



FASD: Questions and Answers

by Sandy and Mike Overs



Q. I have a daughter who is affected by an FASD. My family just doesn't seem to understand my situation and I end up feeling like they think I am a bad parent. I would like their support and understanding but I am afraid to ask for help. Do you have any ideas about what I could do?

A. We also encountered the same issue with a few members of our family. Parenting children with an FASD requires structure and consistency along with a good dose of patience. Sometimes members of our family saw, and continue to view our actions, as too strict and that we should lighten up on the rules. As you may well know, to get the best out of the children and minimize outbursts, disruptive or destructive behaviours, a consistent approach to discipline and behaviour control is required.

One of the strategies that has worked to get the community and extended family on board with us was to provide education on the issues we were coping with in working with the children. This can be done by open and frank discussions with them and providing them with information like pamphlets, books, internet sites. A good source of information for families dealing with FASD is available from the Network. Another approach was

to have them attend workshops that dealt with the issues we were encountering (FASD, ADD, ADHD, opposition defiance, etc...) When talking to our family members, they stated that having first hand experience with the children helped them to comprehend the issues we were dealing with.

“Try to keep and encourage the positive relationships and minimize those that aren't.”

When certain behaviours become evident as your child is around other family members, you can explain why the children have these behaviours and the best strategies that work to resolve or counter the behaviour. As your family gets to know and understand the children, you may be able to start using them as a major part of your support system. Parenting children with an FASD can and will be very stressful so this could be helpful.

Be prepared though, that no matter how much some family members get to know your children or how much you try to educate them, some will still not understand the issues and will remain critical of the way you parent. Remember, you parent these children 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and you will

know the best way to deal with them and the resources required. Until they have walked in your shoes for a good length of time they will not fully understand what you or your children need.

Our children have a great relationship with their aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents and that is what all children need. Keep your family members involved with your family and like all relationships, it will take time for them to get to know and understand your children. This will help you and your children and lessen the stress in your life. Above all, keep a positive outlook... ❁

Sandy and Mike

Sandy and Mike Overs are parents of two young adults affected by FASD. Sandy is also a member of the FASD Support Network Board of Directors. Together Sandy and Mike have gained insight into many common parenting issues and struggles. They have generously agreed to share their understanding about gaining the support of extended family members in response to this question. Thank you to Sandy and Mike for your thoughtful response.

Disclaimer:
Living with FASD offers this question and answer column as general information. It is not intended as a substitute for professional advice on medical, behavioural, educational, or legal matters specific to your situation. ❁