

## **Case - Brian & Jerry**

### **Assessing Adaptive Functioning**

Brian comes from a lower-income family. He has always functioned adequately at home and in his community. He dresses and feeds himself and even takes care of himself each day until his mother returns home from work. He also plays well with his friends. At school, however, Brian refuses to participate or do his homework. He seems ineffective, at times lost, in the classroom. Referred to a school psychologist by his teacher, Brian received an IQ score of 60.

Jeffery comes from an upper-middle class home. He was always so to develop and sat up, stood, and talked late. During his infancy and toddler years, he was put in a special stimulation programme and given special help and attention at home. Still Jeffery has trouble dressing himself today and cannot be left alone in the backyard lest he hurt himself or wander off into the street. School work is very difficult for him. The teacher must work slowly and provide individual instruction for him. Tested at age six, Jeffery received an IQ score of 60.

### **Commentary**

Brian seems well adapted to his environment outside school. However, Jeffery's limitations are pervasive. In addition to his low IQ score, Jeffery has difficulty meeting challenges home and elsewhere. Thus, a diagnosis of ID may be more appropriate for Jeffery than for Brian. Several scales have been developed to assess adaptive behaviour. Here again, however some people function better in their lives than the scales predict while others fall short. Thus to properly diagnose ID, clinicians should probably observe the adaptive functioning of each individual in his or her everyday environment, taking both the person's background and community standards into account. Even then such judgements may be subjective as clinicians may not be familiar with the standards of a particular culture or community.

Diagnosticians cannot rely on a cut off IQ score of 70 to determine whether a person suffers from intellectual disability. Some people with a low IQ are capable of managing their lives and functioning independently, while others are not. The cases of Brian and Jeffery show the range of adaptive abilities.