

## How You can help Children and Teens with FASD Learn about Ownership

Children and teens with FASD often have trouble understanding what 'ownership' means. There are many reasons for this. First, because they might be 'living in the moment', if they see something they want and it's available they take it. Or, because of problems with short-term memory, they might not remember taking it. Or, they might have thought that it was theirs or that someone had given it to them. They also might lie and deny stealing because they are afraid of being in trouble. Finally, because each day is new and different to someone with FASD, the child or teen may not remember that they had stolen before and that this was the wrong thing to do.

It is hard to know what to do when a child or teen with FASD steals something. Are they stealing because they are behaving badly? Or, because they really didn't understand that it is wrong to take things that belong to other people? You will need to use your judgment in each case. And, you'll need to teach them over and over again about what ownership means. Here are some tips on how you can do this and some 'real life' examples...

### Example #1

A child sees a blue jacket he likes at school. So, he takes it and wears it.

#### What happened

The jacket doesn't seem to belong to anybody. He doesn't consider who owns it. It looks at that moment that no one does and, his thinking is based 'in the moment'. Because of the way his brain works, he doesn't think ahead to what would happen when the owner of the jacket sees him wearing it.

### Example #2

A teen with FASD asks her older sister if she can wear her sweater. The sister says, "Yes", but she assumes that she is loaning it and not giving it to the little sister. She may not give it back. She argues that it's now hers and that her big sister 'gave' it to her.

#### How to help

People in this teen's life need to be very clear when they lend her things. "Yes, you can borrow my sweater for the dance. But, I'll need it back tomorrow. This is not a gift to keep."

### Example #3

Some children are on the playground. One child has a skipping rope. Another child with FASD takes the skipping rope.

#### How to help

The child with FASD wants the skipping rope and even though she knows it belongs to someone else she picks it up and puts it in her backpack. This is something we might expect from a 2 year-old child. This may be the age this child functions at. Talk, over and over again, about how ownership works. Describe things as your jacket, my wallet, Jane's skipping rope.

## FASD Tip #8

### Developed by:

FASD Support Network  
Of Saskatchewan  
510 Cynthia Street  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7L 7K7

Phone for free:  
1-866-673-3276  
In Saskatoon call: 975-0884  
E-mail:  
fasdnetwork@sasktel.net  
Website:  
www.skfasnetwork.ca

Please feel free to photocopy  
and use these sheets.

## **T**ips to Teach about Ownership:

1. Most children will take something that is not theirs at least once while they are young. It is up to the parent or caregiver to teach a child about ownership and right from wrong. Be patient. Ownership is a hard thing to learn from children and teens with FASD.
2. If your child takes something that is not theirs, ask her how she would feel if her favourite toy or shoes were stolen. Help them to understand that no one likes to have their things stolen.
3. If your child takes something which doesn't belong to her, make sure she returns it with an apology. Practice how she will say sorry. Go with her for support.
4. Mark the things your child owns with a sticker. For example, everything with blue stickers are his. If they don't have his sticker on them, he should not take or use them.
5. If your child takes something that is not theirs, do not get caught up in an argument. Simply say, "This ... belongs to ...". Have them return the item. Stealing needs to be dealt with quickly, firmly and with appropriate consequences.
6. Valuables should not be left around where a child may come across them. Lock up things like coin or stamp collections, cameras, money and jewelry.
7. Stores and malls are not good places for children and teens to "hang out". A good rule is that a parent must always go with the child or teen to the store or mall. Shoplifting can be a big problem with children and teens with FASD.
8. Supervise, supervise, supervise. Children and teens with FASD need supervision at home, at school, during free time, and all the time.