

E Physical and Behavioural Characteristics

The following characteristics are not found exclusively in individuals with FAE/FAS, but a clustering of characteristics and patterns of behaviour coupled with a history of maternal and/or paternal drinking prior to and during pregnancy are strong clues for identification. They are presented so that educators can consider FAS/FAD, when seeking to understand the possible causes of a student's difficulties. They are not intended for diagnostic purposes.

Individuals MAY be described as:

- distractible, have difficulty stay on task, maintaining attention
- impulsive and/or emotionally volatile
- limited in problem solving skills, predictive ability and judgment
- limited in their ability to generalize information, form links, perceive consequences, inconsistently learn from mistakes
- having problems with sequencing information
- having impaired visual or auditory processing

-often able to repeat instructions verbally but unable to follow through to complete the task

-having difficulty with arithmetic, math skills significantly lower than other subject areas

-not understanding or learning time and money concepts (may learn rote information but not apply conceptual understanding)

-having difficulty mastering new academic skills and integrating with previous learning, particularly those requiring abstract thinking

- having problems with short term memory

-having difficulty with decoding and comprehension in reading

-having problems with coordination and visual-motor-production

-having speech and language delays and/or disorders

-having difficulty with social interactions, poor peer relations

This is a partial list of characteristics, any one of which could reflect genetic variability. It is the constellation of characteristics along with the history of alcohol abuse which assumes relevancy.

PRESENTING PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION

Poor Information Processing

***Difficulty translating information into appropriate action.**

***Failure to generalize information from one situation to another.**

***Difficulty perceiving similarities and differences between events.**

Need shifts in thinking of caregivers and educators:

A. Diminish assumption of wilful misconduct by the child.

The child may misinterpret what he hears, or only process pieces of what he heard, or have trouble connecting what was heard to what he needs to do about it.

B. The approach to teaching needs to change providing information through all sensory systems, touch, vision, smell, hearing, taste and emotions.

Pictures and charts may help access to information usually taught in standard auditory form.

C. The child's environment may need to be structured differently. They relate differently to the environment to navigate through the day; may need more constancy, less change, more transition time when faced with change.

ATTENTION DEFICITS

Inattention and distractibility

trouble in coming to attention

selective attention

sustaining attention

Attends to everything - distractible and distracts others

Impulsivity

The child with FAS/E may have lessened inhibition for stopping impulses or drives as their peers would. They may or may not see after the fact that they have done something troubling, and may show weak predictive ability and poor judgement.

HYPERACTIVITY

Children with FAS/E or ARBD may show different thresholds for physical movement and sensory stimulation than peers. Changes to the Central Nervous System may alter the flow of signals and responses between the brain and body.

Other overlapping disorders include:

enuresis

encopresis

conduct disorder (30-50%)

oppositional defiant (35-60%)

depression (25%)

anxiety (25%)

learning disabilities (20-25%)

language impairment (30%)

ADD/ADHD (regardless of cause) is often accompanied by:

- low self esteem
- mood swings
- being easily frustrated
- limited organizational skills
- developmental, learning and coordination problems
- increased sensitivity to allergens (eg. pollens)
- peer problems
- general immaturity
- temper outbursts
- low achievement in school
- increased risk of alcohol and drug abuse...

Children with ADHD often lack social skills and have poor self-esteem, and their families are under great stress. (Early assessment and intervention will minimize the negative effects of ADD/ADHD and the onset of related disorders.)