

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A Letter from a 16 Year-Old

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When I first found out that I had the symptoms of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, I was confused and angry. I thought that I was different from everyone else and that I would be known for what I have. Since then, I have learned that the symptoms vary from individual to individual. It depends on during what stage of the pregnancy the mother drank, and the amount of alcohol consumed.

One of my symptoms is trouble understanding instructions. When a teacher shows us a certain topic, I can understand. Visual contact is a very important way of learning for me. Instructions sometimes confuse me. Following instructions is hard. When I'm asked or told to do something (like "take out the garbage") I won't understand, or the words will get mixed up in my mind.

Some other symptoms are: Not being able to follow oral instructions as well as written ones (example – Teacher giving assignment instructions orally – not being able to remember or follow them correctly); not hearing exactly what was said to me (example – My stepfather giving me a command to do, and not hearing him clearly, even in the same room. It's like I don't catch some words or phrases.); being impulsive, doing or acting on excitement, not able to focus on reality if disaster strikes.

Most of the time I worry a lot, and make problems seem impossible to handle. When I worry, I make myself sick. At school sometimes I get sick to my stomach, or get a fever and feel awful.

These symptoms are very small compared to some symptoms I've heard of. Some people find it impossible to believe when I explain my problem, since they can't see the signs of FAS.

This letter is to help guide myself and others. I want to help people learn about FAS, help parents who have kids who have it, and let other people who have it understand themselves better.

Sincerely,

Sidney, age 16

Information provided by:



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