

Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association Inc CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

The challenging behaviours of a child can lead to social exclusion, family breakdown and educational exclusion amongst others. Behaviours resulting from prenatal exposure to alcohol rather than the environment will not respond to behaviour management techniques. Their behaviour will **not** be modified by natural justice or tough love.

There are literally thousands of 'rules' that people with FASD will unknowingly break. Behaviours labelled as problematic are often breaking a social norm or rule. These behaviours can include:

- How close to stand to other people
- When it is appropriate to interrupt another person who is speaking
- When and how and to what level to show emotion
- What subjects are inappropriate and in what environment
- How to interpret and respond to nonverbal communication
- What parts of a person's body may be seen naked or touched, and under what circumstances
- When to speak and how to get a point across without becoming angry or aggressive

A challenging behaviour is one that a reasonable person will find hard to accept; it literally challenges our ability to understand why it is happening and a complex behaviour is one which makes it difficult to initially see the reasons for the behaviour. Both of these types of behaviours are common in a person with FASD

Examples of challenging and complex behaviours:

- Physical or verbal aggression
- Self-injury
- Property destruction
- Disinhibition
- Hyper-sexuality
- Impulsivity
- Aggressive behaviour

All behaviour serves a purpose, and can also be a method of communication. If challenging behaviour in the child with FASD is seen as a way for them to communicate that things are not right in their world, it may be easier to understand and to manage.

Instead of seeing a particular behaviour as an annoyance, looking for the underlying message is the first step to resolving the causes. A complex or challenging behaviour communicates three things:

- An unmet need, such as social, attention, emotional discomfort or physical discomfort
- Expression of mood, such as sadness, anger or frustration
- Response to stimulation, either lack of stimulation (eg boredom) or too much stimulation (eg a noisy crowd or too much activity)

¹ Their common messages can be:

- There are too many demands on me
- This is an unfamiliar environment/activity and it's upsetting me
- There is too much noise/light
- There are too many people all talking at once
- I'm tired and stressed
- I don't know what I'm supposed to do

Keeping a record of the child's behaviour and reactions can provide an indication as to what environments, experiences or situations to avoid.

Keeping records of each incident can increase the chances of being able to support the child to show appropriate behaviours in the future. It can:

- Identify triggers by comparing incidents
- Show which strategies work and which don't
- Keep a record of overall progress as he or she grows

Part of the recording of the child's behaviour can include:

- When the behaviour occurred
- Where it occurred
- With whom
- How long the behaviour lasted
- The severity of the behaviour
- What it was that triggered the behaviour
- What occurred after the behaviour
- Any interventions, strategies or accommodations used and whether they were effective
- What changes that may need to be made as a result of analysing the information

Identifying triggers can be tricky; sometimes all the possible causes need to be documented and patterns identified over time. The trigger may have been something that happened well before the actual behaviour emerged. It can be very difficult to identify the cause of the behaviour because it may be different each time. For instance perseverative behaviour in the form of tapping a pencil on the table or a similar behaviour combined with a facial expression may mean the same thing – "I am overwhelmed and unless I can move away from the situation or environment, my behaviour will escalate."

This is why it is so important to look at all these questions, and record what happened after each episode of challenging behaviour. The key is to look for patterns emerging over the weeks or months. Is the trigger due to eating a particular food? Does the behaviour occur at a certain time of the day? Does it happen in a particular environment?

Provided by the Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association as a community service

¹ <http://www.synapse.org.au/Behavioural/documenting-behaviour-fact-sheet>

Challenging behaviour in FASD: Subtle thinking deficits leading to impulsive behaviour Useful strategies

Nathan E. Ory, M.A. 28 November 2008 Winnipeg, MB

We need to remember that people with FASD have different ways of thinking:

<i>NEURO-TYPICAL FUNCTION</i>	<i>FASD FUNCTION</i>
Abstract thinking	Concrete thinking
Able to analyse	Can't analyse
Good problem solving	Poor problem solving
Good judgement : Common sense	Poor judgement : Lack of common sense

WHAT IS NORMAL FUNCTIONING 85 – 115 IQ

Complex language processing, good judgement, abstract thinking. Good long-term and immediate memory. Good attention span.

Can see the big picture. Can see other's point of view and their place in this Good sense of time, past, present, future. Goal orientation, able to organise self towards future goals.

Range of coping strategies, flexible. Wide repertoire of adaptive behaviours.

WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY 45 – 70 IQ

Concrete language processing. Difficulty with meaning of pronouns and prepositions, compound sentences, past and future tense verbs, time concepts. Impaired memory. Difficulty focusing attention.

Little abstract thinking. Step-by-step in approach to problem solving. Learn by rote practice. Egocentric . Difficult to see other's point of view.

Poor sense of past, present future. Limited ability to organize self towards future goals .

Copes by using rituals and habits. Dependent on others for support in daily living. Doesn't know

What to do when they don't know what to do!

COGNITIVE FACTORS IN ADULTS WITH FASD

Wide range between relative strengths and weaknesses.

Looks and sounds "smart", acts disabled

Wide variability of function within day | week

Fluctuating attention and ability to focus

BRAIN PHYSICS OF SOME PEOPLE WITH SUBTLE THINKING HANDICAPS

I know but I can't answer or show that I know.

I'm fine til I'm frozen.

I can do, but I can't figure out how to do by myself.

I can see what you want but I can't listen to what you want.

I know in the moment, but nothing "sticks."

I can't do all of the time what I can do some of the time

NORMAL FUNCTION	FASD FUNCTION
Learns by example and analogy	Learns by rote, step-by-step practice
Learns from experience cause and effect	Difficulty learning from experience Difficulty learning from experience
Generalises learning and can apply to similar situations. Flexible thinking.	Does not generalize. Learning specific to each situation.
Good long-term and immediate memory.	One track mind. Rigid, concrete thinking Impaired long-term and immediate memory. Things slide out of their mind. Poor working memory.
Abstract and complex language processing.	Concrete and simple language processing.
Good attention span. Able to focus and concentrate. Quick thinking.	Distractible, impulsive, hard to focus own attention. Slower rate of thinking.
Good sense of time, past, present and future.	Poor sense of past, present and future.
Can see the “big picture .” “World-centric .”	Can see the “little-immediate picture.” “Egocentric.”
Can see other’s point of view and their place in this.	Difficult to see other’s point of view
Goal orientation. Able to organize self towards future goals.	Little ability to organize self at all, much less to organize self towards future goals.
Wide repertoire of adaptive behaviour. Figures out what to do when he doesn’t know what to do.	Limited repertoire of adaptive behaviour. Has no idea what to do when he doesn’t know what to do.
Flexible and wide range of coping strategies.	Few, habitual, inflexible coping strategies. Dependent on others for support in daily living

WHAT TO DO – FOR PROFESSIONALS

- Lower expectations for how much person will “independently” accomplish
- This is how to avoid another three inches in their file.
- Raise expectations for “peaceful coexistence.”
- Structure environments to provide them with successful experiences, and slowly build their routines for living.
- Gain eye contact
- Keep language short (4-5 words)
- Pause
- Repeat
- Be visual and concrete, use props
- Demonstrate

HOW TO SET UP A PERSON FOR SUCCESS

- Don’t look for unsuccessful independence.
- Look for successful acceptance of and dependence on external structures.
- Look for independent functioning within these External structures
- Life as an AAA roadmap.
- Each section has beginning, middle and end laid out. Step by step break down.
- Let them “trace life” by rote patterns. Assist to focus on relevant cues.
- Life as Lego blocks, you are the connecting link.
- You are the bridge and must provide the pieces They are missing.
- Give frequent reminders and acknowledgment for accepting support.