



# FASD 101: Understanding Symptoms and Providing Support

Stacia Stribling, Ph.D.

[Stacia.Stribling@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Stacia.Stribling@FormedFamiliesForward.org)

Kelly Henderson, Ph.D.

[Kelly.Henderson@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Kelly.Henderson@FormedFamiliesForward.org)

# Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with specialized needs, and family-serving professionals.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; webinars; virtual trainings; videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

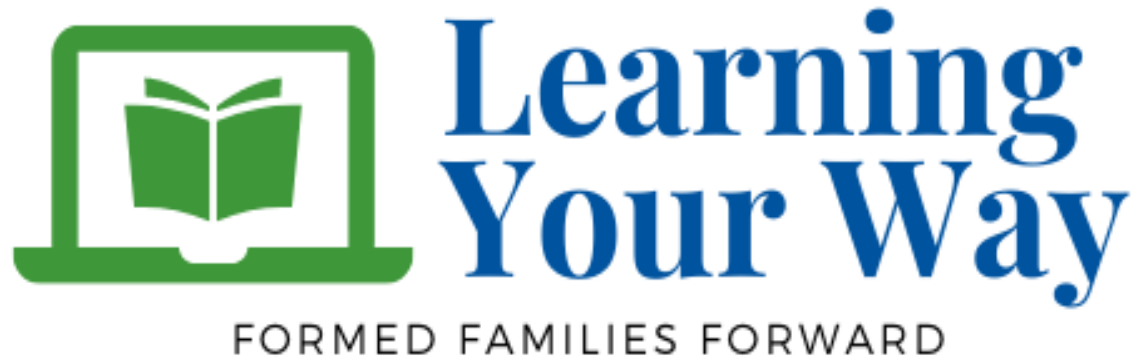
Certificates of  
Attendance

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# FASD Winter Webinar Series

- Tuesday, ***January 13***, 2026, 7-8pm:  
**Diagnosing FASD** with Dr. Ali Sturgill  
(University of Virginia Children's Hospital)
- Tuesday, ***January 20***, 2026, 7-8pm: **The Role of Occupational Therapy (OT) in Supporting Those with FASD** with Dr. Misty Pruner and Dr. Tracy Jirikowic (University of Washington, Seattle)
- Tuesday, ***January 27***, 2026, 7-8pm: **FASD Virginia: Exploring a New Resource for Families** with Dr. Stacia Stribling and Dr. Kelly Henderson (Formed Families Forward)





Registration will open Feb. 1, 2026  
Check the website for registration link  
[www.FormedFamiliesForward.org](http://www.FormedFamiliesForward.org)

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**



*Spring Forward*

Foster, Adoptive & Kinship Family Fun Day

# Mark your calendars!

Saturday, April 18, 2026

8:30 AM - 2 PM

GMU Science & Tech Campus,  
Manassas

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# *Formed Families Together* parent and caregiver support groups

- Formed Families Together peer-led support group for **adoptive and foster parents and kinship caregivers** meets twice a month
- Virtual - First SUNDAY each month, 7:30 – 9 PM
- In-person - Third WEDNESDAY of each month on site in Fairfax city, 7- 8:30 PM
- Led by trained FFF staff

<https://bit.ly/FFTgroups>



# RAISING KIDS with BIG

## BAFFLING BEHAVIORS

### a course for caregivers



DEVELOPED BY ROBYN GOBBEL, MSW

#### ABOUT THE COURSE

You'll develop the confidence to stay connected to your kids even in the face of the most bizarre and baffling behaviors.

##### SECTION 1

How to Become the Expert in Children's Behaviors.

##### SECTION 2

Now, Let's "Fix" Those Behaviors.

##### SECTION 3

Why Knowing Isn't Even Half the Battle.

- **Tuesdays, Feb. 3- March 24**
- **7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Virtual**
- **\$250, includes materials**
- **<https://bit.ly/BBBwinter26>**

Based on the best seller

RAISING KIDS WITH BIG, BAFFLING BEHAVIORS:



BRAIN-BODY-SENSORY STRATEGIES THAT REALLY WORK

You can experience what parents and caregivers describe as a life-changing new way to reframe and change children's behaviors.

#### 3 CORE TENETS

- 1 Behavior is just a clue.
- 2 We all need connection to survive.
- 3 Regulated, connected kids who feel safe behave well.

FORMED FAMILIES **FORWARD**



## MEET YOUR FACILITATOR

Melissa Lebling, Family Support and Outreach Specialist

#### TOGETHER WE'LL EXPLORE

Owls, Watchdogs & Possums



Plus, you'll get tons of resources!

#### The Three Tenets



**Behavior is just a clue.**

It's what we see on the outside that gives us some information about what might be happening on the inside.

**We all need connection to survive.**

If a child is behaving in a way that makes us not want to be connected to them, we can pause and ask "What's up with that?"

**Regulated, connected kids who feel safe behave well.**

To change children's behaviors, we will look for ways to increase regulation, connection, and felt-safety.

You'll develop the confidence

to stay connected to kids even in the face of the most bizarre and baffling behaviors

Section 1- How to Become the Expert in a Child's Behaviors.

Using the science of being relationally, socially, and behaviorally human, this section will demystify the most baffling behaviors. You'll change how to see and interpret a child's behavior. That change will become the most powerful tool in your caregiving toolbox.

Section 2- Now, Let's "Fix" Those Behaviors.

Your caregiving toolbox will be stuffed with brain, body, and sensory strategies- that actually work. These techniques will strengthen the child's nervous system and decrease baffling behaviors. Better yet, by the end of this section you'll know what interventions to use when.

Section 3- Why Knowing Isn't Even Half the Battle.

You aren't a bad caregiver, so what happens between learning new caregiving skills and actually using those new caregiving skills? Section 3 will grow your tolerance for baffling behaviors so you can show up the way that you want to.

FORMED FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# POLL

What brings you to this webinar:

- I am parenting a child with an FASD diagnosis
- I am parenting a child I suspect has an FASD
- I am a professional working with clients/students who are diagnosed or who I suspect have an FASD
- I don't have personal experience with FASD - just curious



# Tonight's Goals

1

Recognize the range of symptoms associated with prenatal alcohol exposure.

2

Understand the impact of FASD on the various brain domains

3

Identify effective strategies that support those with FASD both at home and in school.

# Definition



## **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)...**

is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol in the womb. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need special supports to help them succeed with many different parts of their daily lives.

(CanFASD – Canada FASD Research Network)

# Umbrella of FASD

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (PFAS)
- Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD)
- Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)
- Neurobehavioral Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (ND-PAE)



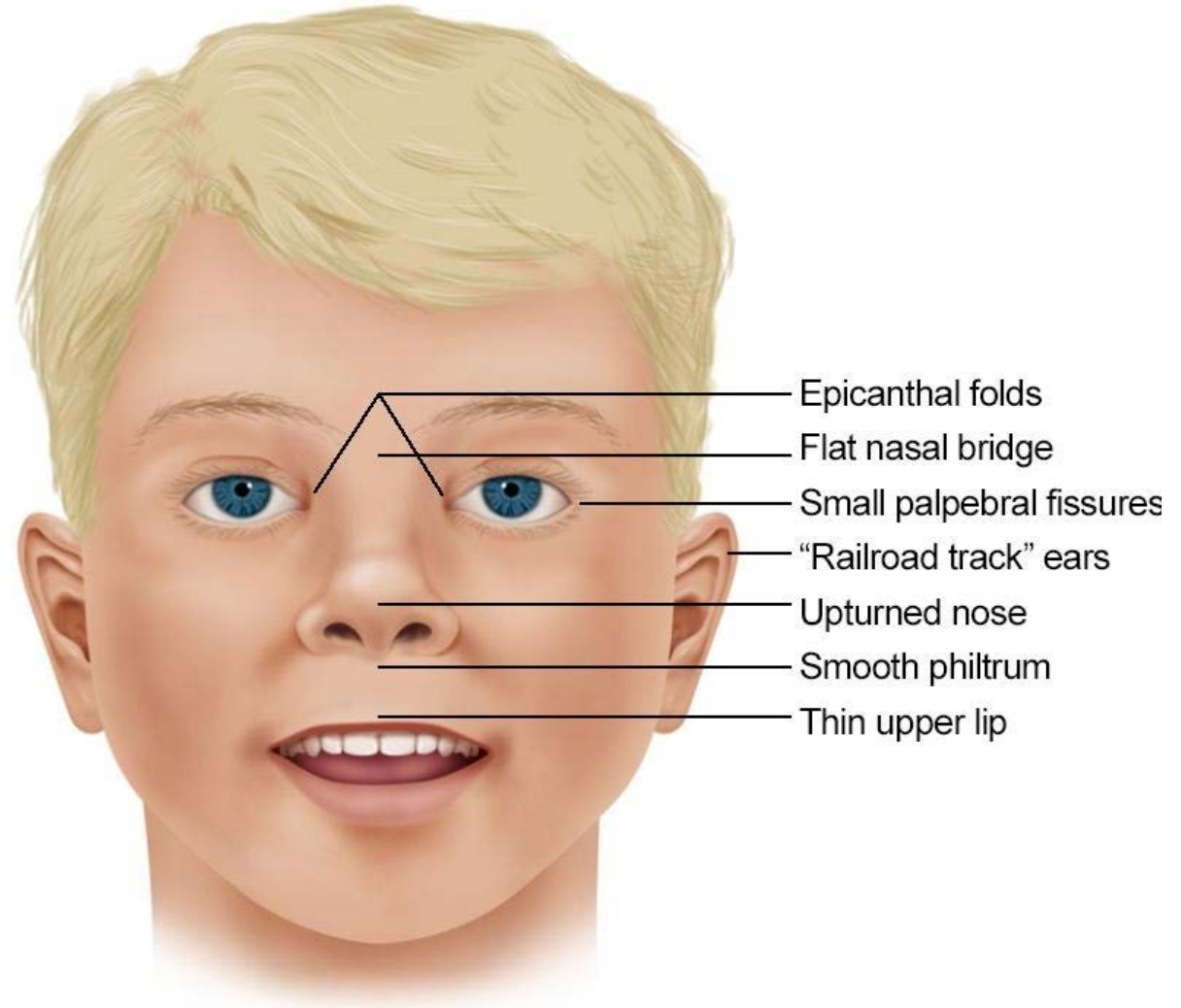
American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# Facial features of FASD

---

Less than 10% of children with an FASD will exhibit these facial features.



# FASD is an invisible brain-based condition



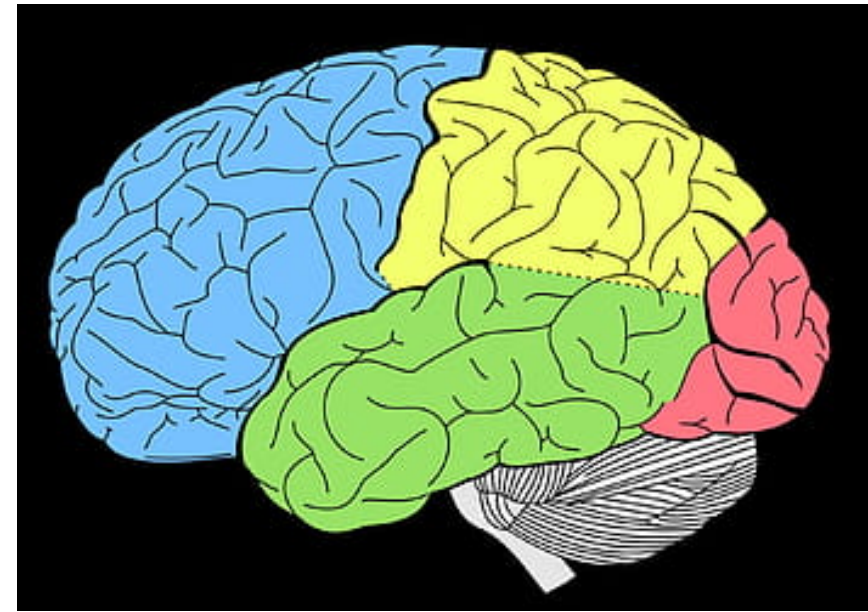
*Most often, there are no facial features...*

(Spiller, 2020)

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# Brain Development

- The brain is the organ most vulnerable to prenatal alcohol exposure (Malbin, 2017)
- Brain is affected differently at different stages of development (Brown & Mather, 2014)
- Factors such as amount, genetics, nutrition, stress, and age can contribute to the wide range of effects (Malbin, 2017)



# Primary Characteristics

- Learning Disabilities
- Poor Short-Term Memory
- Inferior Auditory Memory
- Delayed Auditory Processing
- Impulsivity
- Struggles with Abstract Concepts
- Developmental Dysmaturity
- Problems with Attention
- Problems with Judgement
- Struggles with Natural or Logical Consequences
- Non-compliant, uncooperative, resistant, manipulative, unmotivated (WHEN BEHAVIOR IS NOT VIEWED AS A RESULT OF THE BRAIN DAMAGE)

# Secondary Characteristics

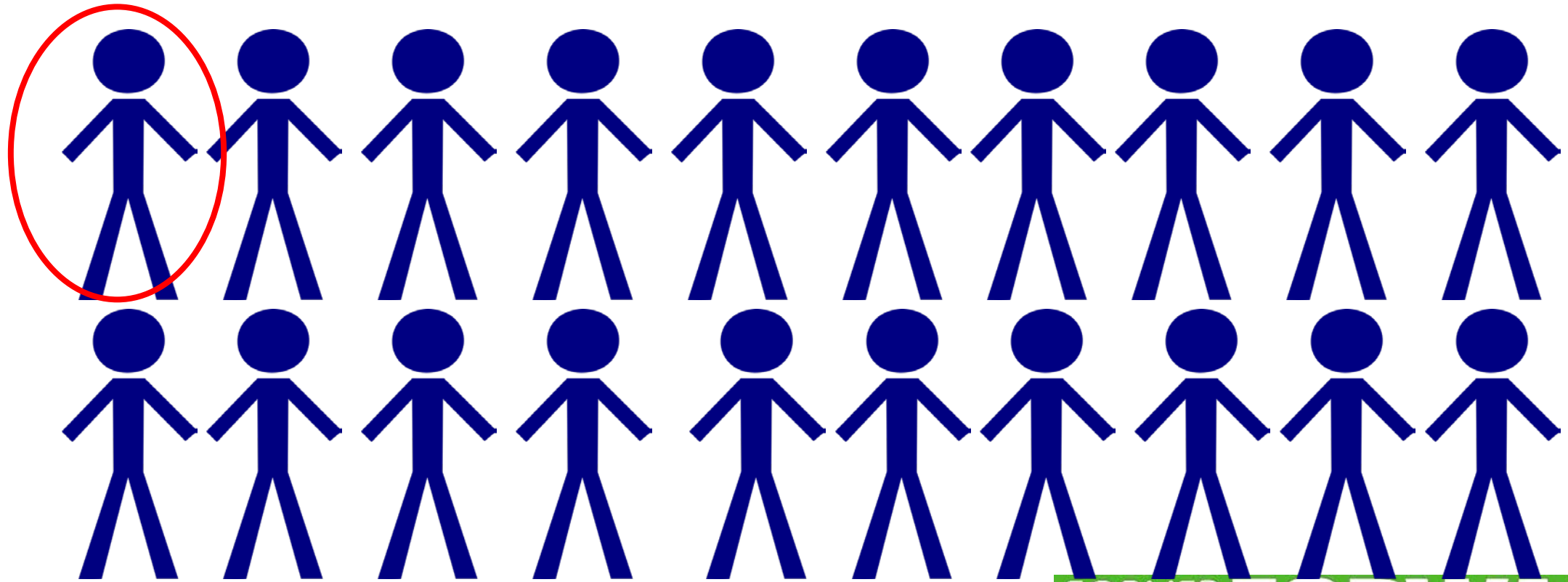
- Mental Health Diagnosis
- Easily Frustrated
- Aggressive
- Anxious
- Quick to Fatigue
- Poor Scholastic Performance
- Over/Under Active

# Tertiary Characteristics

- Constantly in trouble
- Running away from home
- Potential for human trafficking
- Homelessness
- Substance Abuse
- Abuse
- Gangs

# Prevalence of FASD

Up to **1 in 20** US school children may have FASDs but less than 1% are diagnosed

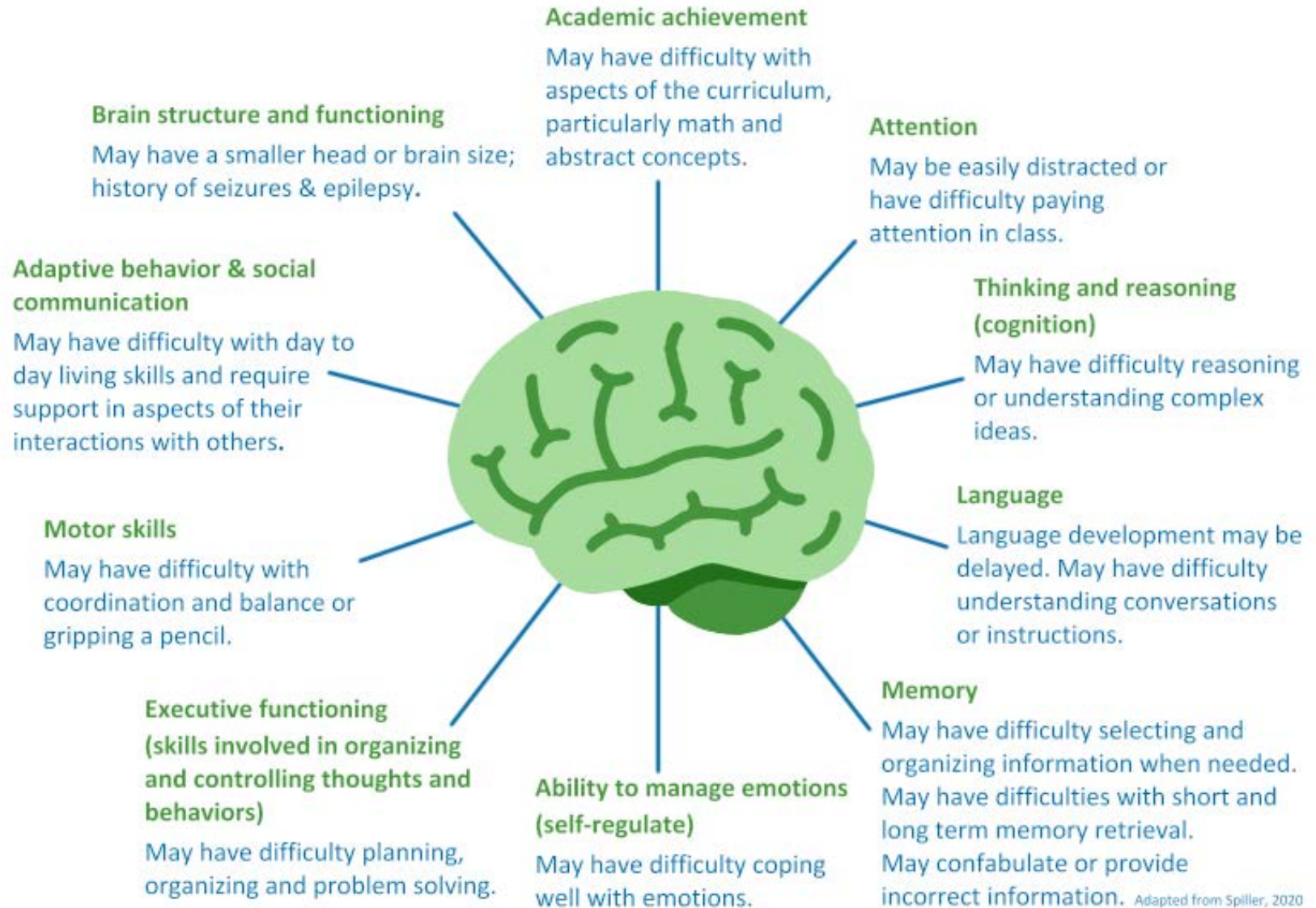


May, Chambers, Kalberg et al., 2018

FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# Brain domains impacted by FASD

Any FASD is a **brain-based disability**



# MODIFICATIONS to 3 areas

(Spiller, 2020)

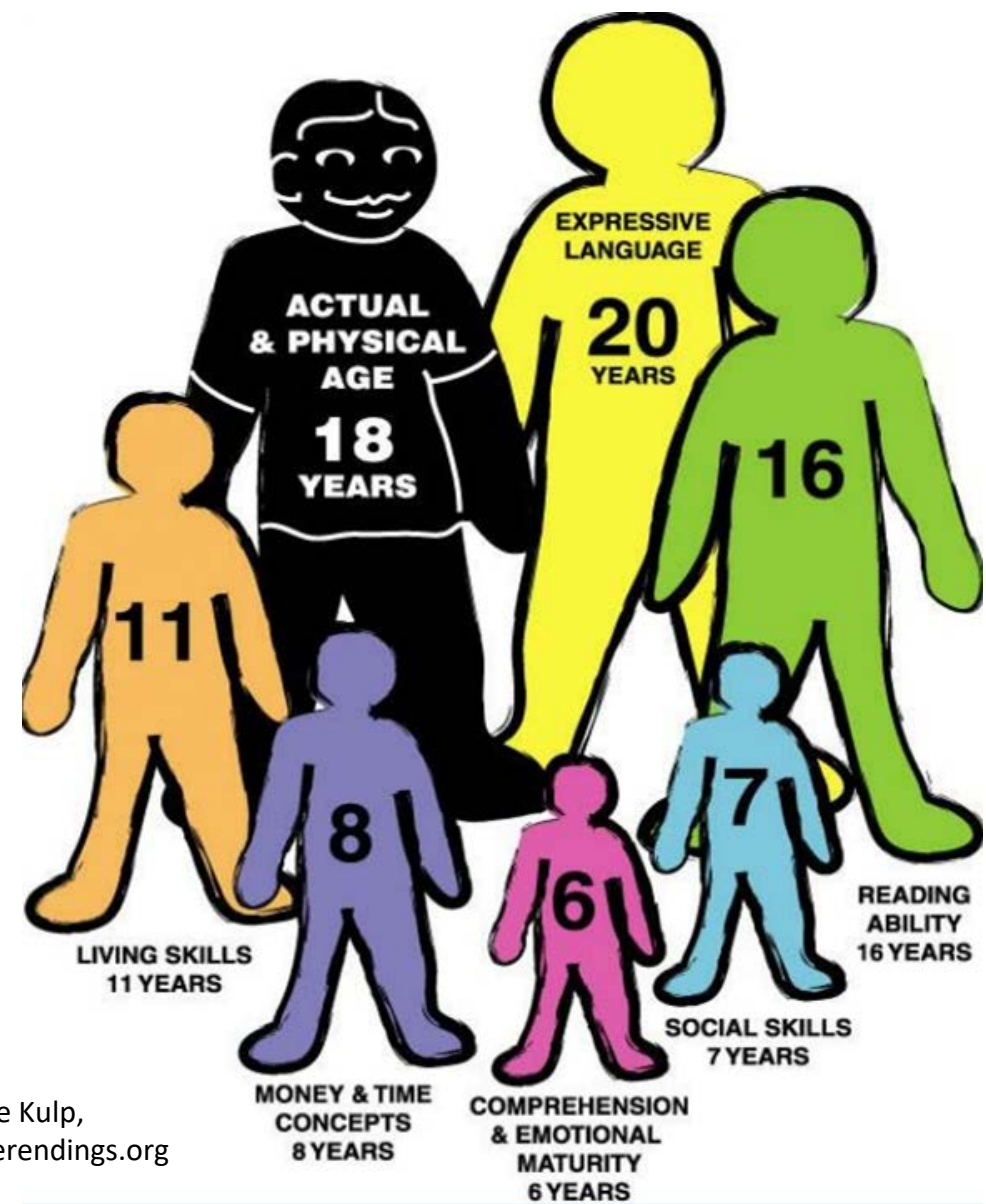
## 1. Environment

- Supervision, supervision, supervision
- Low stimulation environments
- Structure, consistency, predictability



## 2. Expectations

- Can't vs. Won't
- Developmental age, not chronological age
- *Inter*dependence, not necessarily independence



Jodee Kulp,  
betterendings.org

### 3. How you use strategies

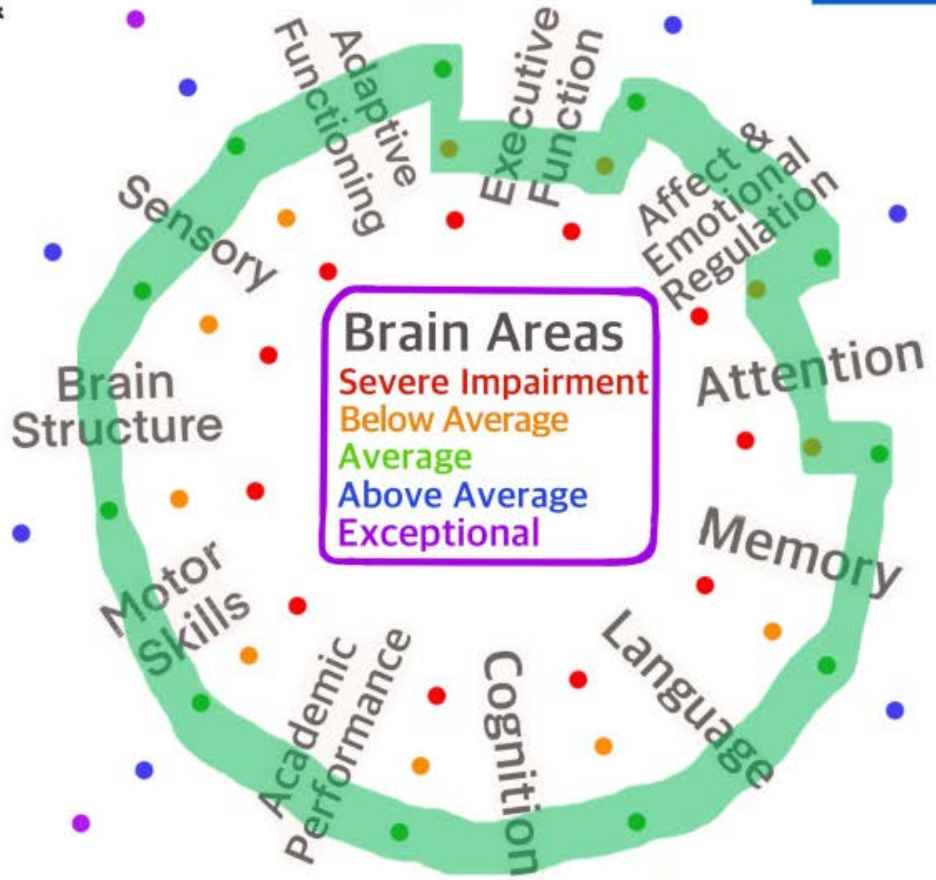
- Be proactive
- High repetition
- Keep it slow, simple, and consistent
- Build on strengths and focus on positives





# ABILITY WHEEL!

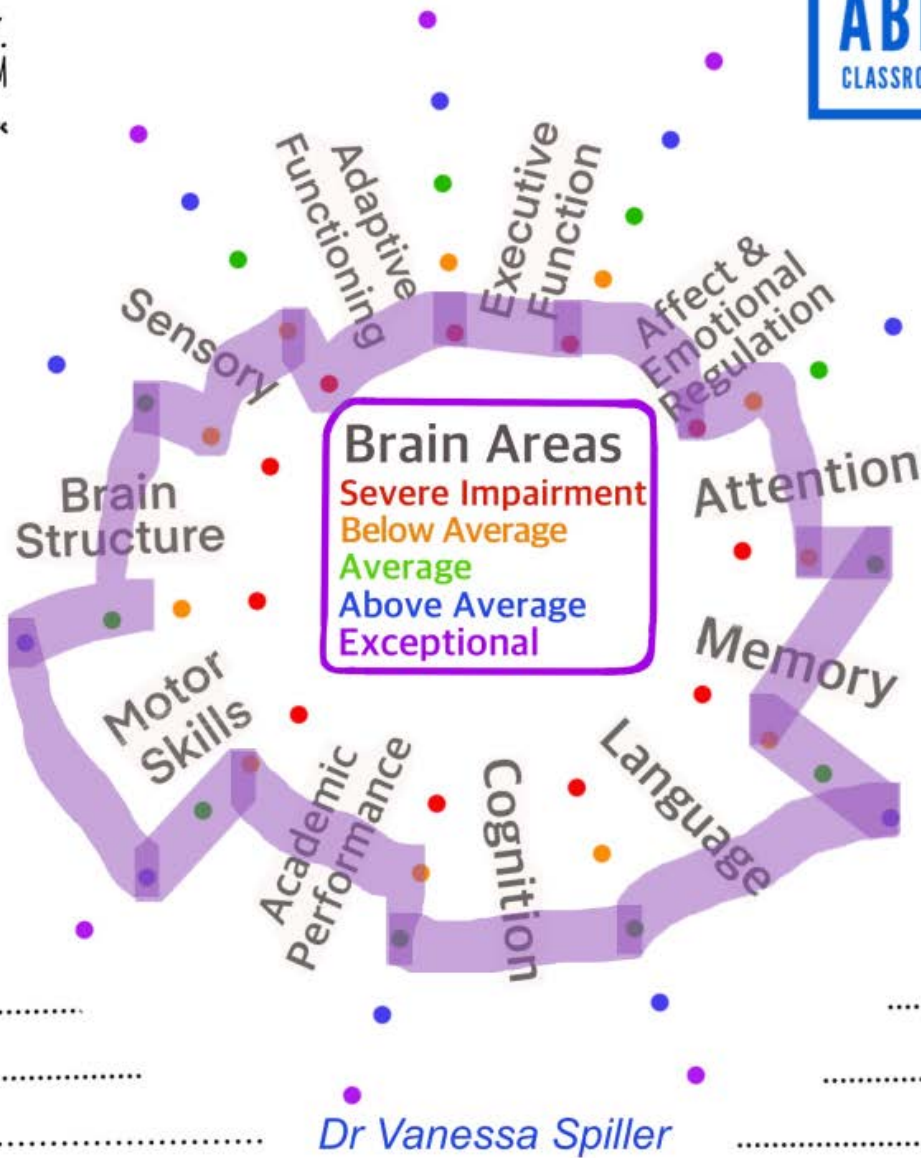
CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND ACCOMODATIONS



- How easily will it roll?
- How much effort will be needed?

# ABILITY WHEEL!

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND ACCOMODATIONS



- How easily will it roll?
- How much effort will be needed?



EXPLAINED BY BRAIN

Dr Vanessa Spiller

# POLL

In which area(s) does your child/youth most struggle? Choose up to 3.

- Adaptive/Executive Functioning
- Affect/Emotional Regulation
- Memory
- Language
- Cognition
- Academic Performance
- Motor
- Sensory



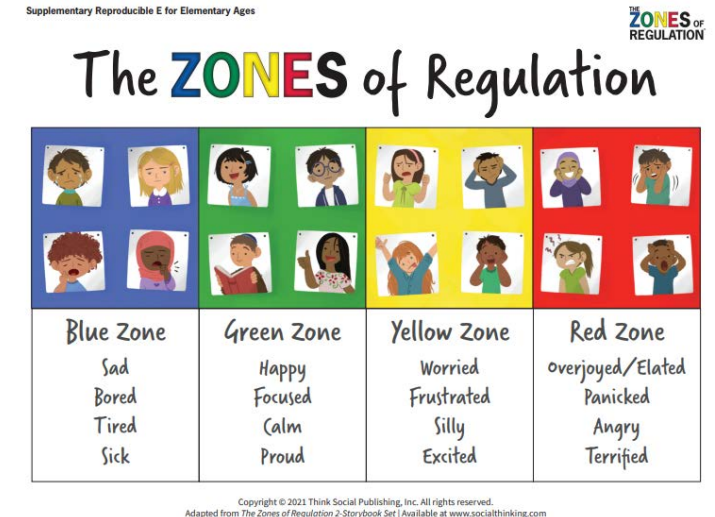
# Strategies for Adaptive Functioning/ Executive Functioning

- Visual charts
- Peer buddy
- Repetition
- Scaffolding tasks
- Support for organization
- **Break tasks into small chunks**
- One instruction at a time




# Strategies for Affect & Emotional Regulation and Attention

- Supervision
- Set up a “calm corner”
- Provide fidgets and other tools for regulation
- Use emotion charts
- Use “time-ins” rather than “time-outs”
- **Distraction (remember developmental age rather than chronological age)**
- Frequent breaks
- Incorporate movement



# Strategies for Memory

- Color coding
- Visual aids/lists
- Label items
- Predictable routines
- Provide information in multiple formats
- Use mnemonic and chunking techniques
- Use songs and movement
- **Create an information channel from school to family**
- **Teach multi-step skills incrementally**



**DAILY ROUTINE**

8:00	Breakfast	
8:30	Get ready	
9:00	Chores	
10:00	School Work	
11:00	Free Time	
12:00	Lunch	
1:00	Reading	
1:30	School Work	
2:00	Snack	
3:00	Free Time	

# Strategies for Language

- Play word and language games
- Use visual aids
- Assistive technology
- Buddy editor
- Provide short, concise instructions
- **Don't use slang or colloquialisms (literal thinkers!)**
- Provide a reader or a scribe
- **Offer alternative ways to show understanding**



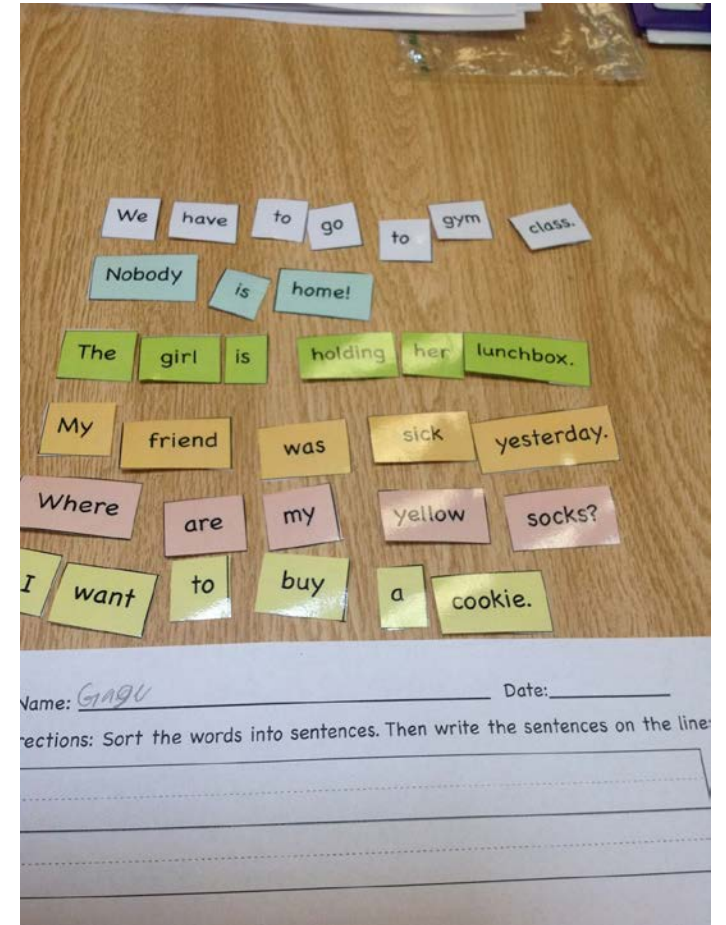
# Strategies for Cognition

- Additional staff support in school
- Small class size
- Learning material that matches developmental not chronological age
- Use manipulatives
- **Teach complex skills earlier in the day**
- Use visual aids in addition to verbal instructions
- Allow “do-overs”
- **Reduce (eliminate?) homework**
- **Make the abstract concrete - show, don't just tell**



# Strategies for Academic Performance

- Audio books
- Fewer visual distractions
- **Modify tasks to provide opportunities for success**
- Fewer items/questions on a page



# Strategies for Motor Skills

- Playdough; theraputty
- Large body movement activities
- **Modify writing tools and surfaces**
- Velcro/slip-on shoes
- Assistive technology
- Alternative seating



# Strategies for Sensory

- Weighted vests/blankets
- Chew necklaces
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Sunglasses
- Natural light
- **Alternative options for high stimulation areas**

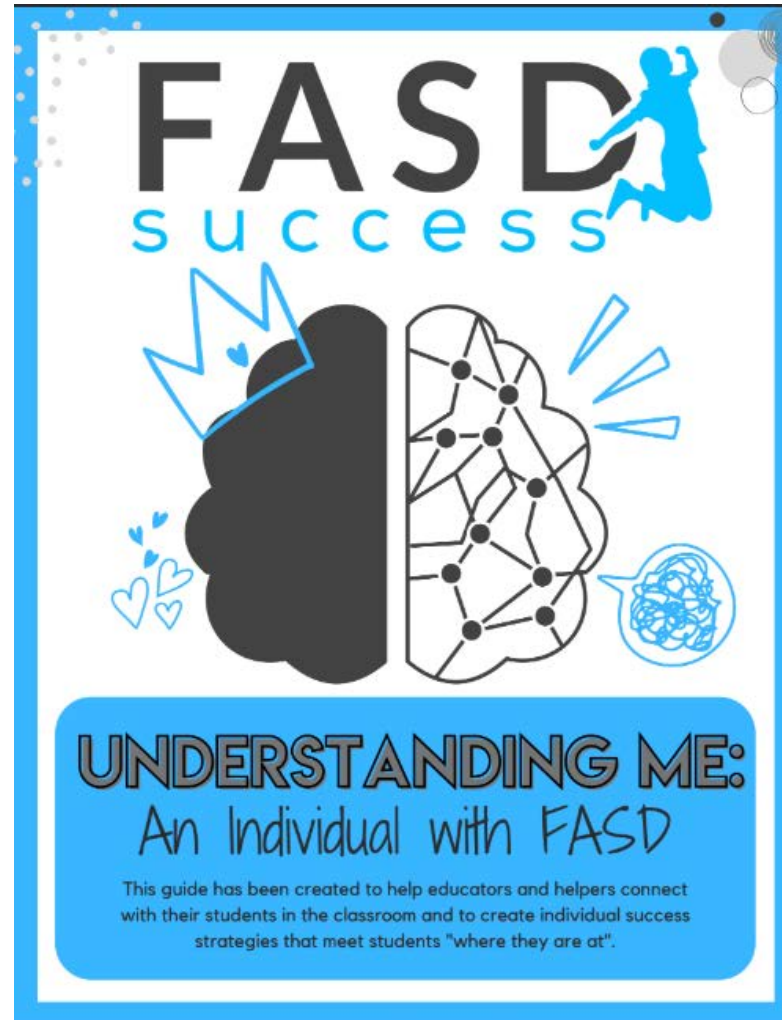


# More Strategies for Sensory

- Items to help with sensory regulation
- Remove clothing tags
- **Prepare them for new environments**
- Use quiet and calm voice
- Modify timing - use the bathroom before the rest of the class



# Understanding Me



FORMED  
FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# Wrapping up with HOPE!

MRI scans show that a brain impacted by FASD is still growing through adulthood, just at a different rate. Keep offering supports - they are making a difference!

Dr. Catherine Lebel

Developmental Neuroimaging Lab:

<https://www.developmentalneuroimaginglab.ca/>



FORMED FAMILIES **FORWARD**

# Additional Web Resources

- Formed Families Forward FASD Resources:  
[https://formedfamiliesforward.org/resource\\_category/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders/](https://formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders/)
- FASD Virginia: <https://fasdvirginia.org/>
- FASD United: <https://fasdunited.org/>
- FASD Collaborative: <https://www.fasdcollaborative.com/>
- CDC page on FASD: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html>
- NIAAA research on FASD: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/research/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders>
- FASD Success Show podcast (Jeff Noble):  
<https://www.fasdsuccess.com/podcast>

# Additional Text Resources

- Clark, B. (2025). *Raising kids and teens with FASD: Advice and strategies to help your family to thrive!* Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Spiller, V. (2020). *Explained by brain: The FASD workbook for parents, carers, & educators.*
- Sheets, N. (2023). *Essential FASD supports: Understanding and supporting people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.* Outskirts Press.
- Catterick, M., & Curran, L. (2014). *Understanding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: A guide to FASD for parents, carers and professionals.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Malbin, D. (2017). *Trying differently rather than harder.* Portland, OR: FASCETS.

# Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch!

**PLEASE COMPLETE EVALUATION** right after we end.

**\*\*Certificates (only available for those who attended the live session) Email: [Veronica.Ferris@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Veronica.Ferris@FormedFamiliesForward.org)\*\***

**Formed Families Forward-** <https://FormedFamiliesForward.org/>

Follow us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/FormedFamiliesForward>

Instagram- <https://www.instagram.com/formedfamiliesforward/>