

Therapeutic Interventions for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) & Other Neurobehavioral Conditions

PRESENTED BY JESSICA WILSON, LCSW

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What Are Neurobehavioral Disorders?

- ▶ Neurobehavioral disorders are conditions that involve impairments in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning due to neurological differences or brain dysfunction.


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Examples of Neurobehavioral Disorders Affecting Children

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD's)
- Learning Disorders
- Intellectual Disability
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Tourette Syndrome
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Epilepsy

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Understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)



- FASD REFERS TO A RANGE OF EFFECTS CAUSED BY PRENATAL ALCOHOL EXPOSURE.
- SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE PHYSICAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES.
- EARLY INTERVENTION IS CRITICAL FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES.

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Challenges Faced by Children with FASD & Other Neurobehavioral Disorders



- Cognitive impairments (e.g., memory, attention, problem-solving).
- Behavioral issues (e.g., impulsivity, hyperactivity).
- Social difficulties (e.g., understanding social cues, making friends).
- Academic challenges due to learning disabilities.

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Treating Neurobehavioral Disorders: A Multidisciplinary Approach

- ▶ Collaboration with healthcare providers, educators, and therapists ensures a comprehensive treatment plan addressing medical, educational, and psychological needs.
- ▶ Early and individualized interventions can significantly improve mental health outcomes for children with neurodevelopmental disorders. Ongoing support and adaptation of strategies are essential as the child develops.

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What Does Wholistic Treatment Look Like?

Pharmacological Interventions (Medication Management)	Speech and Language Therapy	Occupational Therapy
Educational Support	Family and Caregiver Involvement	Mental Health Treatment

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Mental Health Therapy

- ▶ Prenatal alcohol exposure places children at risk for unique mental health challenges.
- ▶ Effective interventions are tailored to each child's specific needs and strengths.
- ▶ Positive reinforcement is used to encourage desired behaviors over punitive methods.
- ▶ Structured routines implemented to promote stability for child(ren).
- ▶ Strategies taught to caregivers and children to manage impulsivity and improve self-regulation.
- ▶ Collaboration and education with caregivers ensures consistent support across all environments
- ▶ Mental health providers can be part of the child's multidisciplinary team

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Effective Mental Health Treatment Interventions for Neurobehavioral Conditions

Families Moving Forward (FMF)	FASCETS Neurobehavioral Model	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)	Trauma Informed Therapies	Expressive Art Therapies	Neurofeedback

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Families Moving Forward

- ▶ The Families Moving Forward (FMF) Program is an evidence-based intervention designed to support caregivers raising children affected by prenatal alcohol exposure, including those diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).
- ▶ By participating in the FMF Program, families receive comprehensive support tailored to the challenges associated with raising a child with FASD, leading to improved outcomes for both the child and the family unit.
- ▶ Appropriate for ages 3-13 years old



Source: Families Moving Forward

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Benefits of the FMF Program for Families

Positive Behavior Support for caregivers helps them understand and manage their child's behavior effectively, fostering a more harmonious home environment.

The program integrates therapy techniques that assist parents in modifying responses to their child's behaviors, leading to improved parent-child interactions and more rewarding relationships.

Reduction in Child's Disruptive Behavior: By focusing on tailored behavioral interventions, FMF aims to decrease disruptive behaviors in children, enhancing their social and academic functioning.

Through education and skill-building, parents gain confidence in their ability to support their child's unique needs, restoring hope and optimism to families.

The FMF Connect app extends the program's reach by providing resources and support through a mobile platform, making it feasible for caregivers to access assistance outside of sessions.

Source: Families Moving Forward

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The FASCETS Neurobehavioral Model

- ▶ Developed by FASCETS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Consultation, Education, and Training Services), this model emphasizes the connection between brain function and behavior, advocating for individualized approaches to support those affected.
- ▶ FASCETS is a framework designed to help caregivers understand and address the behaviors associated with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and other brain-based conditions.
- ▶ Appropriate for all ages (children & adults)



Source: FASCETS

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Benefits of the FASCETS Neurobehavioral Model:

- ▶ Brain-Behavior Connection: Recognizes that behaviors are often symptoms of underlying brain differences.
- ▶ Individualized Approaches: Encourages creating personalized strategies that align with each individual's unique brain wiring.
- ▶ Trauma-Informed Perspective: Approaches behaviors through a lens that considers past traumas, enhancing empathy and understanding.
- ▶ Empowerment and Education: Focuses on educating caregivers, professionals, and individuals about the neurobehavioral aspects of FASD to foster empowerment and positive change.

Source: FASCETS

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Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Modified for FASD)

- ▶ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a structured, time-limited psychotherapy that aims to modify unhelpful thoughts and behaviors.
- ▶ CBT Helps children identify and modify negative thought patterns and behaviors, promoting better emotional regulation
- ▶ For children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), CBT can be particularly beneficial in addressing challenges such as impulsivity, aggression, and social integration difficulties.
- ▶ Appropriate for ages 3+

Source: Robinson, et al. (1999)

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Benefits of CBT for Children with FASD

REDUCTION OF IMPULSIVITY AND AGGRESSION: CBT TECHNIQUES HELP CHILDREN RECOGNIZE TRIGGERS AND DEVELOP COPING STRATEGIES TO MANAGE IMPULSIVE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS. STUDIES INDICATE THAT CBT MAY EFFECTIVELY REDUCE SUCH INCIDENTS IN CHILDREN WITH FASD.

IMPROVEMENT IN SOCIAL SKILLS: CHILDREN WITH FASD OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH FORMING RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION. CBT CAN ASSIST IN ENHANCING SOCIAL COGNITION AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS, LEADING TO BETTER PEER INTERACTIONS.

ENHANCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING: CBT INTERVENTIONS CAN IMPROVE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS, INCLUDING INHIBITORY CONTROL AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION, WHICH ARE COMMONLY IMPAIRED IN CHILDREN WITH FASD.

Source: Robinson, et al. (1999)

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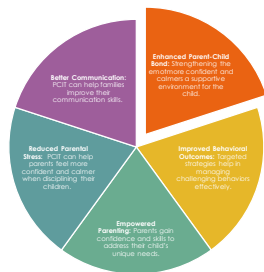
Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

- ▶ PCIT is an evidence-based approach that enhances the parent-child relationship through guided interactions with a trained clinician. By improving communication and fostering positive behaviors, PCIT helps parents manage their child's behavioral issues more effectively.
- ▶ While PCIT shows promise for children with FASD, it's essential to recognize that research specifically examining its efficacy within this population is limited. Therefore, integrating PCIT with other supportive interventions, such as educational support and medical care, is recommended to address the multifaceted challenges associated with FASD.
- ▶ Appropriate for ages 2-7 years old

Source: Bertrand et al. (2009)

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Benefits of PCIT for FASD



Source: Bertrand et al. (2009)

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Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

- ▶ Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a cognitive-behavioral treatment originally developed to address chronic emotional dysregulation and self-harm behaviors.
- ▶ Its structured approach focuses on teaching skills in mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- ▶ Given the emotional and behavioral challenges often associated with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), there is emerging interest in adopting DBT for children and adolescents affected by FASD.
- ▶ Further research is needed to establish its efficacy and to develop tailored protocols that address the specific needs of this population.
- ▶ Most appropriate for ages 13+

Source: Flannigan, et al (2020)



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Benefits of DBT for Children with FASD and Other Neurobehavioral Disorders

- **Emotional Regulation:** Children with FASD frequently experience difficulties in managing their emotions. DBT provides structured techniques to help individuals identify and modulate intense emotional responses, which can be beneficial for this population.
- **Behavioral Interventions:** The American Academy of Pediatrics highlights the importance of behavioral interventions tailored to children with FASD, focusing on improving self-regulation and adaptive functioning. While DBT is not specifically mentioned, its emphasis on behavioral skills aligns with these recommended interventions.

Source: Flannigan, et al (2020)

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Neuro-Friendly Adaptations to Traditional Therapy

Communication Simplified Language Concrete examples Repetition and review Processing time Role play	Structure of Sessions Create session routine Shorter session times Longer therapy duration Caregiver and family involved	Executive Function Breaking down tasks Visual aids Incorporate movement Emotion regulation skills
Sensory Low lighting Keep toys to a minimum Minimize distractions Sensory tools and fidgets	Parent and Caregiver Involvement Educating caregivers Promoting attachment Positive behavior strategies Emotional support	Focus on Strengths Communicate success Introduce challenges slowly Set realistic goals Self-advocacy

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Treating Trauma and FASD

- ▶ Addressing trauma in children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) requires specialized considerations due to the interplay between prenatal alcohol exposure and traumatic experiences. These children often face unique challenges that can complicate traditional therapeutic approaches.

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Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) for Trauma Treatment

- ▶ TBRI stands for Trust-Based Relational Intervention®. It's an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention designed to meet the complex needs of children who have experienced relational trauma, such as abuse, neglect, or early institutionalization.
- ▶ While not specifically designed for FASD, TBRI is often a very helpful approach *with* children with FASD because many have experienced trauma and have attachment challenges.

Source: Purvis, et al (2013)

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Benefits of TBRI

- ▶ The principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) are based on building strong relationships and helping children feel safe and valued. The three core principles are:
 - **Connecting:** Build trusting relationships that help children feel safe, cared for, and valued
 - **Empowering:** Create a healthy and safe environment for children
 - **Correcting:** Guide children to appropriate behaviors through positive reinforcement and consistent caregiving
- Appropriate from infancy to young adulthood

Source: Purvis, et al (2013)

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Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Approaches



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Online Resources

- Cognitive Supports with Nate Sheets
• www.cognitivesupports.com
- Jeff Noble- The FASD Success Show
• www.fasdsuccess.com
- Families Moving Forward Program- FASD Intervention, Training, and Research
• www.familiesmovingforwardprogram.org
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Consultation, Education, and Training Services
• www.fascets.org
- The Karyn Purvis Institute
• <http://child.lcu.edu/about-us/tbi/>
- FASD United
• <http://fasdunited.org/>

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Books

- ▶ Fantastic Antone: Grows Up: Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome by
- ▶ Trying Differently Rather Than Harder: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders by Diane Malbin
- ▶ Making Sense of the Madness: An FASD Survival Guide by Jeff Noble
- ▶ A Complicated & Beautiful Brain: A guide to understanding the effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (PAE) and what Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) looks like across the lifespan by Angela Geddes
- ▶ Explained by Brain: The FASD Workbook for Parents, Carers and Educators by Dr. Vanessa Spiller
- ▶ The Broken Cord by Michael Dorris
- ▶ The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family by Karyn Purvis (and The Connected Parent as well)
- ▶ Finn has FASD! (My Friends are Different!) by Sophie McLelland

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