

and distressed by her inability to perform at the level of her own or a support person's expectations. As a result, she may develop low self-esteem, become emotionally fragile and engage in self-blame.

Those who are functionally dependent require a protected, limited and rigorously guided environment in order to function in a relatively independent manner. They may be described as "dependently independent." This functionally dependent characteristic exists to varying degrees. Some people are functionally dependent in only a few areas while others are in many areas.



Without rigorous support, a person who consistently demonstrates functional dependence may also display severely challenging behaviors. These behaviors can lead to the breakdown of community, educational and vocational placements, hospitalization and/or problems with the law. "Putting her back together" and rebuilding a support system is often extremely difficult.

Providing proactive support is essential. While the proper support requires intense expenditure of time and resources, it is a much better approach in the long run. It greatly reduces the chances of having to control a flood after the dam has already broken.

Generative Factors

One or more of at least four factors may generate dependent behavior. (See box below.) The support person's goal in each case is to give as little assistance as possible while always providing just as much assistance as necessary.



Generative Factors in Dependent Behavior

- Accidental learning (Changes in social interactions can make this irrelevant and overcome these environmental factors.)
- Hard-to-detect learning disability (Using strategies that work with the person's strengths can overcome many of her weaknesses and psychological factors.)
- Prompt dependence (Developmental brain dysfunctions require environmental adaptations to compensate for these biological factors.)
 - Inability to self-initiate action
 - Inability to self-sustain momentum.

Accidental Learning

The person has the potential to learn to perform a task adequately. She can perform the task, but has inadvertently learned to be dependent, non-initiating or withdrawn as a means of gaining assistance or having the task done for her. Her dependence or passivity is behavior that support staff have mistakenly reinforced, and/or rewarded.