

Focusing an FASD Lens on Relationships and Strengths-Based Strategies

Susan Opie, BA, MSW, RSW

Saskatoon

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Imagine we have arrived at a new future destination:

- A world in which each individual, including those with FASD, had their needs met, their strengths recognized, access to services and support systems that allowed them to live and function up to their full potential while having choices that allow for individuals with FASD to have a sense of safety, of belonging, and of meaning in their lives.

Our starting location now:

- Individuals with FASD may be expected to ‘fit’ into a world that may not fit for them, and in which ‘poor fit’ far too often leads to less than ideal situations . . .



Cultivating hope for a different journey

- We have moved a long way forward from a society that did not believe we could afford accessible side walks and public buildings.
- We need to take a similar journey forward closer to a future that provides increasingly better ‘fit’ for individuals with FASD and other invisible, cognitive disAbilities.

Tools . . .

- An FASD lens, building strong relationships and building on strengths can help us begin to build a more respectful world for all people, with and without FASD.

Person with FASD is a Person First

- Every person with FASD is born a unique person just as he or she would have been without FASD.
- Every person with FASD is affected by FASD in a unique way that applies just to them.
- Every person with FASD has had life experiences that are their own and have shaped who they are as a person, and as a person with FASD.
- People deserve to be treated with respect, the right to develop their potential, and the right to determine their own path in life.

A Parent's Job

- The implied but not usually stated job description of a parent or caregiver is:
 - To assist the child or youth to grow into a responsible, contributing member of our society.
- It's a very difficult job with no vacation or sick leave, no pay, and little credit given for positive outcomes and much criticism when things are not going well.

When parenting is challenging

- The unique neurodevelopmental difficulties of a child, youth, or adult with FASD may mean that there is a poor fit between that individual and social systems:
 - Family, school, community/neighbourhood, workplace, legal system, health care system
- When things are not going well, as parents we may become fearful, emotional, overwhelmed, immobilized, making it difficult to do our job.

Reframing

- We may need to reframe the expectations on ourselves as parents as well as those we and others place on our children.
- Accept the child/youth's developmental abilities and work with them.
- Build and protect our relationship with our child as a priority.
- Find areas of positive abilities and work with these.

An FASD Lens

- Respectfully applied allows us to view the world through the eyes of the person with FASD to understand as best as we can what they see and think and feel.
- This allows us to be more respectful, and allows us to work to empower a person with FASD to be all that they can be.
- Stops us judging others with our own biases and beliefs that may not be valid to the person with FASD.

What does a relationship have to do with FASD strategies?

- Relationships build connection and trust with others.
- Relationships provide safety for ourselves and others.
- Good relationships concretely demonstrate that we care: we value the other person's interests, skills, viewpoints, needs, boundaries.

Relationships

- Are built step by step, one action at a time.
- Grow each time we present a respectful approach or activity to the other person.
- Grow when we act with respect and consideration for what the other person wants.
- Relationship Bank – deposits/withdrawals.
- ‘The Platinum Rule.’ (Barbara Daté)

What does a relationship have to do with FASD strategies?

- FASD strategies employed as part of a caring relationship can help support an individual with FASD.
- Relational approaches prevent power struggles, and empower individuals with FASD to be all that they can be.
- Relational approaches say I care about what happens to you.
- Relational approaches offer support without expectation, judgment, or blame.

How can strengths-based approaches assist a person with FASD?

- Many individuals with FASD have struggled with school, may have had many families care for them, may have had difficulties with friendships and other relationships.
- This may leave the person feeling badly about themselves, with poor self-esteem.

How can strengths-based approaches assist a person with FASD?

- Areas of strength can provide avenues for the person to receive positive regard, praise, a sense of accomplishment.
- This in turn builds self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- Can provide HOPE to a person with FASD and their families, friends, and communities.

How can strengths-based approaches assist a person with FASD?

- Areas of strength can:
 - Be utilized to engage a person with FASD positively.
 - Be utilized to support school learning.
 - Be areas of fun activities, potential areas of work, and areas to engage in the community in which a person lives.

How can strengths-based approaches assist a person with FASD?

- Can improve quality of life.
- Give a person purpose in their life.
- Give the person goals to work on that bring meaning to every day experiences such as school.
- Help others see the person with FASD as a competent member of the community.

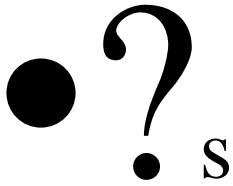
How would the world look?

- If people with FASD were treated with respect, viewed as competent and capable.
- If people with FASD were supported to be successful, to make the best choices for themselves, to feel competent.
- If people with FASD were valued as uniquely wonderful individuals with much to share with their communities.

How would the world look?

- If people with FASD had the supports and services that they need to be successful.
- Delivered in a way that uniquely fit each individual in a way that was respectful, empowering, and self-determined by each person.
- If the unique perspective of people with FASD was valued in our society.

Questions



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