

## How You can help Your Child with FASD

### Figure out Reality and Fantasy

All children tell stories. Children see the world differently than adults do. But, children with FASD have a hard time knowing the difference between reality and fantasy.

Your child may lie, over and over again, about many things. But, they probably aren't doing it because they are a 'bad kid'. They may be having trouble with their short-term memory, so they are filling in the blanks. They may be trying to please you by telling you what they think you want to hear. Or, they may be having trouble thinking in a logical way. Because of the way their brain works, they might really believe the lies that they are telling you.

This can be very frustrating and confusing for parents and others. Sometimes it's hard to feel close to someone whom you can't trust or believe. This tip sheet offers you some ideas on how to cope and teach your child about reality and fantasy.

#### Example #1:

You ask your son if he has brushed his teeth. He says he has. But, you see that his toothbrush is still dry. You feel mad because he seems to be willfully lying.

##### What is happening

He is telling the truth as he sees it. He HAS brushed, many times in the last month. Because of the way his brain works, his sense of time is different from yours. He doesn't connect your question with something that has happened in the last half hour. His answer shows that he processes information differently.

#### Example #2

One member of the family has lost \$20 while doing laundry. The rest of the family has been told that the money is missing. The next day your child with FASD finds the money. She insists that this \$20 was not the one that had been lost, even though she found it in the laundry room.

##### What is happening:

The child with FASD may believe she is telling the truth. She can't connect the money she has found with the lost cash. After all, in her mind that money is lost - the money she found isn't lost! Even when something seems clear and obvious to you, it might not be to your child. You'll need to make an effort, over and over again, to fill in the gaps of what your child can't understand. For example, when talking to your child, ask questions like, "Do you think it might be that \_\_\_\_\_'s money fell out onto the floor when she was loading her clothes into the washer? Could this be her money? Could you have found \_\_\_\_\_'s lost money?"

## FASD Tip #6

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Please feel free to photocopy  
and use these sheets.

## **Some Tips to Help with Telling the Truth:**

1. Can your child tell you when she has made a mistake or lied? There are times when you will need to help a child sort out the truth from a lie. It helps to have an open and honest relationship with each other.
2. Learn to give very clear instruction like, “Go brush your teeth please.” A clear order is less confusing than asking questions.
3. Encourage your child to tell you what is true, not what they think you want to hear.
4. Practice story telling with your child. Have your child tell you stories and praise them for having a good imagination. Tell them that there are good times to make things up and bad times. Offer real life examples.
5. Read stories with your child every day. Many books are based on make believe. Have your child tell you when he thinks the story might be true or when it is made up. If you go to the library, the librarian can help you pick some good books that work for kids your child’s age.
6. Be very careful about what you allow your child to see, read and hear. Your child may have a lot of trouble separating reality from fiction in the things they see. Be aware that a child may believe that what they see on TV shows, movies and video games are “real”. Music and pictures can be very suggestive and confusing to a child with FASD. Some video games are very violent and /or sexually inappropriate for children. Take the time to sit and watch the TV or a movie with your child. You will be able to help them sort out fact from fiction.
7. Be careful about what games you allow your children to play.
8. Be your child’s ‘external brain’. Know what they have been doing and need to do next. This way you will know what really happened and be able to guide your child to remember the facts.
9. Help family members and school staff understand that your child may not remember things as they really happened. Be positive about it if you can and suggest some of the ideas mentioned here. Do this before there’s a problem, if you can.
10. If you catch your child lying, try to remain calm. If you yell they will get distracted and find it harder to understand what they have done wrong.
11. Every child needs love and responds to love. If you speak with compassion they may be more open to listening to you.