

FASD help for family and friends

We need you! Children with brain damage need non-judgmental, loving friends and relatives who will accept them as they are, encourage but not demand growth, and rejoice in strengths and accomplishments no matter how small.

What every child with FASD needs?

- Unconditional love
- Acceptance
- Attention
- Supervision
- Patience and understanding
- Wisdom
- Structure / environmental controls
- Redirection
- Help to slow down when getting out of control (deceleration)
- Someone who believes they are capable

Ways to help our child grow

1. Praise their strengths
2. Acknowledge their expression of frustration
3. Respect their fears and difficulty with change
4. Understand that behaviors may be a can't do it not a won't do it
5. Talk to them as a person - not someone who is stupid
6. Keep from comparing them with others
7. Keep from joking, teasing or putting them down
8. Keep yourself from telling them, "you will grow out of this"
9. Get involved in their interests
10. Find out what they are trying to learn and think of fun ways to join in

Please understand

This is a brain injury not an issue not a 'bad' parenting.

We may have to avoid

- Holidays
- Birthdays
- Circus
- Concerts
- Movies
- Sport events

These events may be too much for our child to handle. New people or visitors in the home are a change in routine and may be difficult for the child.

We need your help

It is exhausting to raise a child who has prenatal brain injury. Consider learning how to provide respite for us.

Things to remember

1. Poor impulse control is a brain injury issue and frustrating behaviors are most likely not intentional. Keep your cool and refrain from yelling. Why? Because the child is more than likely not misbehaving, but unable to understand certain things.
2. The child may not be able to do two things at once. For example: If you are eating or playing a game the child may not be able to talk.
3. View behavior problems as a disability that can be dealt with, rather than disobedience.

Tips on communicating with a child with FASD

1. Find a quiet place to talk. Why? Large, noisy and busy areas are hard to communicate and function well in.
 - Turn off radio or TV.
 - Close door.
 - Move to quieter area.
2. Began talking with simple topics.
 - How is your dog?
 - What did you eat for lunch?
3. Talk about things the child likes.
4. Stay on one topic.
5. State one sentence at a time.
6. Keep sentences short.
7. Instead of asking why, use words like where, how, what, who or when.
8. Allow time for child to respond, refrain from hurrying child.
9. Give them choices to ease decision-making, but still allow independence of choice.
10. Be an active listener.
 - Give frequent eye contact.
 - Look for gestures.
 - If understanding is unclear, take a guess (are you talking about . . . Oh now I get it.)
11. Look through the child's eyes.
 - How we look at things or understand things may be totally different from how they understand something.
12. Tell others if you learn better ways to talk with your child so all can benefit.
13. Avoid behavior which winds our child up. Such as tickling, wrestling and pillow fighting.

Adapted from Our FAScinating Journey: Keys to Brain Potential Along the Path of Prenatal Brain Injury. (2002) by Jodee Kulp Sources used with permission.

FASD general teaching tips

1. Observe, refocus, reframe

Misbehavior is often neurological misfire. Take a deep breath, think about what might be going on. Is it your student can't or is it your student won't? Ask your student how you can help her/him help herself/himself. You may be surprised at the answer.

2. Give student only one direction at a time

Multiple directions are confusing to child with FASD. The student may forget what was said first, may not understand what was said or may be confused by a two-part or more direction.

- Give clear directions, starting with one and two steps. Say "put your coats on" instead of "get ready to go"
- Use fewer words - walk, stop
- Have child repeat directions to see if child understands

"Pick up the paper and go to the black board and write this sentence."

Imagine what it is like to process each word one at a time... Pick... (ok what did she mean by that)... up... (oh here I need to pick up something) the paper... (what should I do with the paper) ... huh?... sentence. Oh "write a sentence on this paper!"

3. Model and mentor correct behavior

Focus on teaching behaviors you want the student to grow, not the behaviors you don't like.

4. Reteach, reteach, reteach . . .

Keep it simple... if they are not getting it break it down into even smaller pieces (task analysis) or teach something easier to build upon.

To compensate for decreased memory:

- Use repetition
- Be consistent

Note: It can take nine steps to go to the bathroom, seventeen steps to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and fourteen steps to write the small letter "o".

5. Teach backward chaining

Teach the child the last step of the process first so the child can always finish the task. For example: making a sandwich let the child put the bread on the top of the sandwich, the next time let child butter the top piece of bread and put the bread on the top of the sandwich.

6. Teach replacement behavior

- Reframe
- Thought-stopping, positive thinking
- Deep breathing and relaxation
- Fun, humor and laughter!

7. Present information in child's best modality

Child may learn best in visual, auditory or multi-sensory learning activities. children may not be able to use two modalities at a time. Consider teaching visual only, auditory only or multi-sensory alone.

8. Use Motivators

Encouragement, positive attention, rewards and incentives for appropriate behavior and meeting learning challenges. Set a goal to be accomplished. Some incentives may work well if they are things the child 'really' desires (small toys, money, time with friends, roller rink passes, special dinners, and movies.)

9. Modify your environment for the student's success

Discipline yourself to be sensitive to set up your students for success. This may mean changing plans if the student is too tired, irritable, or nervous. Don't try something new if the student is hungry or over stimulated. The environment is an absolute "key" to the child's success. Prevent the meltdown from happening.

10. Keep yourself healthy

Maintain the support of other teachers. Teaching children with FASD can be very frustrating.

11. Become a team player with the family

The parents of a child with FASD will have ideas to help you help their child. Listen carefully to what they have to say. Find a way to keep in touch with the family on a regular basis.

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