Unique Needs of Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Presenter: Dwaine M. Souveny
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Session Goals
Participants will understand and appreciate:

- The developmental characteristics of individuals with FASD including:
  - Attention
  - Sensory Processing
  - Emotional Reactivity
  - Social Skills
  - Behavioural Regulation

Session Goals
Participants will understand and appreciate:

- The difference between motivation and skill development
- How beliefs impact a person’s behaviour and ultimate success
“FASD is a lifelong condition that presents different challenges at different stages of life”

FASD is a Neurological Disability

“Organic brain damage in individuals with FASD initially occurs prior to birth and is the result of exposure to alcohol”

Responding to Students Needs

- Primary and Secondary Characteristics
  - Attention
  - Sensory Processing
  - Social Skills
  - Transitions
  - Behavioural Regulation
  - Consequences
  - Beliefs
Primary Characteristics

- Attention
- Sensory
- Memory
- Motor
- Social Skills
- Adaptive Behaviour
- Behavioural Regulation
- Language and Communication
- Abstract Thinking
- Planning and Organization

Secondary Characteristics

- Education
- Mental health
  - Depression/Suicidal thoughts
  - Anxiety
  - Defiance/Aggression
- Legal
- Drug and alcohol
- Social
- Employment

Attention

- Inattention
- What Attention Difficulties Look Like
  - Provide Structure To Focus
Inattention: Focusing and Sustaining Attention

What Attention Difficulties Look Like

- Miss instructions
- Respond with answers unrelated to the questions
- Look attentive and focused but have trouble understanding and responding appropriately
- Be easily distracted

Teaching Students With FASD, 2004
**Provide Structure To Focus**
- Provide external structures such as study carrels...or a desk in quiet part of classroom
- Limit materials in a lesson, on desk or in a workplace
- Limit amount of oral instruction – follow it up with a “print copy”
- Be prepared to repeat, repeat, repeat

**Sensory Processing**
- Sensory Defensiveness/Integration
  - Jason's Story
  - Reduce Sensory Overload
Sensory Defensiveness/Integration

Resulting in:
- Disorganization
- Confusion
- Emotional reactivity – anger, depression

Jason’s Story

- Singing O Canada
- Jason would cover ears and drop to the ground

Was that behaviour Attention Seeking, Defiance or Sensory Sensitivity???

Reduce Sensory Overload

Tactile stimulation (touch)
- Firm pressure: squeeze hugs, hugs between pillows or mats, pressure down shoulders
- Do not use light unexpected touch
- Be aware of sensitivities to clothing - cut tags of clothing that may irritate skin

(S. Mitchell, O.T.)
Reduce Sensory Overload

- Use a soft voice
- Reduce volume of TV, radio, etc.
- Provide soft relaxing music – use head phones or FM system in class
- Provide quiet zones
- Tennis balls on bottom of chairs

(S. Mitchell, O.T.)

Reduce Sensory Overload

Visual stimulation (sight)

- Limit visual input when practical
- Observe if lighting seems to make a difference
- Provide most verbal instructions in front of a blank wall

(S. Mitchell, O.T.)

Reduce Sensory Overload

Smell/Taste stimulation

- Observe & be aware of smell/taste sensitivities

(S. Mitchell, O.T.)
Social skills

- Social Skills
- Recognize Developmental Skill Level
- Age Appropriate Expectations
- Social Skills Strategies
- Sentence Strips

Social Skills

Missing subtle social cues

- Impacts
- Social Behaviour
- Transition Times

Social Skills

- Difficulties in areas including:
  - Act younger than chronological age
  - Don’t follow rules during games or in social situations
  - Say inappropriate things or act in ways that disturb others
Recognize Developmental Skill Level

Actual Age = 18 years
Expressive Language 20
Reading: Decoding 16
Reading Comprehension 6
Emotional Maturity 6
Physical Maturity 18
Social Skills 7
Living Skills 11

D. Malbin 1994; Adapted from research findings of Streissguth, Clarren, et. Al.

Age Appropriate Expectations

Age six (6) Going on three (3) developmentally
- Pay attention (1 hour)
- Line up on their own
- Wait their turn

Age thirteen (13) Going on eight (8) developmentally
- Are responsible
- Organize themselves
- Have social boundaries
- Understand body space
- Need reminding
- Need visual cues, modeling
- Tactile – lots of touching
- In your space
Social Skills

- Knowledge can be taught/learned
- Using the skills
- Must be practised in real situations

Social Skills Strategies

- Structure the environment for positive interactions
- Provide direct instruction in social skills
  - Tell (provide verbal instructions)
  - Demonstrate and model
  - Actual practice and Role playing
- Play turn taking games

Sentence Strips

- Proactively provide a way of dealing with a situation
- Give clear instructions of what to do
- Give clear instructions of what not to do
- Use one (1) short sentence per strip
**Transition Times**

**Missing Subtle Social Cues:**

- Middle School Years
  - Changing classes
- Later School Years
  - Moving away from school

**Plan for Transitions**

- Place child at beginning or end of the line to minimize tactile input from other students
- Have specific spots for the child in lines or at circle time
- Provide visual cues around desks for space to stay within
- Use picture schedules

**Transitions Grid**

Please see handout attached
Adaptations: Organization

- Checklists

Plan for Transitions

Techniques that facilitate learning:
- Schedules
- Social Stories
- Supervised practice

Emotional and Behavioural Regulation

- Emotional Contagion: The Mirror Neurons
- Behavioural Regulation
- Using Social Scripts
- Behavioural Regulation Strategies
Emotional & Behavioural Regulation

“age appropriate ability to control one’s activity level and moderate emotions in response to internal or external stimuli”

Emotional Contagion: The Mirror Neurons

Image from: http://www.mindpowernews.com/014.htm
Emotional Contagion: The Mirror Neurons

Emotional contagion is the tendency to express and feel emotions that are similar to and influenced by those of others.

Explains why…
- Some people/situations can inspire, create empathy or joy and others can elicit fear, disgust or outrage
- Emotionally laden responses are learned so easily (E.g. Swear words) yet so hard to reduce
- Children escalate quickly from one emotional state (E.g. calm to another E.G. anger)

External Contagion:
- We mirror (imitate) people
- If someone smiles at you, you smile back (Babies as early as 1 month)

Internal Contagion:
- We mirror (monitor) ourselves
- If you smile you feel happy, if you frown you feel bad (even if you ’fake it)
Emotional Contagion: The Mirror Neurons

Techniques
- Be aware of the emotions that you are conveying
- Be aware of the emotions that you are receiving
- Do not hide emotions – rather label them & teach ways of dealing with them

Behavioural Regulation

Intentionally Teach What Others Incidentally Learn

Social Scripts
- I walk down the hall following my friend
- I see the water fountain
- I ask for a drink of water
- My teacher says, “yes you can have a drink”
Social Scripts

- I have a drink of water
- My teacher says, now it is time to walk in line again
- I go to the line and walk with the other students
- I am happy that I had a drink 😊
- My teacher is happy that I walked in line 😊

Behavioural Regulation Strategies

- Tell
- Show/Demonstrate
- Role Play
- Practise
- Prompt

Consequences

- A Neurological Disability: Paradigm Shift
- Challenges with Consequences and FASD
- Utilizing Consequences
A Neurological Disability: Paradigm Shift

“I won’t”

“ I can’t”

“I can to the best of my ability with support and assistance”

Challenges with Consequences and FASD

- Linking words with actions
- Forming associations and linking the punishment with the action or behaviour
- Remembering or retrieving information on the future in different settings

Challenges with Consequences and FASD

- Generating different outcomes
- Abstracting and predicting future events
- Generalizing information to new situations in the future
**Utilizing Consequences**
- Effective with students with AD/HD
- Limited effectiveness with students with FASD
- Use positive consequences with both types to build knowledge of desired behaviour and feelings of competency

**Beliefs**
- The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy
- Sally’s Story
- Seeing Only What We Expect
- Building Upon Strengths

**The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

You become who you believe you are
Sally’s Story

- AD/HD, ODD, Conduct Disorder, OCD, EMH, LD
- Noncompliant, uncooperative, aggressive, bully, unpredictable, liar, stealer, fighter, mouthy, swearing, failure at school-unable to learn

Seeing Only What We Expect

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS
Building Upon Strengths of FASD

- Concrete thinkers
- Creative, artistic, musical
- Learn by doing
- Energetic and involved
- Good sense of humour
- Strong sense of self
- Preservative and persistent
- Athletic, spontaneous

From: Health Canada Report, 1998

Building Upon Strengths of FASD

- Strong visual memory
- Friendly – outgoing, gregarious, trusting
- Loving – caring, kind, concerned, sensitive, loyal, faithful
- Tactile
- Affectionate – compassionate
- Mechanical
- Curious, questioning, sense of wonder
- Rich fantasy life

From: Health Canada Report, 1998

Creating a Positive Classroom Climate: Paradigm Shift

Professionals shift

- Stopping behaviours
- Behaviour modification
- Changing people
- Preventing problems
- Modeling, using visual cues
- Changing environments

Creating a Positive Classroom Climate: Paradigm Shift: D. Malbin
“Teaching Students with FASD: Building Strengths, Creating Hope”

Reference

Contact Information

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Source Material

- Teaching Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (Alberta Learning, 2004)
- ABC’s for Success with Attention Deficit Disorders (Souveny & Souveny, 2000)
- Trying Differently Rather than Trying Harder (Malbin, 1999)
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A Guide for Families and Communities (A. Striessguth, 1997)
- Let’s Talk FASD (VON Canada, 2005)

See Handout for Information on Upcoming Sessions in the Series

Please Remember to Fill Out Your Evaluations

Thank You