

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH FASD: BEST PRACTICES

The following “best practices” were selected from reviewing the mental health and FASD literature, consultation with mental health professionals who work with people with FASD, FASD researchers, as well as people with in-home and in-body lived experience.

Build a Strong Therapeutic Alliance



- A key factor in the success of psychotherapy
- Create a purposeful and collaborative relationship based on trust and a safe working environment
- Leverage relational strengths
- Consider appropriate and respectful boundaries

Engage in Reflection



- Consider the process with clients and what is and is not working
- Adapt expectations to decrease chances of burnout *for both professional and client
- Recognize own comfort level and areas where additional knowledge is needed

Collaborate on Goals



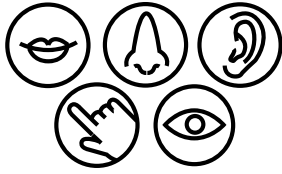
- Engage with the person to determine realistic and important goals
- Write down goals to revisit and focus sessions
- Explore previous strategies to inform the development of realistic goals

Adjust Language and Communication



- Use concrete language, be specific and use examples
 - Give instructions in step-by-step form
 - Use visuals when engaging in activities or take home work
 - Check-in with clients to minimize misunderstandings
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Use Multiple Approaches



- Have a flexible toolkit of possible approaches
- Present information in a myriad of ways
- Use a multi-sensory approach (i.e., auditory, visual, and hands-on methods)
- Drawing, painting, music, and role playing may be techniques that can work for clients with FASD

Support Self-Regulation



- Engage in activities that allow for recognizing emotions
- Use grounding, mindfulness, and other sensory tools

Have Patience and Be Flexible



- Be patient as concepts and ideas likely need to be repeated
- Have patience with clients who may miss appointments
- Set up reminders
- Avoid stigmatizing statements about challenges that repeatedly occur (e.g., "we've been over this 100 times")

Provide Consistency and Structure



- Keep appointment times the same and at the same location
- Recognize that missing appointments does not reflect a lack of desire from clients
- Consider sensory differences and changes to the physical environment

Reframe Behaviour



- Reframe behaviours that may be seen as challenging (see Section 2 - Reframing Behaviour)
- Contextualize behaviours within the challenges each client experiences
- Consider behaviours through an FASD-informed lens

Focus on and Leverage Strengths



- Work from a strengths-based perspective
- Take time to figure out each client's assets and abilities
- Expand ideas of mental health to include wellness, happiness, and joy