

Signs of a Happy, Healthy Community

- ❖ Children and elders feel nurtured, loved and secure.
- ❖ All people feel valued; understanding and feeling the importance of their place in the community.
- ❖ The only gossip is "good gossip;" people observe and tell each other the "good things" they have seen someone doing.
- ❖ Trust is given and trust is felt because people tell each other the truth and don't feel they have to sabotage or pull another person down to build themselves up.
- ❖ The community is alcohol and substance free because there is no longer a need to medicate the pain of the past or the hurt of the present.
- ❖ Wealth is determined by what you give rather than what you get.
- ❖ Cooperation, not competition, is the force behind action.
- ❖ The land and animals are healthy because they are respected as relations.
- ❖ All relationships are characterized by a generous spirit that offers help (takes initiative) and follows through with respect, compassion and trust.
- ❖ Doors do not need to be locked.
- ❖ Tradition, culture and spirituality are woven into the fabric of all programs and activities.
- ❖ Gratitude for community, family and the land is felt and expressed each day.

S.P.I.R.I.T.S

Strategies for Prevention, Intervention & Resilience in Teaching for Success

Suzie Kuerschner: FASD Consult. & Trainer; Child Dev. Spec.; Early Child. Ed. Program Dev.;

Early Int. & Spec. Ed. Consult. & Program Dev.

Phone: 503-622-3973 ❖ Fax: 503-622-4881

E-Mail: suziekuerschner@gmail.com

Life is Sacred



Invite It

Nurture It

Celebrate It

If I have an FASD...

What I Need

...and

Who Can Help



I am an elder with an FASD...please:

- ❖ don't forget me, or decide I'm a throw away...it's never too late and just like every one else my age, I want to relate and enjoy my family...but some of them stay away.
- ❖ help me connect with community activities and find a way that I can give.
- ❖ If I need, try treatment with me that is delivered in the way I learn. Help me script and do role plays that will counteract my very old behaviors.
- ❖ know my mood swings are a little better now and I seem to have an easier time controlling my temper, but little things still can really bother me.
- ❖ know I still like it when everyone who supports me gets together with me at the same time. I feel more respected, it makes things make more sense and fit together, and I feel like I am in some control.



A whole basket is created by the weaving together of many reeds...
The consistent supportive relationship of that weave determines the strength of the basket.



I am a middle-aged adult with an FASD...please:

- ❖ know that, still sometimes, life seems so hard...too much...too busy, but I try to take charge even though I feel overwhelmed.
- ❖ continue to help me organize and plan my time and space. The more predictability I have the less stress I feel.
- ❖ continue to give me opportunities where I can share and help my community.
- ❖ if I am parenting, I would like concrete support for each of my children's ages and stages that is shown and practiced with me...not just handouts and lectures.
- ❖ know that I often misinterpret and misunderstand social and work situations. Please don't shame me but just take me aside somewhere privately so we can discuss it.
- ❖ know I am still really vulnerable to be exploited which sometimes gets me in trouble with Justice & Corrections so please use these opportunities to make good, concrete therapeutic work plans that get me paying back and moving forward
- ❖ don't give up on me if I am still using substances. Understand I am just self-medicating and need to be in a treatment setting that understands how I learn and can help me address traumas over a long, not short period of time.
- ❖ understand that I do better when everybody who is helping me gets together as a circle with me. It comes together in a plan instead of a bunch of separate parts.



I'm pregnant...of course I want a healthy baby...but:

- ❖ Does it really matter if I drink and use just a little? I even heard that there are studies that say a little doesn't hurt.
 - Even drinking a small amount of alcohol can impact your baby's development and future quality of life. Some of the impacts may be visible and some may not.
- ❖ Life "sucks" a lot of the time and I can't believe that stress is good for my baby when I just do alcohol or pot to calm down.
 - Keeping calm is important, but finding healthy activities that give fresh air, exercise and good friends are most helpful and will not harm your baby.
- ❖ I know people who drank when they were pregnant and their babies are fine.
 - Some of the effects of drinking while pregnant may be known while your child is still little, but many come later with the most destructive and devastating effects being those that are related to thinking and learning (cognition and judgment) and emotion and behavior. Often, we don't realize this until our child is struggling in elementary school or getting in trouble in middle or high school.
- ❖ Worse things than that will probably happen to my child in their lifetime. Maybe being out of it a little would help.
 - Your child's ability to deal with bad things in life can be made even more difficult by the impulsive, poor judgment and trouble with learning and memory that can happen when a mother drinks while pregnant.



I am an infant with an FASD.....please:

- ❖ know that like all babies I need to feel loved with calm and soothing sounds and surroundings but I am often easily over-stimulated and find it hard to “settle.”
- ❖ talk and sing to me quietly.
- ❖ touch me gently and with soft, natural materials and offer me wooden rattles and toys to explore.
- ❖ keep sights, lights and colors quiet around me but give me different things to watch and look at.
- ❖ breast feed me to develop my sense of security and my ability to develop language (also makes me smarter). Sometimes it's hard but you can get lots of help
- ❖ swaddle me snugly in my cradle board so I can feel where my body is in space.
- ❖ put me in a blanket hammock so I can rock from side to side. This “cocoon” me from too much noise and light. Please do not put me in “back and forth” wind-up swings.
- ❖ give me lots of “tummy time” so I can learn to develop my arms, chest and shoulders. Using a small bolster or rolled up towel under my upper chest helps me a lot when I’m tiny.
- ❖ don't leave me in strollers or car seats for long periods of time.
- ❖ structure my days so things happen at the same time in the same way.



I am a young adult with an FASD...please:

- ❖ help me not only find but remember who I dream to be. There is often so much negative I can't remember the positive and I sure can't remember what steps I should take to that dream.
 - help me remember that FASD is not about smart or stupid
- ❖ know that my life feels so busy with every thing coming at once, I am way overwhelmed and have a hard time sorting out priorities. I need to have the technology and tools to have calendar date and time reminders.
- ❖ Give me opportunities to be a community helper in ways that show my strengths.
- ❖ help me problem solve social situations and “script” for me good responses.
- ❖ if I need drug and alcohol or behavioral interventions, make sure that they are knowledgeable and are tailored to people like me with an FASD.
- ❖ know that I might have housing and or employment needs and that it is helpful to work with somebody who understands Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
 - I want to live completely independently, but if I need help, help me to find supportive options.
- ❖ be here for me when I'm pregnant and parenting. I need non-judgemental, frequent support and cheerleading delivered in positive, concrete ways.

I am an adolescent with an FASD...please:

- ❖ know that, like all teenagers, I want freedom but I'm starting to feel more and more frustration and failure about many things
 - school work has gone from mostly concrete to mostly abstract and often I can't keep up.
 - friends come and then go, often seeming mean, leaving me feeling picked on.
 - my emotions are on a roller coaster that my brain can't control. I'm fine one minute but want to give up the next; these mood swings exhaust me.
- ❖ help me know and follow what I am good at, not just to be nice to me, but to support and extend my talents or skills I might have in music, art, theater, dance as well as other professions. There are many outstanding artists and musicians with an FASD and there are also teachers and therapists with an FASD. Be realistic in your expectations of me but do not put "ceilings on these expectations." I really need this both for hope for a career and for the positive feelings that come from success.
- ❖ help me be involved in healthy friend and community activities, not just to keep me busy but also to guide me to positive relationships and situations where I feel I can be helpful.
- ❖ continue to develop my Individual Education Program in a way that structures my day for realistic success,
- ❖ know I want to be good and please you but when you yell at me, or seem to judge me, I react defensively and angrily because I already feel stupid a lot of the time.
- ❖ if you want the truth from me don't "back me into a corner" and ask me what you already know. Guide me to the truth, otherwise I'll just be watching your face and words and telling you what I think you want to hear.
- ❖ know that because so many things go wrong, not only do I feel like a failure but I have to cover that up with acting out and "holding my ground" and for sure am doing what my friends around me are doing. I am my environment.
- ❖ Help me find and use the tools and activities that will keep me from wanting to self-medicate my frustrations and mood swings.
- ❖ remember that my behavior is "brain-based, not "willful," but it's like I find myself in the middle of messes and sometimes I end up in trouble with the law. Please help me to turn this into an opportunity for positive change. Activities and work that makes me give back and make amends to those I've hurt, are very good for me.
- ❖ understand that even though I can seem "cheery" in the morning, by afternoon I might be so down I want to end it all...not like I planned it... it just might happen.

SLBK

I am a toddler with an FASD...please:

- ❖ know that like all toddlers I want to explore, discover and play, but am easily over-stimulated and I get frustrated a lot.
- ❖ help me have an organized place to play where I can find things... and because this also helps me develop my memory and thinking skills.
- ❖ give me toys that teach me to explore and problem solve cause and effect. Things like blocks, village making, puzzles, drawing and painting...not animated, noisy and mechanical.
- ❖ I do best with natural and wooden toys because sometimes I'm extra sensitive to plastics and synthetics.
- ❖ tell me stories that show me how to be.
- ❖ know that I want to please you but I often get hyper and distracted and it's really hard for me to sort out what I'm supposed to pay attention to—it's best if you just give me one short direction at a time.
- ❖ know that sometimes I am so anxious and stressed I do repetitive things (sounds, movements). That's called "self-stimming" and I do it to calm down. A toy, ball, or rock or something to hold is helpful.
- ❖ help me create a small, cozy "retreat and relax" place to go to when I'm upset.
- ❖ know that using sign language with your words is helpful to me. Sometimes in crowded public places, it's just best to give me the sign without the words.
- ❖ structure my days so things happen at the same time in the same way.

SLBK



I am a preschooler with an FASD...please:

- ❖ know that like all preschoolers, I really like to play and have fun with friends, but sometimes I don't know what they, or people in general, want me to do.
- ❖ give me time to move or transition from one activity to the next. Let me know ahead of time, plan with me and try to keep things as predictable and structured as possible
- ❖ keep helping me have organized materials and play spaces with good problem-solving toys so I can continue to grow my brain.
- ❖ enroll me in a preschool or play group so that I can practice how to play and learn with friends.
- ❖ show me what I am doing right, giving me a map of what to do rather than what not to do.
- ❖ make sure I get outside and exercise and eat healthy foods each day. Sometimes I have blood sugar issues that make it important for me to "graze" on healthy snacks between meals.
- ❖ Take me to my pediatrician regularly and notice if I seem to have any reactions to certain foods or things.
- ❖ know when I act out, I'm not trying to be bad...my brain is just not coming together and I'm upset. Let me go to my retreat space and after I calm down, help me to figure it out. It might just be that my sock seams are bugging me.



I am an elementary child with an FASD...please:

- ❖ know that I'm excited to go to school but also that I get confused with such busy days so I need more and more structure, planning and picture schedules I can see so I can concretely know what I am supposed to do.
- ❖ don't just think I'm "stubborn" or "bad" when I don't do things right. Show me so I can see and feel to understand.
- ❖ praise me, labeling what I'm doing right, reinforcing my success so I will do more of it.
- ❖ make sure that an Individual Education Program (IEP) is developed for me that addresses my strengths as well as my needs.
- ❖ help me move from high activity to low activity behaviors. Sometimes getting me to tip toe from outside to inside is helpful.
- ❖ know that I need lots of rest even though I seem like I'm bouncing around.
- ❖ teach me things by sitting beside me rather than across from me so I don't get distracted by your face or your jewelry.
- ❖ help me know activity boundaries by using things like mats.
- ❖ help me with my impulsiveness by giving me strategies.