

How You can help Teens and Adults with FASD Make Decisions

Good decision making is a life-long challenge for a person with FASD. They will need the aid of someone who can be trusted to help them make good decisions. But how do you help your teen or adult to be independent?

Teens with FASD are like most teens: they want to feel good about themselves, have friends and be independent. But, because of the way their brains work, they are likely to act first and think later. They are often more impulsive than their peers and, quick decisions can lead to trouble. This sheet offers some tips on how you can guide and teach your teen or adult to make good decisions. But first some 'real-life' examples:

Example #1

A teenager has a paper route. He does a great job delivering papers everyday after school! But, he forgets to pick up the customer's monthly payments. Collecting money is not part of his daily routine.

How you can help

Help him make collecting money part of his routine. On collection day a parent or trusted friend could walk his route with him. This way he'll be reminded to collect the money. And, he'll have someone to help if he needs to make change for a customer. Explain that his job includes delivering papers, collecting money and paying the newspaper business their share.

Example #2

An adult is on her way home from work and she has just enough money for the bus. While she's waiting for the bus to come she gets hungry. She goes into the store and buys a chocolate bar. Now she doesn't have enough money for the bus and she is going to have to walk home.

How you can help

You can help this woman learn to budget her pay. A monthly bus pass, or enough bus tickets to last her the whole month, would help her get home safely from work.

FASD Tip # 5

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Please feel free to photocopy
and use these sheets.

Some Tips to Improve Decision Making:

1. Youth and adults with FASD need a long time to learn some things. You can help by being patient and explaining some things over and over again.
2. A person with FASD may need a lot of time to make good decisions. Try to give them plenty of time to make up their mind. You can also explain how the decisions we make effect how our life turns out.
For example, you can explain how a bus pass really works. Even though a bus pass seems to cost more money than bus tickets, it can sometimes be cheaper. Explain how a bus pass will let them use the bus as many times a day as they want and, on any day of the week. It's less hassle finding the right change too. Help them consider the pros and cons.
3. Try to have fewer things to distract them when they have to make a decision.
For example, before the family orders food in a restaurant, talk about what meals are on the menu and help them decide what they want to eat and drink. Then let them order food first from the waitress or waiter. If you go to the same restaurant every time they may feel more relaxed and less confused. (Foods that have food colouring or additives and preservatives can effect behaviour in negative ways.)
4. Help them understand that everyone makes mistakes. And, that it's good to stay calm when you've made a mistake.
Teach them to look around and see if there is someone they know who they can ask for help. If they don't know anyone, teach them that it is okay to ask for help from a mom or a grand mother. Help them understand that getting angry or rude will make things more confusing for them.
5. You need to show them why it is best to think things over before they do something they are not sure of. Good decisions often aren't easy to make. Life is complicated. But, good decisions sure are easier to live with. Make sure you point out when they make good decisions. Talk about different situations and how what they decide to do could be a good choice or a poor choice. For example, what would you do if you missed the bus? Would you stay in the bus shelter and wait for the next bus? Or, would you walk to work even if it's really cold out?
6. Point out how everyone has responsibilities to ourselves and to others.
For example, it is our job to keep our bodies clean and to wear clean clothes. And, it is our job to try to keep our homes clean and tidy. Talk together about the important life skills people need to live well with others and with them self.
7. Talk and show them about what it means to be a grown-up. Explain that it takes time to learn to be a mature adult. In life, everyone needs help from a family member or trusted friend. Tell them how you, or friends or Elders have learned to manage adult life. Try to make your examples short and clear.
8. Take time to explain what can happen when money is spent on the wrong things or when a job is not done right.
For example, if all the money is spent on new clothes, how will the rent be paid and food bought?
9. Life skills, Life Skills. Life Skills. Make their chores and responsibilities habits in their lives. If they have good habits and clear routines they will have less decisions to make every day.