

Memory

Memory is fundamental to retaining and storing information and understanding and using prior knowledge for later use. The fact that a child cannot remember something learned or experienced before means behaviour and its consequence is forgotten and a social rule is broken yet again or another risky situation has occurred. In answering for their actions, multiple answers can be given as the child searches in their memory for something to satisfy the reason for the behaviour and answers may be illogical. It may be the answer is the one closest to something connected with what just happened, some trigger to a memory which is disconnected to the current situation. It may also be the case that different answers will be given until the parent seems satisfied.¹ Memory may also be linked with a fluctuating knowledge base and unpredictable performance when attempting the same task even in a short time frame. It is the case that children living with FASDs may get something right one day, even the next, then on the third day it is as if the skill has never been learnt. The lack of consistent knowledge means rules for sport or the spelling of words or remembering number concepts results in not being part of the team or relentless work on daily school work tasks until they have it correct.

Strategies

- Provide only one direction at a time. Limit to 6 concrete words.²
- Use a lot of repetition. Be prepared to teach and re-teach. This is the rule of thumb.
- Then teach and re-teach in each different environment – at home, at school, at the playground, when visiting family and friends.
- Break down information into smaller sections and relay one section at a time. If the child looks confused, then it is your job to break the information into even smaller pieces. Eg even a simple task like getting dressed may need to be broken down into steps because they can't remember what to do - put on your jocks, now put on your t-shirt, now put on your shorts etc.
- Provide modelling and mentoring – walk through an activity at the same time.
- Use visual tools – a calendar, charts, memory boards, scrap books. Collect pictures of people doing – dressing, showering, cleaning teeth, getting ready for school. Paste these in a book or paste on cardboard and keep in a box. These can be laid out in sequence.
- Use tools like a video recorder or take photos (in sequence for use as a memory prompt) of the child getting ready for school - washing face and/or hands or showering, clothes on the bed and getting dressed, shoes on, lunch in bag, going to car.
- Use a tape recorder and record the child reading. Or, with appropriate intervals, sequence actions – “now turn on the cold tap....now clean your teeth....

¹ McCreight 1997:23

² Let's Talk FASD.

- Have someone 'walk' through activities which happen in a sequence (as above).