



Communication FASD-Style

When communicating with people who have FASD, always remember to...

KISSSSSS!



Keep
it
Short
Simple
Same
Slow
Specific
Show

When they go FAST – you go slow.
When they go HIGH – you go low.

With shared strength, guidance and wisdom, those with FASD can grow and achieve.



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Keep it Short, Simple, Same, Slow, Specific, Show

This strategy is a reminder of the need to slow down and be calm and reassuring when interacting with a person with FASD.

Communicating FASD-style is based around the brain-processing challenges many people with FASD experience in terms of memory, focus and attention, slower information processing speed, developmental versus chronological age (particularly in expressive and receptive language skills) and their tendency for black and white or literal thinking.

There are two elements to the strategy: what we say, and how we say it – particularly our tone.

- **Short** – do not use more than one or two short sentences at a time without pausing for at least 10 seconds for them to process that information.
- **Simple** – use simple, unambiguous words, not colloquialisms or irony.
- **Same** – always use the same terminology and phraseology. We have several different words for some things and that can be confusing. Repeating words or phrases regularly (like a litany you regularly say or use) helps cement the understanding in memory, as repetition is required to shift learning from the working memory to long-term memory, where information is stored nearer the brain stem and it is usually easier for a person with FASD to

retrieve. Memory retrieval may still be 'patchy'.

- **Slow** – talk slowly and clearly. Don't rush. Give them time and attention, and check they truly understand what is being asked or explained by asking them to repeat it back in their own words. Do not accept a nod or an ability to parrot the words back as constituting understanding.

The brain loses its ability to process language when in a heightened emotional state. This is true of all of us. The more dysregulated a person is, the less verbal language we should be using.

- **Specific** – be clear in instructions or requests. Use positive phrasing, rather than negative, e.g. "I would like you to ... by ..."
- **Show** – People with FASD tend to be kinesthetic, tactile and visual learners. They learn best by 'doing'. Showing them what you mean as you talk with them, walking along side them as they do it, is an excellent communication strategy to reduce frustration and help cement understanding and learning.
- **Go slow and low** – when they appear to be going fast or high in movement, thinking or speech, it is important you slow down and lower your voice tone to be calming, reassuring, and neutral. Most people tend to mirror the behaviour and tone of others if they can.

With shared strength, guidance and wisdom, those with FASD can grow and achieve.

