

## How to Care for the Caregiver of Children and Youth with FASD

Being a parent or caregiver can be a great experience, but it is also tiring and challenging. Families with children with FASD are often under a great deal of stress. Others don't always understand the issues they face everyday. This can make one feel alone and overwhelmed. You and your family need you to take care of yourself. If you are stressed and tired you won't be able to see clearly or give your kids all that they need. And, stressful times seem even worse when you are exhausted. Here are some tips on how you can take time to care for yourself.

First, some 'real life' examples...

### Example #1

Your son's teacher tells you that he's doing fine, but you know that he has a 'meltdown' most days when he gets home from school. You dread the time between school and supper.

#### What is happening

Your son is probably trying really hard at school. He's putting so much effort into his work that he's exhausted. He knows that home is safe place and he can relax. He does this by letting his feelings loose and letting go of feelings that have been building up all day.

#### What to do

You can help your son develop some good relaxation habits. Listening to his favorite music with the headphones on or quietly watching a favorite movie can help him unwind. Maybe some quiet time in his room is what he needs to help him calm down or, going for a bike ride will help him relax after school. Find out what works for your son and encourage him to relax in a positive way.

### Example #2

Your family has been invited to spend Christmas Day with your partner's parents. You know your children will be uncomfortable there and out of their routine. But, you don't want to upset your in-laws. You lie awake at night worrying about how you can keep everyone happy.

#### What to do

You know from experience that your children need their structure and routine but you in-laws don't understand this. Share information about FASD and how it relates to your child. Ask them to come to your home for Christmas. Or go to their home for a short visit- maybe for breakfast and then spend the rest of your day at home.

## FASD Tip #11

### Developed by:

FASD Support Network  
of Saskatchewan  
510 Cynthia Street  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7L 7K7

Phone for free:  
1-866-673-3276  
In Saskatoon call: 975-0884  
E-mail:  
fasdnetwork@sasktel.net  
Website:  
www.skfasnetwork.ca

Please feel free to photocopy  
and use these sheets.

## **Some Tips on How to Care for Yourself:**

1. All parents have dreams for their kids. It may be hard for parents of children with FASD to deal with disappointment or guilt. A counselor, religious leader or Elder may be able to help you.
2. Think about what helps you to relax and make a real effort to do it every day or at least every week. Have coffee with a friend, take a long bath with the bathroom door locked, call a parent you like, go out with your partner, go to a support group, hire a babysitter or share and swap childcare.
3. Find someone to talk to who understand what it's like living with children with FASD. This could be a family member who is close to you, or another parent of a child with FASD. If you don't know any other parents, call the FASD Support Network of SK (our number is 1-866-673-3276 or 975-0884). We'll connect you with another parent. It is amazing how many experiences parents share.
4. Sometimes, the only place your children can truly 'shine' is in your own home. Let them be at home a lot and don't feel badly about celebrating holidays and birthdays at home where your children feel safe and comfortable.
5. Many children with FASD become very stressed when a family leaves home to go on holidays. It can be hard for them to leave a familiar area and routine or stay in a strange hotel room. It will be good for everyone if your children can stay in their routine.
6. Give your relatives some information to read about FASD. Or, have them call us at the FASD Support Network Saskatchewan .
7. Arrange for a break for you and /or your partner. Hire a mature babysitter who understands your child and train them about FASD and the importance of routine.
8. Take time to laugh. Rent a funny movie. Think about the funny side of some of the things your kids do.
9. Rest, relax, exercise, walk and try to look at the big picture. You are doing the very best job you can.
10. Think about all the things that you love about your children and all the things you admire.
11. Phone the FASD Network and get involved. Other parents need support and you may be the perfect person to support them. Another parent may be able to help you too.
12. Educate yourself. Knowledge is empowering.