



FASD from a Trauma Lens webinar

Hosted by Formed Families Forward
www.FormedFamiliesForward.org



Who we are...

Formed Families Forward's **mission** is to improve developmental, educational, social, emotional and post-secondary outcomes for **children and youth with disabilities and other special needs** through provision of information, training and support to adoptive and foster parents, and kinship caregivers. We provide:

- ❖ In-person trainings (we sponsor and we come to you!)
- ❖ Webinars
- ❖ Fact sheets and other resources; Updated Resource Directory!
- ❖ *Stronger Together*- Youth/YA peer support group; parent/caregiver support group, Tuesday evenings in Fairfax
- ❖ Direct support- consultations by phone & in person
- ❖ Youth LifeSkills classes; Parenting Wisely classes
- ❖ Connecting families to resources

www.FormedFamiliesForward.org

Upcoming Trainings



- ***Critical Decision Points for Families of Children with Special Needs***, 9:30 AM- 2 PM on February 20 at Prince William Co Public Schools Parent Resource Center
- ***Loudoun Connect: Refresh Your Parenting and Problem Solving Tool Kit*** at ALLY Center, Leesburg, February 24, 6- 8 PM
- **Spring Forward Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Family Fun Day**, May 2 at GMU Manassas
- Recording of January's ***Evidence Based Interventions for Children with FASD*** by Dr. Molly Millians is available now, Resources > Webinars

Other requests!

- Use Chat Box to communicate, ask questions, comment.
- Download slides from side panel.
- Complete Evaluation at conclusion of the webinar
- If you need a certificate of completion, email Lisa.Mathey@formedfamiliesforward.org
- Like us on Facebook!
<https://facebook.com/FormedFamiliesForward>
- Suggestions for other topics of interest – let us info@formedfamiliesforward.org



Like

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders



3 Types of Trauma

-Bruce Perry

1. Intrauterine insult; prenatal alcohol or drug exposure, stress during pregnancy
2. Early neglect; mother who is inattentive due to stress, depression, domestic violence, postpartum depression, orphanage, etc.
3. Classic trauma; abuse, molestation, witnessing violence, car accident, medical trauma, etc.

“Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus.”

—*IOM Report to Congress, 1996*

Alcohol or drugs:

Which is more
damaging to a
developing fetus?

ALCOHOL!!

Varying Impact of Exposure to Substances



	Alcohol	Opioids	Marijuana	Meth	Cocaine	Nicotine
Facial anomalies	Strong	Effect	None	None	None	None
Behavior Challenges	Strong	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect
Cognitive Impairment	Strong	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect
Growth Issues	Strong	None	None	None	Effect	None
Physical/Medical Effects	Strong	Effect	None	Effect	Effect	None
Withdrawal	None	Strong	None	Maybe*	None	None
Birth Weight	Strong	Effect	None	Effect	Effect	Effect

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders- FASD

- Most people have heard of FAS, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. It became a spectrum disorder in 1996.
- FASDs are a set of physical, behavioral and cognitive disorders affecting people who were prenatally exposed to alcohol.
- FASDs are permanent disabilities that result in lifetime brain injury/damage.

To better understand what the different diagnoses are that fall under the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum, please watch some of the past webinars on FASD on the Formed Families Forward website.

https://formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/webinars/

Factors that impact the degree of brain injury to the developing fetus

- Timing of exposure
- Resiliency of fetus
- Metabolism and diet of the mother
 - If mom's iron level is low, more likely fetus is damaged
- Blood alcohol concentration of the mother



Twin Research

- Identical twins had virtually identical results of injury from Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (PAE).
- Fraternal twins had vastly different outcomes from the prenatal alcohol exposure.
- Conclusion: fetal genetics factor into the level of damage that a fetus receives from the PAE



(Hemingway et al., Twin study confirms virtually identical prenatal alcohol exposures can lead to markedly different fetal alcohol spectrum disorder outcomes fetal genetics influences fetal vulnerability. Advances in Pediatric Research, 2019)

Red Flags

question to consider



- Was the child in foster care or is he/she adopted?
 - NOFAS estimates that 70-80% of children in foster care were prenatally exposed to alcohol and have an FASD.
 - 29-68% of Russian adoptions are estimated to show severe alcohol-related damage
- Is there history of chemical dependency issues for child or for their parents?
- Is child is easily distracted, hyperactive, inattentive and impulsive?
- Have they been involved with the criminal justice system?
- **Does the child continue to make the same mistakes?**
- **Does the child appear to not learn from consequences?**

Red Flags



- Are there multiple diagnoses like Bi-Polar, ADHD, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Autism, Conduct Disorder, etc.?
- Does the child consistently display extreme behaviors (aggression, emotional instability)?
- Are there sleeping and/or eating issues?
- Does the individual have an average IQ but functions at a much lower capacity?
- Are vivid fantasies and perseveration problems present?
- Can the child repeat a rule, but cannot follow it?
- Does the individual seem unaware of what they have done or why they are in trouble?

Tough Fact:

Children with an FASD are 3 times more likely to be abused or neglected than typically developing children.



Kirisci et al. *Impact of Parental Substance Use Disorder and Child Neglect Severity on Substance Use Involvement in Male Offspring*, December 2001, *Prevention Science*

4th-6th Grades



Around the ages of 9-11, difficulties in academic performance and behavior in the school setting become more apparent.

It is important to consider screening for an FASD if parents are expressing concerns over new behavioral issues and/or academic struggles particularly around the 4th to 6th grade level.



Infancy & Early Childhood



- Some children who were prenatally exposed have medical and developmental struggles at birth and in early development
- The majority of children who were prenatally exposed are fairly on track developmentally in early development, and do not raise any red flags at pediatric check ups, or early childhood screenings



Early Intervention is CRUCIAL



- Diagnosis before age 6 is a protective factor
- Choline supplements before age 5 can help repair some of the brain injury
- Parents can use more effective techniques if they understand the infants brain – therefore not unintentionally causing more trauma

Why Diagnosis?



- Decreases anger and frustration for all
- Helps to know the negative behaviors result from a disability and are NOT willful
- Helps the individual receive appropriate services early
- The individual will need a lifetime of external supports
- Set realistic expectations
- Decreases risk of secondary disabilities (law/school)
- Provides better self awareness and acceptance
- Prevents next pregnancy exposure
- Increases understanding that FASD is a lifetime disability based on permanent, irreversible brain damage

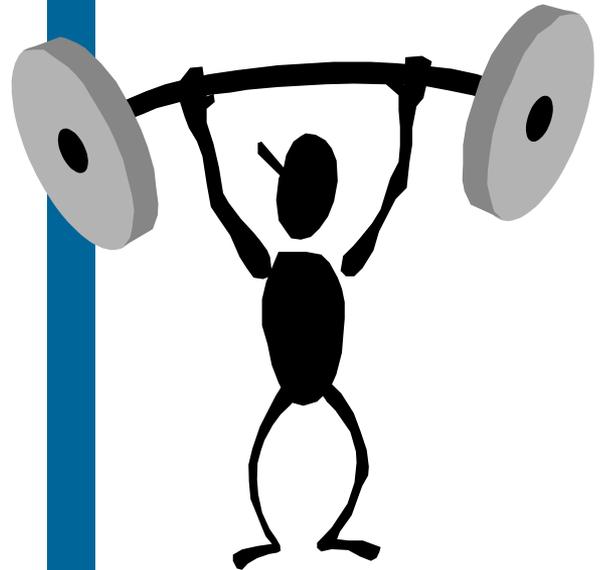
How to ask...

A graphic of the word "QUESTION!" in large, colorful, 3D-style letters. The letters are blue, green, yellow, red, purple, and orange. The exclamation point is green. The graphic is tilted upwards to the right and has a white shadow behind it.

- Hard questions
 - Do not just ask if they used alcohol while pregnant
 - “Is there any way you could have been using alcohol before you knew you were pregnant?”
 - Empathize – “This has happened to several of my friends and family” (It probably actually has!)

Strengths

- ▶ Highly verbal
- ▶ Energetic, hard working
- ▶ Caring, kind, and loyal
- ▶ Curious and involved
- ▶ Friendly and likeable
- ▶ Talkative
- ▶ Strong desire to be liked
- ▶ Don't hold a grudge
- ▶ Good with younger children
- ▶ Not malicious
- ▶ Every day is a new day!



Most Common Strength:

Good with younger children



Most should not babysit
younger children without
adult supervision



Corpus Callosum Damage

- Typical

- FAS

*Inconsistency is symptom of Corpus Callosum damage



Impulse Control

- Frontal lobe, part of executive function skills
- Impacts anger response, taking things (stealing), sexual choices, cursing or verbal aggression



Memory Struggles

- There is a difference between short term and long term memory.
- Short term memory is what is called working memory.
- Working memory is almost always a deficit in people with an FASD.



Sensory Issues

SIGHT

CAN BE SENSITIVE TO
BRIGHT OR
FLUORESCENT LIGHTS



TASTE

CAN STRUGGLE WITH
TEXTURES OF FOODS OR
BE VERY FUSSY EATERS

TOUCH

FLIGHT OR FRIGHT
RESPONSE
CAN BE INCREDIBLY
SENSITIVE TO BEING
TOUCHED

HEARING

SOMETIMES ARE ABLE TO
HEAR EVERY LITTLE
HUMMING OR BUZZING
NOISE

SMELL

ODORS CAN HAVE A
HUGE IMPACT, LEADING
TO EXPLOSIONS.

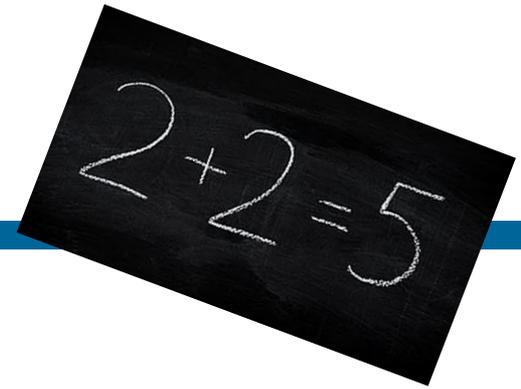
Difficulty Generalizing

- Struggle to transfer skills to different situations, with different people, different places, etc.

$$4+4=8$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ +4 \\ \hline 8 \end{array}$$

Math Struggles



- When FASD children were imaged by a technique called DTI (Diffusion Tensor Imaging), the 5 areas in the brain important in mathematical ability showed damage—and the amount of damage correlated highly with their math scores on standardized tests.

$$X = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

Sleep Challenges



- Sleep is directly related to brain function
- Important to not get upset with or impatient with the child if they are not sleeping well

ANXIETY



- Heart rate increases
- Body temperature rises
- Body tenses up
- All tied to brain function
- Keep anxiety as low as possible through sensory breaks, interventions, relaxed testing (if any), etc.





Struggle with Abstract Concepts

Children with an FASD are very concrete thinkers

Amelia Bedelia



"Amelia Bedelia,
the sun will fade the furniture.
I asked you to draw the drapes,"
said Mrs. Rogers.
"I did! I did! See,"
said Amelia Bedelia.
She held up her picture.



Concrete thinking can look like narcissism



Concrete Thinker

- See in the box
- Don't read other's feelings very well
- See life through a camera lens, they are not in view
- Will hang with anyone who will be their friend

Narcissism

- Look at me
- I am better than you
- Exploitive/takes advantage of others intentionally
- Need to hang with people of high status

Typical symptoms/challenges



- Inability to manage money
- Difficulty understanding the passage of time & telling time
- Struggle with delayed gratification
- Poor problem solving skills
- Stubbornness/perseveration
 - Very similar to children with autism
- Struggle to find right words
- Poor executive functioning skills



Strategies



Trauma Informed/Therapeutic/ Connected/Relational Parenting

If we, whether parents or professionals, are not trauma (including FASD) informed, we can easily (and unintentionally) cause further trauma to our children

Trauma Informed Example



- “Honey, who do I need to get this back to?”
- Took away anxiety
- Allowed for open conversation about how she was feeling before she took the phone which has decreased frequency of stealing.



YOU WILL BE JUDGED – BE PREPARED!!!!

Trauma informed parenting is not what most of us were raised with, nor what the majority of the world uses. You will get horrible advice from loved ones, neighbors, etc. If you are not being judged, you are not parenting these children correctly. Embrace the judgement!!

Polly Pocket Airplane

-thinking out of the box



- Where does Polly want to travel to?
- People take boats to Hawaii
- Found boats she could take to Hawaii
- Could not find airplane, suggested she and I sit down to build airplane out of Lego's, together

Guard Family Life

- It is easy to have your family be consumed with appointments, interventions, therapies, meetings, activities, social skill groups, etc. Find a balance, maybe choose one or two at the most to be doing at once.

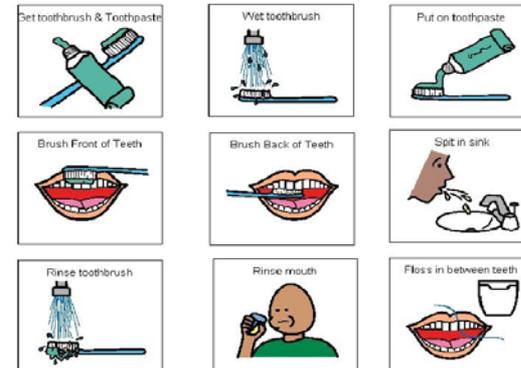


Hygiene

Break down abstract tasks

- Make picture charts
- Show each step
- Have child/adolescent wear swimsuit while you monitor and show them the steps to a shower
- Use the little sand timer for how long to brush teeth – also can use in shower for lathering soap and scrubbing

Make it concrete



Measure shampoo/soap out into a dixie cup or use travel size containers

“If you have told a child a thousand times, and he still does not understand, then it is not the child who is the slow learner”

Walter Barbee

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