

How to Help Children and Teens Succeed in Community Groups

This FASD Tip was written for parents to give to a group leader, coach, or community member. The tips will help those in the community understand the behaviours and needs of a child or teen with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Being a part of a community group is good for children and teens. Children and teens with FASD may have trouble joining in community activities like Brownies, Cubs, 4-H and community sports teams. It is important for group leaders and their helpers to understand and support a child with FASD. This will help the child or teen be successful, make friends, and enjoy the activities in their community. Here are some “real life” examples of what might happen:

Example # 1:

The group meets in the school gym at 7pm. The children can play with the skipping ropes and basketballs until the meeting is ready to start. One child cannot settle down when the leader asks that the balls and ropes be put away. She runs out of control and hits the other children with the rope. This upsets everyone in the group.

What is happening

This child is over-excited. The noise, bright lights and the confusion of all the children playing are hard for her to cope with.

What you can do

Understand what is happening and help the child before there is a problem. Organize a quiet activity for all the children as they arrive. This will help the child with FASD to keep from getting over-excited. Or, arrange for the child to arrive right at 7pm or a few minutes late so the pre-meeting activity will not get her over-excited.

Example #2:

You are Ryan’s soccer coach. For the past 3 weeks, the teens have been learning a new skill. Ryan learns it well each week, but at the next practice, he has forgotten what he learned. Ryan doesn’t want his team to know that he’s forgotten, so he fools around and it looks like he’s not trying. The other teens are annoyed at him and don’t want him on the team anymore.

What’s happening

Many children with FASD need to be taught a new skill many times before it is mastered. Ryan wants to be part of the team and do well. But, FASD causes poor memory and he really has forgotten what he knew last week. Ryan wants to be liked so he acts silly to hide his poor memory.

What you can do

Be patient and give Ryan lots of time to learn a new skill. Maybe he can practice the new skill at home or before the other children arrive for practice. Maybe Ryan could have success if he is allowed to be a supporting player rather than a key player. Community groups help all children learn teamwork and gain confidence.

FASD Tip #12

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Please feel free to photocopy
and use these sheets.

Things I would like You to know about FASD

My child has Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and I would like you to know some things about this disability. FASD is a permanent, lifelong brain injury. However, with support, encouragement, and understanding, people with FASD can have many successes.

People with FASD:

- Usually have an average IQ, are friendly and outgoing, and want to do what everyone else is doing.
- Have some special skills – some are very athletic, some artistic, some have a great sense of humour.
- May have developmental delays, behavioural problems, or learning difficulties. These are often invisible and misunderstood.
- Can experience failure and miss the opportunity to enjoy activities with their peers due to their disability.
- Friendship and community support is important to all children and youth.

Here are some things that might help:

When _____ feels stressed, you may see him/her _____
(child's name)

_____.

What I do is when this happens is _____

_____.

Sometimes _____ will _____

This is because _____.

What I find works best is _____

_____.

If you have any questions or concerns please call me at _____

_____.

For more information about FASD call the FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan at **1-866-673-3276** or visit the website at www.skfasnetwork.ca.