

A BOOK ABOUT



Dear Teacher,
**WHAT I WANT
YOU TO KNOW**

ABOUT ME

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Dear Teacher,

My name is _____,

and I want you to know a little about me.

I have **FASD**, which stands for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, because I was exposed to alcohol before I was born. The alcohol changed the way my brain developed, so I have struggles that may look like a **behavior issue** but it is actually a **brain issue**.

FASD is a lifelong disability that creates challenges for me, and I need your help as I'm growing and learning.

I really try to do my best, and I want to be happy and like school just like everyone else. Sometimes, my brain won't let me do things on one day, even if I was able to do it before. If you tell me to "try harder", or "this is easy, you can do it", I want you to know I am already trying as hard as I can, and it really might not be that easy for me. I may not always have control of my actions or feelings because of how my brain works, so I will need your help when this happens.

Thank you for reading this little booklet about me to know more about how FASD effects my learning and behaviors. I am excited and nervous at the same time for school, but I know it can be a good experience for me when we work together.

Sincerely,





Facts About Me



MY FAVORITES



PHOTO
OF
ME

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 my family loves about me
(my strengths):**

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
- ☐ Subjectivity
- ☐ Concrete



Assessment Information

Facts About Me

My IEP:

☐ I do NOT have an IEP at this time

My IEP was implemented on _____

My IEP has these accommodations written in them _____



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: _____

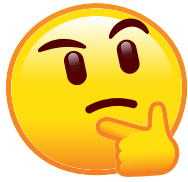
Comprehension:_____

Social/Emotional Skills:_____

Comments:_____

Additional Comments:





My Big Feelings

Facts About Me



Sometimes I have a hard time expressing how I feel in **appropriate** ways because I cannot always access the part of my brain that regulates emotions. This gets in the way of my learning, my friendships, and my daily life.

I **want** to control how I respond to my feelings, but sometimes I **can't**, no matter how hard I am trying.

You can help me by understanding why I'm feeling the way that I am feeling, and supporting me in how to manage my feelings in **healthy** ways.

Please notice how hard I am trying, even though my behaviors may be a challenging. I really don't want to be or feel out of control.



I get upset when:

- ☐ I don't understand
- ☐ Things/plans change
- ☐ Things are moving too fast 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 classmates
- ☐ I can't meet the expectation
- ☐ Other _____

I show my feelings by:

- ☐ Acting defiant
- ☐ Raising my voice/yelling
- ☐ Nagging
- ☐ Physical movement
- ☐ Physical aggression
- ☐ Giving up
- ☐ Withdrawing
- ☐ Talking too much
- ☐ Throwing things
- ☐ Running Away
- ☐ 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
 - ☐ Take a break
 - ☐ Allow me to have a small snack or cold water. My body may need nutrition
- ☐ Listening to my words and validate my feelings
- ☐ Discovering the why behind my behavior



When my feelings become too big for me, my brain can't handle it and I may lose control of my behaviors. If I get to this point, I NEED you to CALMLY take me to a quiet space so I can gain some control. If you try to talk to me or reason with me it may frustrate us both and I may escalate. And I really DON'T want to. Please wait for me to be calm before trying to talk with me about what happened.





Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and the brain



Because of the timing, type and amount of alcohol consumed, prenatal alcohol exposure affects 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 a hard time understanding personal boundaries and reading social cues. I am very vulnerable and can be easily taken advantage of. I may act younger than my age and prefer younger friends. I have a hard time seeing things the way others do.

☐ 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'm a 30 second kid in a ONE second world. It takes me longer to think and respond because my brain needs more time to understand what you have said and to come up with my answer. Please be patient with me and wait for me to answer you. Talking over me or calling on someone else will frustrate me or make me feel not good enough.

☐ 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:

Please use words that mean exactly what they say. Please tell me exactly what you need or want from me and say them in the positive. "Two hands" or "walk" will help me.



Expect to Re-Teach Me Things:

Because I have a hard time with memory in learning things. I have to learn something new over and over until it sticks in my brain. I may master a task or concept one day, but completely not remember another day. Please be patient with me as I try to remember things. Or when my brain is having an "off" day.



Be Specific:

I have a hard time learning something one place and transferring it to another place. Please be specific to help me make those connections. Show me things that may look different but have the same function. (Ex: phone, street, etc.)

Remember...
Maybe it's not
that I WON'T do it,
but I CAN'T do it



One Thing at a Time:

If I seem lost while you are talking, please speak slower and use fewer words so I can understand. Please be patient with me as if I am slower to respond when you ask a question. It takes me longer for the words to go from my brain to my words.



How you can help me *Succeed*



ALWAYS THINK BRAIN FIRST

**Especially when you see behaviors first.
Please find out the why behind my behavior.**



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.

*Remember...
Maybe it's not
that I **WON'T** do it,
but I **CAN'T** do it*



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.





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:**

Please help me keep my desk and space clean. Messy desks and spaces overwhelm me, but when you tell me to clean my desk, I have no idea where to start or what I'm supposed to do.

☐ **Changes:**

Please try to keep things as consistent as possible. Even small changes can be too much for me to handle. Please help me adapt to change by telling me ahead of time and then give me time to process the change before it happens.

☐ **Decorations:**

All the fun decorations on the walls in the classroom are too much for my brain to handle and will often distract or overwhelm me. Less decorations and an organized classroom space will help me make sense of my surroundings.

☐ **Allow:**

All the sights and sounds in the classroom make it really hard for me to focus. Please allow me ways to filter out all my distractions. Maybe a small safe place for me to sit quietly, sitting up front in the class, headphones, sunglasses, or chewing gum to release my anxiety are some ideas.





Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder *Resources*

www.EmbracingTheBrain.com

Shannon Iacobacci is an FASD specialist, educator, advocate, certified facilitator of the FASCETS Neurobehavioral Model, and Master IEP Coach®. She provides classes through speaking engagements, in person trainings, one on one coaching sessions, and virtual courses for parents, caregivers, educators, professionals and organizations.

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.

Trying Differently Rather Than Harder by Diane Malbin

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.

