THE CEREBRAL PALSY TOOL KIT

From Diagnosis to Understanding
Dear Parents and Family,

The period after you hear about your child or family member’s diagnosis feels overwhelming and often scary. This resource has been created with you in mind, by parents of children with CP who have been where you are now, and who want to tell you that you are not alone.

You may not know where to begin in the CP Tool Kit or where to find the strength to open the pages before you. Take your time and know that you do not have to read everything in a day or even a week or even a few months. Some days you will feel stronger and more prepared to learn than others. The Tool Kit may be used like an encyclopedia, referencing sections as needed, or some of you may find relief by reading it in order from cover to cover. However you decide to approach the Tool Kit, be gentle with yourself and use the information to empower you and your family.

Our cover includes a large picture of a dandelion. Dandelions symbolize positivity, hope and survival, often finding unthinkable ways to emerge through cracks in the sidewalk. I have been fascinated by how the qualities of the dandelion have captured our experience with our daughter whose persistence and resilience have repeatedly surprised us. As we move further from the day when my daughter was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, the playfulness of the dandelion has also been a gentle reminder to simply enjoy each other as mother and daughter, outside of doctor and therapy visits and her diagnosis of cerebral palsy.

I have wanted to pursue this CP Tool Kit project since the day my daughter was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and our family struggled to find the information and support we needed. Our team of passionate and dedicated parents and professionals have worked together to bring you a comprehensive resource about early brain injury/disturbances leading to cerebral palsy. It is our goal to empower you with the knowledge you need to ask important questions, advocate of your child, and strengthen your family.

Sincerely,

Michele Shusterman
Founder and Executive Director of CP NOW
IF YOU ARE READING THIS, someone you love or care for has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy, or “CP” for short, describes a group of movement disorders caused by an injury or disturbance in the early developing brain, and specifically the areas involved with creating movement.

When parents and families get a diagnosis of CP, they often feel confused about what the diagnosis means for their child’s future. They wonder what to do to best help their child. Emotional reactions can be strong and decisions can be difficult. Although the diagnosis of cerebral palsy may feel overwhelming, it does not define or dictate what your loved one’s future will look like. Discoveries in neuroplasticity, and research into the brain’s ability to change and recover from injuries like those that cause CP, are offering new insight and hope for the CP community.

The Cerebral Palsy Tool Kit was created to help you sort through some of these emotions and answer your questions and concerns related to CP. It will guide you through the initial diagnosis period, direct you to other helpful resources and provide information to you about the different approaches to treating and managing CP.

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