



Dear Support Person,

WHAT I WANT YOU TO KNOW

ABOUT ME



Dear Support Person,

My name is _____,

I want to share a little about how my brain works so you can better understand me.
I have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (**FASD**).

This means I was exposed to alcohol before I was born, which affected how my brain developed. Because of this, I experience challenges that may sometimes look like behavior problems or a lack of effort—but they are actually the result of a brain-based, lifelong disability.

FASD affects how I learn, remember, regulate my emotions, and respond to my environment. These challenges are not something I will “outgrow,” but with the right understanding and support, I can continue to grow, learn, and succeed.

I truly want to do well and enjoy school, relationships, and daily life—just like everyone else. Some days I may be able to do something, and on another day I may struggle with the same task. This doesn't mean I'm not trying or that I don't care. It means my brain has limits that can change depending on stress, fatigue, or sensory overload.

When I'm told to “try harder” or that something should be easy, please know that I am already doing my best. What may seem simple can take a lot of effort for me. At times, I may need extra support to manage my actions or feelings—not because I choose to struggle, but because of how my brain works.

Your patience, understanding, and support make a huge difference for me. When you work with my brain instead of against it, you help me feel safe, capable, and ready to learn.

Thank you for reading this little booklet
about me to know more about how FASD
effects my learning and behaviors.

Sincerely,



Strengths & Interests



Place
Photo
Here

I have ____ brothers
____ sisters
____ pets.

I love to...

Allowing me to do some of these things may help me when I need motivation to learn or when I am having a hard time.

3 things I am good at:

It will help me when you remind me of these things and what you like about me too.

I respond best to:

- ☐ Structured environment
- ☐ Unstructured environment
- ☐ Fast Pace ☐ Calm
- ☐ Slow Pace ☐ Energetic
- ☐ Positive Reinforcement
- ☐ Negative Reinforcement
- ☐ Consistency ☐ _____
- ☐ Flexibility ☐ _____
- ☐ One task at a time
- ☐ Concrete Language
- ☐ _____ ☐ _____



Assessment Information

My IEP:

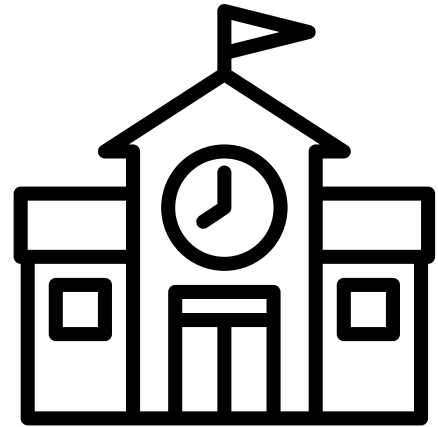
☐ I do NOT have an IEP at this time

My IEP was implemented on _____

My IEP has these accommodations written in them _____

Comments: _____

Other Assessments:



My Adaptive Abilities:

☐ My adaptive abilities have not been evaluated

My adaptive ability was

evaluated on: _____

My adaptive abilities were

measured to be at these levels:

Expressive Language: _____

Reading Level: _____

Comprehension: _____

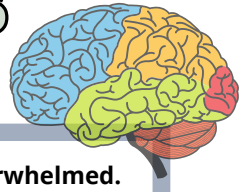
Social/Emotional Skills: _____

Daily Living Skills: _____

Comments: _____



Overwhelming Emotions



Sometimes I struggle to put my feelings into words because my nervous system can become overwhelmed. When that happens, it can make learning, friendships, and daily activities harder in that moment.

I work hard to manage my reactions and make good choices, but there are times when my emotions feel bigger than my ability to regulate them—no matter how much effort I'm putting in.

You can help by trying to understand what may be causing these feelings and by supporting me with strategies that help me regulate in ways that work for me.

Please notice the effort I am making, even when my behavior looks challenging. I'm not trying to be disruptive or out of control—I'm doing my best and need support to get back to a regulated state.

I get upset when:

- ☐ I don't understand
- ☐ Things/plans change
- ☐ Things are moving too fast/slow for me
- ☐ I can't remember something
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed
- ☐ Someone touches me
- ☐ I don't know what questions to ask or how to say what I want to say
- ☐ I feel like I don't fit in with my family or at school
- ☐ I can't meet the expectation
- ☐ Other _____

I show my feelings by:

- ☐ Expressing resistance to demands
- ☐ Raising my voice/yelling
- ☐ Physical movement
- ☐ Physical impulsivity
- ☐ Giving up/withdrawing
- ☐ Consistent talking/re-hashing
- ☐ Throwing things
- ☐ Running Away
- ☐ Hiding in small spaces
- ☐ Eating/snacking
- ☐ Other _____



How you can help me:

- ☐ Noticing when I am becoming frustrated by learning my cues
- ☐ Speaking slowly and calmly to me
- ☐ Reminding me gently and helping me with the coping skills that I am trying to learn
- ☐ Providing a quiet and safe place for me to go to in order to:
- ☐ Practice using my coping skills
- ☐ Allowing me to have a small snack or cold water. My body may need nutrition
- ☐ Allowing me to take a break
- ☐ Listening to my words and validating my feelings
- ☐ Discovering the why behind my behavior.
- ☐ Understanding my reactions are from being overwhelmed, and are not intentional

When my emotions become overwhelming, my nervous system has trouble processing what's happening. At that point, I may need help regulating my reactions.

If this happens, I need a calm, quiet space so I can reset and regain regulation. Please guide me there calmly and with minimal talking. Being talked to or reasoned with during this time can increase my stress and make it harder for me to de-escalate.

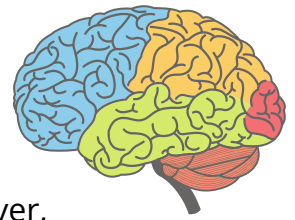
I'm not trying to escalate or be difficult. I want to calm down and get back to learning as quickly as possible, and this support helps me do that.

Please wait for me to be calm before trying to talk with me about what happened.





Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and the brain at home



Because of the timing, type and amount of alcohol consumed, prenatal alcohol exposure effects every person differently. However, there are some common challenging areas for those with **FASD**.

Some of **my** personal struggles are:



Concrete Thinking:

I am a concrete thinker, which means I learn best when expectations stay consistent. It can be hard for me to change a rule or routine once I've learned it. For example, spaces in my home usually have a clear purpose, so when that purpose changes, I may feel confused or stuck. I also understand language very literally. Phrases that don't mean exactly what they say can be confusing for me. Clear, direct words help me know what is expected and help me feel successful.



Language:

Language can be hard for me to process and express. Sometimes I know what I want to say, but getting the words out or keeping up with long conversations is difficult. When information comes too fast or all at once, I may fill in gaps to help things make sense to me. This isn't lying—it's my brain trying to understand. Even though I may sound fluent when I talk, I may not fully understand everything I've said or heard yet.



Generalizing:

I have a hard time applying what I know to different situations. Every situation is brand new to me because I cannot use past experiences to guide my actions. An example: I can use my computer at home. I know all the keys and how to turn on. At school, the computer is a different color, so now I don't know what to do.



Memory:

I have a hard time remembering things. What I learn one day may be gone the next day and I have to learn it all over again. Sometimes I can repeat something back to you, but after I walk away, I might forget. It may seem like I am lying, but I am actually filling in the blanks to make something make sense to me.



Adaptive Behavior:

I may find it challenging to understand personal boundaries or read social cues. I can be very trusting and sometimes taken advantage of. I may act younger than my age or prefer spending time with younger friends. I also see and understand things differently than others, and may need support to navigate social situations safely.



Executive Functioning:

I have a hard time getting started on things, making a decision, or being given too many choices or tasks to do all at once. My brain cannot remember all the choices or tasks and that makes me frustrated and overwhelmed. When there is a change in my environment or routine, my brain cannot handle it. Sometimes I get "stuck" on doing something or making my point and my brain cannot move on to something else.



Processing Pace:

I need a little more time to think and respond. My brain processes information at its own pace, and waiting helps me understand what's being asked and share my thoughts. When I'm given time and patience, I feel more confident and successful. Being rushed or talked over can make it harder for me to respond.



Sensory:

I can become easily overwhelmed by bright lights, sudden or loud sounds, crowded spaces, or busy environments. Changes in my routine or surroundings can also be challenging. When this happens, managing my emotions can be hard, and I may need extra support, time, or a quiet space to feel safe and settle down.



Nutrition:

Because my brain has to work extra hard every day, especially at school, my brain burns more calories and I need to snack often. When I don't have access to snacks every hour, my brain cannot keep up with all the demands of the school day and I can lose control of my feelings.



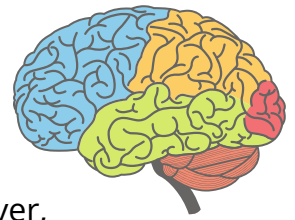
Cause and Effect:

I sometimes find it hard to see cause and effect, predict what might happen, or adjust to changes and transitions. This can make me act impulsively or be surprised by the outcomes. I may also find it difficult to control my behaviors at times. Traditional reward charts, or consequence systems may not always work for me, and I do best with supports that are flexible and understanding of how my brain works.





Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and the brain at school



Because of the timing, type and amount of alcohol consumed, prenatal alcohol exposure effects every person differently. However, there are some common challenging areas for those with **FASD**.

Some of **my** personal struggles are:

☐ **Concrete Thinking:**

I am a concrete thinker so it's hard for me to re-learn something or change what I have learned. If I have to sit quietly in the lunchroom for an assembly, this is hard for me because the lunch room is for eating and talking with my friends. I may not understand phrases that say one thing but mean something else. "Pick up your room", "Bite your tongue, Clean your desk."

☐ **Language:**

Language is not easy for me. I have a hard time getting my words out that are in my brain and keeping up with a long conversation. I sometimes "make up" things to make something make sense to me, which may seem like I am lying, but I'm just trying to make sense of things or when you are telling me too many things at one time. I may talk well, but I may not totally understand the meaning of what I just said or heard.

☐ **Generalizing:**

I have a hard time applying what I know to different situations. Every situation is brand new to me because I cannot use past experiences to guide my actions. An example: I can use my computer at home. I know all the keys and how to turn on. At school, the computer is a different color, so now I don't know what to do.

☐ **Memory:**

I have a hard time remembering things. What I learn one day may be gone the next day and I have to learn it all over again. Sometimes I can repeat something back to you, but after I walk away, I might forget. It may seem like I am lying, but I am actually filling in the blanks to make something make sense to me.

☐ **Adaptive Behavior:**

I may have difficulty understanding personal boundaries or reading social cues. I can be very trusting and may need guidance to stay safe in social situations. I might act younger than my peers or prefer interacting with younger students. I also process and see situations differently than others, so I may need support to navigate social interactions successfully.

☐ **Executive Functioning:**

In the classroom, I may need support to get started, make decisions, or manage multiple choices at one time. Too many options or tasks can lead to cognitive overload and impact my ability to participate. Changes in routine, environment, or expectations may be challenging to adjust to. When this occurs, I may become "stuck" on an idea or task and benefit from additional time and structured support to transition.

☐ **Processing Pace:**

In the classroom and at school I may need additional processing time to understand questions and organize my response. Allowing wait time helps me participate and share my thinking. When I am rushed or spoken over, it can impact my confidence and ability to respond effectively.

☐ **Sensory:**

I am easily overwhelmed by lights, sudden or loud sounds, too many people/crowds, or overstimulating environments. Some places that are really hard for me are recess, lunchrooms, assemblies and field trips. I can become very upset in changes to routine or my environment and regulating my emotions can be too hard for me, especially when I am overwhelmed.

☐ **Nutrition:**

Because my brain has to work extra hard every day, especially at school, my brain burns more calories and I need to snack often. When I don't have access to snacks every hour, my brain cannot keep up with all the demands of the school day and I can lose control of my feelings.

☐ **Cause and Effect:**

It's hard for me to understand cause and effect, predict what might happen, or handle transitions or change. I may make impulsive choices and be shocked at what happens. I have a hard time controlling my behaviors. Because of this, typical behavior plans, reward or consequence charts might not work for me.



How you can help me succeed

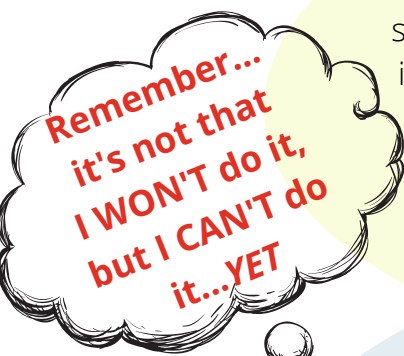
Please don't let what I CAN'T do, stop me from what I CAN do.

☐ **Use Concrete Language:**

I understand language best when words mean exactly what they say. Clear, direct, and positive instructions help me know what is expected. Simple phrases like "two hands" or "walk" support my understanding and success.

☐ **Expect to Re-Teach Me Things:**

My memory works differently, especially when I'm learning something new. I often need repeated practice over time for information or skills to stick. I may show understanding one day and have difficulty recalling it another day. Patience, repetition, and gentle reminders help me when my brain is having an "off" day.



Be Specific:

I may have difficulty generalizing what I learn in one setting to another. Specific explanations and concrete examples help me make those connections. Showing me how things that look different can serve the same purpose supports my understanding (for example, different types of phones or streets).



One Thing at a Time:

If I appear unsure or disengaged (not paying attention) while you're speaking, I may need information delivered more slowly and in fewer words to help me understand. Please allow extra wait time when asking questions, as it can take me longer to process information and organize my response.



ALWAYS THINK BRAIN FIRST

Especially when you see behaviors first.

Please look for the "why."



☐ **Provide a Routine:**

I need to know what is coming next because change and transitions overwhelm me. Keeping a routine helps me know what to expect next and that helps me feel safe and secure.

☐ **Use The Same Words:**

Please use the same words for my brain to know what is expected. When you say "slow down", "don't run," or "walk", my brain does not know you want me to do the same behavior each time. Using the same words will help me know what you want from me.

☐ **Rewards and Consequences:**

Please don't tie rewards and consequences to my behavior. My brain is working over time and I already know I may lose it during the week. I will have "on" and "off" days, and when I am having an "off" day, I am still trying my hardest to keep it together.

☐ **Provide Extra Help:**

I need those around me and working with me to know that my brain works differently, and to help me navigate new situations, surroundings, and tasks. This will help ease my anxiety, and provide direction.

**Remember...
I want to do
well**





How you can help me

At Home

It's easy to see what a person needs with a disability that is visible. But with a brain based invisible disability, it's not that easy. Little changes in my environment can make my home life a lot easier for me.

Clutter:

When my personal space becomes cluttered, it can overwhelm my nervous system and make it hard for me to stay regulated or focused. Even though I want my space to be organized, figuring out where to start can feel confusing or stressful.

You can support me by helping me break cleaning tasks into small, clear steps, offering visual or verbal guidance, and working alongside me when needed. This support helps me learn organization skills without feeling overwhelmed.

Changes:

Consistency helps my nervous system feel safe and regulated. Even small or unexpected changes can feel overwhelming if I'm not prepared.

You can support me by letting me know about changes ahead of time whenever possible and giving me time to process and adjust before the change happens. This helps me stay calm, flexible, and better able to cope with transitions.

Daily Tasks:

Daily tasks, like cleaning my room or completing other routines, can feel overwhelming for me. Starting, organizing, and finishing these tasks can be hard because my brain needs extra support to plan and manage steps. With clear instructions, step-by-step guidance, and gentle reminders, I am better able to complete tasks successfully and feel more confident.

Allow:

The sounds, movement, and activity at home can sometimes overwhelm my sensory system and make it hard for me to focus or stay regulated. I do best when I have options to reduce sensory input and create a calmer environment.

You can support me by offering ways to filter sensory information, such as a quiet or comfortable space to sit, reduced noise, headphones, chewing gum, or other tools that help my body stay regulated. These supports help me stay engaged and calm, not avoid responsibilities.





How you can help me

In The Classroom

It's easy to see what a person needs with a disability that is visible. But with a brain based invisible disability, it's not that easy. Little changes in my environment can make my life at school a lot easier for me.

Clutter:

When my desk or learning space becomes cluttered, it can overload my nervous system and interfere with my focus. While I want to keep my space organized, I may struggle with knowing where to start or how to organize materials independently.

Please support me by giving clear, step-by-step directions, visual supports, or brief check-ins to help me organize my space. These supports help me stay regulated, focused, and ready to learn.

Changes:

Predictability helps me stay regulated and ready to learn. Unexpected changes—even small ones—can be overwhelming and make it harder for me to stay focused or engaged.

Please support me by sharing changes in advance when possible and allowing time for me to process and adjust before the change occurs. This support helps me transition more successfully and stay engaged in learning.

Daily Tasks:

Daily classroom tasks, including academic work and routines like organizing materials or transitioning between activities, can feel overwhelming for me. Starting, staying on task, and finishing work can be challenging because my brain needs extra support to plan and manage steps. With clear instructions, step-by-step guidance, and check-ins, I am better able to keep up, complete tasks, and feel successful in class.

Allow:

The sights, sounds, and activity in the classroom can overload my sensory system and make it harder for me to focus and learn. Access to sensory supports helps me stay regulated and participate more fully. Please allow me options to reduce sensory input, such as seating that works best for me (for example, near the front or away from high-traffic areas), a quiet or designated calm space, headphones, sunglasses, or chewing gum. These tools help me stay present and ready to learn.





Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Resources



www.FASDUnited.org

The Leading Resource of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Community Formerly National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS), FASD United supports families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and prevents prenatal exposure to alcohol and other substances harmful to human development.

www.FASCETS.org

FASCETS offers a variety of services to help individuals, groups and organizations. Whether you are a parent, caregiver, support worker, educator or other professional, the Neurobehavioral Model will support the work you do.

www.cdc.gov/fasd/about/

National site that specifically speaks about FASD strengths and challenges. The website gives direct parent experience videos of parenting children and teens living with FASD and provides resources for caregivers.

www.EmbracingTheBrain.com

Shannon Iacobacci is an FASD specialist, parent expert, and Educational Advocate. She provides special education advocacy and trainings for parents, caregivers, educators, professionals and organizations on FASD, special education, and behavior supports.





Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Resources



Trying Differently Rather Than Harder Revised **Lynn Alsup, Nathalie Brassard, Melissa Ellington**

This book provides a readable, narrative discussion of the neurobehavioral approach for working effectively with children, adolescents and adults with FASD. After a brief review of the diagnosis, the focus is on understanding behaviors differently - primary, secondary and tertiary behavioral characteristics. One section explores the most common behavioral symptoms by providing case examples, interventions, and improved outcomes. The neurobehavioral approach in Trying Differently Rather Than Harder is illustrated by stories of how alternative interventions lead to less frustration.

Essential FASD Supports **by Nate Sheets**

Nate's book, "Essential FASD Supports" is a must-read for anyone supporting people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. It covers everyday supports, difficult behaviors, and a framework for long-term success.

Beyond Behaviors **by Mona Delahook, PHD**

While not an FASD-specific book, it reframes children's challenging behaviors as signals of underlying developmental or emotional needs, not as intentional misbehavior, using brain science to help parents and professionals understand the "why" behind the "what". It advocates for a compassionate, relationship-based approach, focusing on co-regulation, building secure connections, and addressing the root causes (like stress or trauma) rather than just managing the outward actions, offering practical tools and strategies for fostering resilience.

Parenting Your Porcupine **by Antonia Rathbun Lindsey**

Drawing on decades of work with families and children impacted by FASD, and other neurodiversity, Antonia offers practical, compassionate tools that bridge the gap between science and daily life. Her book empowers parents and professionals with concepts and skill for improving collaboration around the "can't not won't" movements, while enhancing strengths through use of creative strategies and workarounds within environments to improve family resilience and success across the developmental span for children.





Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Resources



13 Beams of Moonlight by Deb Evanson

13 Beams of Moonlight: Gentle Guidance for Families and Communities Living with FASD is a relationship-centered, brain-based guide for understanding and supporting children, youth, and adults whose lives have been shaped by prenatal alcohol exposure. Drawing on more than fifty years of work in classrooms and communities—from Pueblo, Colorado, to Iñupiaq villages in Alaska and beyond—educator Deb Evanson invites readers to step away from blame and shame and instead see FASD as a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability that calls for compassion, structure, and creativity.

Raising Kids and Teens with FASD by Barb Clark

In this supportive guide, Barb Clark shares her experiences raising a child with FASD - what she got wrong, what she got right, and what you can do to support your own family. Through chapters including plain-English explanations of what FASD actually is, the strengths and struggles of kids with FASD, and strategies for keeping your head above water, Barb offers practical advice for looking after yourself and your family.

Parenting Your Porcupine by Antonia Rathbun Lindsey

Drawing on decades of work with families and children impacted by FASD, and other neurodiversity, Antonia offers practical, compassionate tools that bridge the gap between science and daily life. Her book empowers parents and professionals with concepts and skill for improving collaboration around the “can’t not won’t” movements, while enhancing strengths through use of creative strategies and workarounds within environments to improve family resilience and success across the developmental span for children.

