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FASD

IT’S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

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Adapting Expectations

“Try differently, not harder.”

It is important to **change** how we **view** certain **behaviours** in people with FASD, and understand that these may be **caused** by **differences** in **brain** structure or chemistry. Behaviours we may view as challenging or incorrect can occur because the person with FASD is **unable** to accurately **gather** or **process information**, which leads to problems with resulting actions.

It is not that people with FASD **won’t** change; they frequently **can’t** or **don't understand**. Realizing this, can help us **change** our **perception of behaviours**. For example, we may see someone and think they’re lying when they’re actually filling in the blanks or over-excited. We may see someone who we perceive as not cooperating, but they don't understand what they should be doing and need a different explanation.

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Individuals with FASD may not be able to **meet** the high **expectations** we have for their independence. For example, living alone without supports may not be a realistic expectation. Living a happy, fruitful, life with support may be a more realistic expectation and be better for the individual with FASD.

We need to **adapt our expectations** and try differently, not harder. A quote by Walter Barbe reads, ***“If you’ve told someone a thousand times and they still don’t change, then it is not them who is the slow learner.”***

Try not to immediately assume that challenging behaviour is purposeful or intentional; this may be the case, but more frequently it is not. This **shift in thinking** can allow the observer to recognize that these **behaviours** are often **connected** to **brain differences**.

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Our **understanding of behaviours** may be improved when we think back to a time when we have been misunderstood. For example, ‘I got angry with my child and later realized I reacted because I was already upset by something or somebody else', and misplaced my emotions, but couldn’t recognize that in the moment. We may be able to recognize this after **reflection**, but individuals with FASD may not be able to. When we view the same behaviour in someone else, we are usually more judgmental than we would be towards ourselves.

Adapting our expectations involves **identifying** that people with FASD may **need support** making these connections, or regardless of how hard they try, they **may not be able to**. This is why we need take **different** approaches, not just try harder.

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We would never expect someone in a wheelchair to just try harder to walk, or someone who is blind to try harder to see. These are very obvious missteps and erroneous expectations. It is easier to see how we should **try differently** in these cases. Moving differently can be using mobility aids, wheelchairs, walking, etc.

For people with **invisible brain-based disabilities**, we need to have the same reactions to **perceptions of** and **assumptions** surrounding **ability**. **Brain-based disabilities** often result in **behaving differently**, therefore, we need to adapt our expectations around behaviour and reflect on our beliefs around how we connect and assign meaning to behaviour and ability.

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