enrollment in a special education program, partial, social inclusion in a regular classroom, graduation from high school or the equivalent, and

skills that may result in employment, supported employment, supported living, a greater degree of independence and community participation, and an improved quality of life.
These expectations suggest, From the beginning....

A functional skills curriculum, such as

and

Continued behavioral intervention or instruction in school guided by behavior analysts

And, always remember, that reasonable expectations and A Reasonable Dream are based on empirical evidence (your child’s performance), and a change in that evidence could easily effect a change in your expectations and your dream...
If your adult child has been described as having autism, but is also known to have a pervasive developmental disability, such as Down Syndrome, Angelman’s Syndrome, Microcephaly, Rett Syndrome, PDD, or PDD-NOS, that almost always results in moderate-to-severe disabilities… or

If your adult child is known to have a moderate-to-severe developmental disability but has not been described as having autism

Reasonable expectations include… skills that may result in employment, supported employment, supported living, a greater degree of independence and community participation, and an improved quality of life.
And, these expectations suggest....

A functional skills curriculum, such as

and

Intervention guided by

behavior analysts

Thank you.

I am always open
to your comments
and your suggestions

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