

SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD)

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ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE:

- Foster independence in self help, play and learning activities.
- Encourage decision making. Allow your child to make mistakes.
- Encourage and permit the child to lead in child/adult play.
- Encourage your child to self monitor.
- Encourage trying something first before asking for help.
- Put problem solving strategies list in conspicuous place.
- Focus on daily living (survival) skills.
- Make list and put it on refrigerator of what to do today.
- Encourage your child to use language in asking for something they want.

SELF ESTEEM:

- Encourage your child to “help” as a valued member of the family.
- Monitor their negative thoughts/substitute positive statements.
- Encourage the use of positive self talk.
- Work with your child on body image and self image.
- Treat your child with respect and dignity.
- Stress to your child that she/he gets another chance to learn when discouraged.
- Help your child to see the value of failure.
- Reward more than you punish.
- Emphasize what they can do and point out progress made.
- Work with your child on body image and self image.
- Negative statements are ten times more powerful than positive statements.

PROVIDING CHILD WITH STRUCTURE

- Have your child get ready for school before going to bed.
- Establish a few simple rules. Use the same language over and over.
- Develop hello and farewell rituals between parents and child.
- Establish routines so your child can predict coming events.
- Give your child advance warning, both auditory and visual, that an activity will be over soon.
- Insist that your child finish short task they started before the next activity.
- Establish a firm routine for meals at the table and for unpredictable behavior at bedtime.

- Have a clearly defined space where your child is supposed to be. Young child need a “placemat.”

LEARNING:

- Encourage imitation of daily events in representational play.
- Spend time noticing, describing events, objects, details and comparing, increase awareness of surroundings.
- Chunk work. Break it down into manageable pieces.
- Don't assume your child has generalized a learned lesson.
- Use visual cues primarily. A picture paints a thousands words.
- Use time out when your child's behavior becomes excessive.
- Be aware that negative behavior may be a symptom of unmet needs.
- Review and repeat consequences of behaviors.
- Reinforce school rules.
- Anticipate danger signs and situations and plan ahead.
- Don't debate or argue over rules or infractions. “Just do it.”
- Specifically label obnoxious behavior. Make house rule that child puts one toy away before getting another one out.
- Notice when your child is doing well or behaving appropriately.
- Avoid threats.
- Don't get hooked into your child's tantrum.
- Try to avoid statements that place a value on behavior, such as, “You are a good (bad) girl.”
- At the end of a time out period ask three things: 1. What happened? 2. What could you have done that you didn't do? 3. What will you do the next time?
- Saying no only lets the child know what you do not want. Explain and encourage them to do what you do want.
- Tell children exactly what you want them to do.
- Be brief.

BEHAVIOR:

- Model/encourage self-talk to help control impulsivity.
- Redirect behavior.
- Intervene before behavior escalates.
- Teach generalization of behaviors.
- Use kitchen time for the task reluctant child.
- Model and practice positive peer interactions.
- Don't depend on child's fear to prevent them from doing something dangerous. Assume they will.
- Work on compliance.
- Focus on behavioral standards.
- Allow them to gain your attention in ways other than negative behavior or crying.

- Talk with your child about solutions for a problem, looking at least 3 different perspectives.
- Avoid asking why. Substitute how, what, where. “How did that happen?” not “Why did you do that?”

HYPERACTIVITY:

- Avoid situations where child will be over stimulated, by people, sound, light, movement, things.
- Better to start day with medication, if needed, then to chase the behavior later.
- If medication is recommended for your child, give the idea a fair chance.
- Control amount of TV watching and video game playing.
- Keep levels of confusion and noise at home low.
- Stress listening skills.
- Language – A large quantity of speech is not the same as quality of language.
- Have your child take an action break after sitting quietly. Alternate active times with relaxation.
- Have a plan in place that your child prefers, for “quiet time,” which your child can follow when feeling overwhelmed.
- Minimize waiting time. Get everything ready first before you start an activity and then move right along.
- If your child needs to stay in one place for a long time, such as a car seat or in a restaurant, give him/her something to do with their hands, like a koosh ball, or any textured toy.
- Calming background music can be soothing, flute, new age or environmental tapes with the sound of rain, wind, street sounds.

EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Find a child advocate at school for your child.
- Explore placement options, special education, program options for appropriate educational programming.
- Begin sex and birth control education as soon as child nears puberty. Add education about exploitation.
- Reading comprehension is lower than word recognition, work with child on understanding what they read.
- Focus child’s attention on a specific piece of information when reading – what was the hero doing in the story?
- Reading/writing may be easier to learn than arithmetic. Don’t make mistake of thinking your child is lazy/stubborn about learning math.
- After giving short, explicit directions, have your child repeat back their understanding of what was said. Give two or more directions at same time only if you are sure they can remember that many.
- Use memory strategies.

- Use many color words when talking to a young child, such as yellow tie or green shirt. Ask child to repeat.
- Pull and push toys strengthen muscles and develop coordination.
- Demonstrate how something is done rather than tell how to do it.
- Play a game of “whisper” to encourage attention.
- Play naming games with pre-schooler. Name 2 pets, 3 flowers.

GENERAL STRATEGIES:

- Give messages implying you need your child to help. The more this is done, the greater the chance the child will respond in a positive way.
- A more positive attitude comes from reminders than from being informed.
- Use a picture calendar.
- Play turn taking games.
- Protect from being exploited. They are naïve.
- For some children that come from dysfunctional families remember they have learned that words cannot be trusted. Show them.
- Use verbal rehearsal.
- Teach them to request repetition in a form other than auditory. Would you write that down for me, please?
- If children have trouble expressing their feelings, ask them to draw how they feel. Make plenty of different colors available.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:

- Teach your child social skills lessons.
- Help child be more aware of how people express their feelings, i.e., “what do you think this means? – model different facial expressions, hand on hip.
- How to negotiate to get what you want.
- How to disagree with someone else in an appropriate way.
- How to show someone you like them.
- How to accept criticism or negative feedback.
- How to ask for something in a way that will increase the odds you will get it.
- How to get an adult’s attention in a positive way.
- How to give and take a compliment.
- How to greet another person.
- How to start a conversation.
- How to say no to peer pressure.
- How to handle anger.
- How to accept disappointment.
- How to act when riding public transportation.
- What to do when someone hurts your feelings.
- What to do when you feel scared.
- How to ignore someone who is bothering you.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO ON BEHALF OF THEIR CHILD?

- Thank teachers for extra help, efforts and understanding. Let them know you understand how hard their job can sometimes be.
- Ask teachers how you can help. Although you may not have the time to be a volunteer in the classroom or library, there may be some other things you can do for a teacher. Take library books back to public library and check out more. Look through some catalogs at home for particular items the teacher wants to purchase but doesn't have time to look for. Cut out letters or other things for bulletin boards for the teacher at home.
- Write occasional personal notes to our child's teacher to maintain communication and to ask about progress or follow up comments or concerns.
- Let your child see you and the teacher working together on his/her behalf.
- Attend classroom or school wide events.
- Comment on or recognize the teacher's strengths, when you can.
- Have a plan in place in which you keep your energy up, which you follow faithfully.
- Start an FASD support group for parents and caretakers of children with FASD.
- Start an FASD support group for people with FASD.
- Personally provide respite care for a family with FASD children. This may involve taking the child and just leaving the rest of the family to enjoy their home alone.
- Ask and demand, if necessary, that in-services on FASD be done at your school, for teachers, staff, interested community members and parents.
- Tell pediatrician about FASD and take informational material to them about it.
- Recommend to House and Senate that they learn about FASD implications.
- Attend conferences on FASD.
- Support one pregnant woman who has been drinking in her decision to refrain from drinking until her baby is born.
- Be an advocate for addicted mothers.
- Encourage your university, college and medical schools to require courses on Alcohol Related Birth Defects.
- Lobby for juvenile court workers, judges and foster parents to be required to have training in FASD.
- Share information and material that you have gathered with others who have or are working with these children.
- Ask parents with FASD affected children to PTA so their interests are represented.

Source URL: <http://www.notasingledrop.org/fasd/evidence-based-practices/parents/skills>

Information provided by: **Shodair Hospital, Department of Medical Genetics**
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