

## Barriers in Working Towards Independence

**Source:** Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King

**Video Link:** <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1433>

**Caron Gan:** Well families from other cultures often have very different views about independence that we as professionals have so for a family from a different culture independence may not be something that is important for them and so the more we push for that the more we're likely to alienate that family member so what's important is to find out what it is that the family values. So an example might be a mom who has a teenage son and you know, her notions of her son's brain injury are that he is sick rather than injured because there are many different ways of experiencing a brain injury and families from different cultures often have different ideas and cultural beliefs and attitudes about what a brain injury is.

So, for example, a mom who believes that her son's brain injury is an illness and her role as a mom is to care for her son then she is going to do everything possible to take care of her sick child because that's how she is experiencing that brain injury. So rather than take it away from her, we need to acknowledge that she is doing her best to be a good mom, but what are the things that would be important for her to support her son in his recovery process. So it may not be independence like the rehab team is wanting, maybe it's to help him be stronger and what are the things that might help him be stronger so perhaps physiotherapy could be reframed as a way to help him be stronger rather than to learn better gait, or for example, rather than have OT or occupational therapy involved to help him to learn to be independent in feeding himself, perhaps OT could be involved in helping him develop skills to be stronger.

So it's reframing things in a way that would be meaningful for the family, but what it requires first is stepping back not imposing our own values and being aware of what our biases are. For example, our biases are very much promoting independence and families from other cultures may not buy into that and then more importantly, getting to know what's important for that family. What are the values that are meaningful for that family and to try to bridge the two cultures based on things that would be meaningful for that mom.