



# Reframing Behaviors Through an FASD-Informed Perspective

## What is FASD?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) are a group of diagnosable medical conditions that can occur in a person who was exposed to alcohol before birth.

Individuals with FASD may face unique complexities, including difficulties with executive functioning, memory, emotional regulation, and social interactions.

## Behaviors Aren't Always Intentional

Many behaviors associated with FASD are often misunderstood as intentional “misbehavior” or defiance. However, these behaviors are frequently the result of brain-based differences caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. Before assuming that someone is being willfully defiant or actively choosing an action that may be inappropriate, consider an FASD-informed approach that considers brain-based differences and support needs.



Move from assuming someone *won't* do something to understanding they possibly *can't* do it (yet) without appropriate supports or accommodations.



## DEFICIT-BASED LENS

## FASD-INFORMED REALITY

## STRATEGIES



### *Misbehavior:* Defiance

Individuals might find it difficult to understand the consequences of not following rules and may struggle to remember instructions or pause to think before acting.

- Instructions should have very few steps
- Expect longer processing time for verbal instructions

### *Misbehavior:* Laziness

What may appear as “laziness” is often the result of executive functioning and memory difficulties that affect organization, time management, planning, and follow-through.

- Use visual schedules
- Set timers and alarms
- Practice a routine
- Use clear, simple instructions

### *Misbehavior:* Self-centered

Executive functioning deficits, impulsivity, and difficulty with perspective-taking and adaptive social skills can make it harder to control behavior and navigate social interactions.

- Share stories and examples
- Exercise patience and understanding
- Ask for clarification

### *Misbehavior:* Lying

People with FASD may inaccurately fill in memory gaps without intending to lie; this is known as confabulation. They do this not to deceive others but because they genuinely believe it is true.

- Gently correct misinformation
- Help the individual build their social cognitive skills

### *Misbehavior:* Stealing

Difficulties with memory, attention, planning, and organization can make it challenging for individuals to understand and consistently follow rules, including those related to ownership and property.

- Set clear boundaries and rules
- Supervise individuals around property
- Educate on ownership



## Looking for Support?

The FASD United Family Navigator Program serves members of the FASD community with one-on-one peer support, referrals to resources and services, information about prenatal alcohol exposure, or with a question about any facet of FASD. This service is free and does not require a referral. Scan the QR code to learn more and to connect with a Family Navigator.

Published 6/2026