

PARENTING AND MENTORING RESPONSES TO BUILD CONTAINMENT, SAFETY, AND TRUST

For many reasons, those affected by FASDs often experience significant difficulty with the emotional themes of childhood. When such themes remain incomplete (i.e. when the imprinting is not entirely successful), the themes remain active, and are carried forward through adolescence and into adulthood. One challenge for parents and caregivers of those with FASDs is to understand which aspects of imprinting remain incomplete and to assist the child (or adolescent, or adult) in finding ways of working with those themes.

The following list shows the developmental themes alongside matching phrases and/or body-oriented strategies. These are general suggestions, and must be adapted for the unique character and temperament of the caregiver or parent. In situations where “we” seems more appropriate than “I,” this substitution may be made for each of the statements.. Remember that for the early stages, when a child does not yet fully comprehend language, the messages spoken by parents and caregivers carry an emotional weight beyond the meaning of the words. It is this emotion that the child hears and to which he/she may respond.

The chart which begins on the next page may be used for children at the specific ages noted or for those seeking to work with incomplete early imprinting in older children, adolescents, or adults.

Note: during adolescence, the childhood themes are revisited by all children undergoing transition toward adulthood. The rapid mood cycling of adolescents is a result of underlying psychological, neurological and hormonal imperatives to revisit and attempt resolution of unfinished themes. In those with FASDs, this cycling is often amplified, and is accompanied by emotional overwhelm.

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
From in utero to one month after birth	<p><i>Basic Safety and Trust</i></p> <p>Do I belong?</p> <p>Will I be loved?</p> <p>Will I be safe?</p> <p>Can I trust?</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>I want you to feel safe and comfortable.</p> <p>I want you to trust me.</p> <p>I want to be here with you.</p> <p>I will not abandon you.</p> <p>You are safe.</p> <p>I want you to be here.</p> <p>We (or I) welcome you with love.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Holding, with particular emphasis on the “bonding point” which is located between the shoulder blades, on the crest of the back. For many children, the bonding point is the location which first comes into contact with the inner surface of the womb. Gentle touch on the bonding point may promote feelings of safety and support (this is why many people instinctively touch this spot on others when showing empathy, caring or support).</p> <p>Creation of safe space.</p> <p>For fostering or adoption: secure, reliable placement.</p> <p>Quiet, non-intrusive atmosphere.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
<p>One month to eight months</p>	<p><i>Need Fulfillment</i></p> <p>Will my needs be met?</p> <p>Will my caregivers understand my 150 cries?</p> <p>Can I depend on my caregivers to respond?</p> <p>At approximately five or six months of age, infant brain development causes control of behavior to shift to the cortex. This is the age at which executive functioning begins to develop.</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>I want to help you meet your needs.</p> <p>I will help you learn to ask for what you need.</p> <p>I cannot meet all of your needs.</p> <p>I will help you find others who may also help you with your needs.</p> <p>Don't give up.</p> <p>Don't retreat.</p> <p>I want you to trust me.</p> <p>We (or I) will meet your needs with love.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Infants use as many as 150 different cries, each of which has a specific meaning, is a specific request, or represents a specific expression. Awareness of the vocabulary of this language of cries is a central task of caregivers of infants. The tendency is to interpret many cries as requests for food. Only a small number of cries derive from hunger; most involve requests for interaction, or emotional comfort, or simply for being together, which is the main ingredient of healthy dependency. (And, sometimes, babies just cry, for no apparent reason; usually in the evening, inconsolably, for durations of up to a couple of hours. This pattern is not currently understood.)</p> <p>Many people with unfinished imprinting from this age have chronic problems staying warm, particularly in the hands and feet. They often enjoy warm water, in hot tubs and baths.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
Eight months to 2.5 years	<p><i>Autonomy</i></p> <p>Can I explore the world safely?</p> <p>Can I establish my own boundaries?</p> <p>Can I crawl, and walk, and run?</p> <p>Can I explore, and return again to safety?</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>I want you to depend on me for some things, yet do some things on your own.</p> <p>The world is an amazing place.</p> <p>I want you to be motivated to explore the world and to find interesting people and experiences.</p> <p>I will help you slow down when you speed up too much, or become overwhelmed.</p> <p>We (or I) support your individuality with love.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Cross-pattern movement: this is any type of movement that utilizes opposite sides of the body at the same time, for example the left hand and the right foot. The most common types of cross-pattern movement are crawling, walking and running.</p> <p>Intentional crawling (in which crawling is a game, and the adult crawls too).</p> <p>Nature and cultural experiences: will expand a child's experience of the world.</p> <p>Physical exercise: running, playing ball, swimming: anything with cross-patterning.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
Two to four years	<p><i>Will and Power</i></p> <p>Can I be who I am?</p> <p>Am I too much?</p> <p>Will I overwhelm others?</p> <p>Will I be overwhelmed?</p> <p>Can I use my aggression?</p> <p>Can I be dominant, or must I submit to others?</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>You are strong.</p> <p>I see your power.</p> <p>I want you to express yourself.</p> <p>You do not need to hide your power.</p> <p>I am not afraid of you.</p> <p>I will stop you if you become unsafe.</p> <p>If you need to fight with me, I will stand in and not run away; but I won't sacrifice my own boundaries or safety.</p> <p>I won't give up my power for you.</p> <p>I want you to feel strong without needing to hurt yourself or others.</p> <p>We (or I) see your power, and love your power.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Strong self-awareness, relaxation, and containment on the part of caregivers.</p> <p>Combining parental kindness with firmness.</p> <p>Conversations about power (physical, emotional, verbal): discuss what power is, how to use it, when to avoid using it.</p> <p>Wrestling (using Aikido-type principles, in which conflict is perceived as flow, or energy).</p> <p>Non-competitive games, or games in which success depends upon cooperation and collaboration (for example, Frizbee, tossing a ball, Lego-building).</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
Three to six years	<p><i>Love and Intimacy</i></p> <p>Development of romantic ideas and fantasies.</p> <p>Growing awareness of physical intimacy and sensuality.</p> <p>Development of ideas about what love means.</p> <p>Expression of love as an ideal.</p> <p>Exploration of the body.</p> <p>Attachment to parents and caregivers as love ideals.</p> <p>(Note: among children who undergo sexual trauma, the first sexual assaults often begin at this age.)</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>Your body is yours.</p> <p>Your sensations are yours.</p> <p>Intimacy and sensuality are normal, healthy feelings.</p> <p>Intimate feelings must be shared carefully and appropriately.</p> <p>We (or I) see and feel your loving feelings and support them.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Conversations about sensual boundaries, safety in the community, norms and behaviors, etc.</p> <p>(Children with FASDs often need direct supervision and support with appropriate touch.)</p> <p>Assistance in developing appropriate romantic role models.</p> <p>Teaching appropriate and safe touch.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
Five to eight years	<p><i>Opinions and Expression</i></p> <p>Conscious development of ideas, opinions, values.</p> <p>Passion for debate and discourse.</p> <p>Desire to be right.</p> <p>Desire to know.</p> <p>Tendency for absolute expressions.</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>You are smart!</p> <p>You know many things.</p> <p>You have strong beliefs.</p> <p>I have strong beliefs.</p> <p>If our beliefs are different, that's OK.</p> <p>I will not belittle you or your ideas.</p> <p>I believe in the power of ideas.</p> <p>I will try to find joy in ideas together with you.</p> <p>I want you to find your own voice, your own truth.</p> <p>I love your ideas and your way of sharing them.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Strong self-awareness on the part of caregivers: differing views/opinions must be OK.</p> <p>Recognition that it does not matter who is right; the relationship is the important thing.</p> <p>Encouragement of conversation, debate, dialog.</p> <p>Provision of educational opportunities.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
Seven to twelve years	<p><i>Groups</i></p> <p>Exploring the balance between solidarity (being an equal group member) and performance (being unique and special).</p> <p>Can I be unique, and different?</p> <p>Can I join with others, and be one with the crowd?</p> <p>Can I be a leader?</p> <p>Can I follow?</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>You are unique.</p> <p>I want you to discover and value your unique gifts and talents.</p> <p>I want you to find a healthy group of peers.</p> <p>I want you to excel at things you enjoy, and sometimes to push yourself to excel at things you find difficult.</p> <p>I want you to discover your potential, and to find your place in the world.</p> <p>I love to see you in groups and also doing your own thing.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>School involvement.</p> <p>Coaching.</p> <p>Support of friends and the peer group (in other words, being an involved parent or caregiver).</p> <p>Assistance with finding a skill at which the child excels.</p> <p>Assistance with the complexities of peer group relationships.</p> <p>Humour, playfulness, relaxation.</p>

Age	Theme	Phrases & Strategies
<p>12 to 19: First integration of childhood themes</p> <p>19 to 28: Transition to adult ego</p> <p>28-32: Choosing of life path</p> <p>32-35: Final choices toward adulthood</p> <p>35: Adulthood</p>	<p><i>Integration</i></p> <p>Many children and adolescents struggle with completion of this long and complex stage. In those affected by FASDs, this stage often takes longer and sometimes cannot be completed at all. This does not mean the work should not be undertaken.</p> <p>As a result of complexities in the modern world, the achievement of adulthood has shifted from age 19 to age 35 since WW II.</p> <p>The central task of this stage is to integrate one's life experience, including the unresolved childhood themes, and to develop a sense of the path one will choose in life.</p> <p>Broadly speaking, this is consistent with what psychologists call the adult ego, or adult observing ego.</p> <p>This stage is the beginning of one's "life wisdom."</p>	<p><i>Phrases</i></p> <p>I want you to understand who you are.</p> <p>I want you to know yourself.</p> <p>I understand that sometimes things can be overwhelming, and I will assist you to understand and deal with this when it happens.</p> <p>I will help you become a lifelong learner.</p> <p>I will help you find ways of reaching your goals.</p> <p>I want you to plan and envision your life with joy.</p> <p>We (or I) love to see who you are becoming, and to be a part of it.</p> <p>I (or we) love you for who you are.</p> <p><i>Strategies</i></p> <p>Dependable adult mentoring.</p> <p>(Appropriate mentoring is one of the most difficult psychological skills to master, because it depends so much on the self-awareness of the mentor.)</p> <p>Neutrality (the essence of mentoring).</p> <p>Assistance in choosing education, jobs, and careers, without pressure and unspoken preferences and expectations.</p> <p>(The search for dependable adult mentors is hard-wired into children by evolution. Similarly, research has shown that the role of mentor is hard-wired into adults, particularly grandparents. In the absence of adult mentors, adolescents seek to mentor one another. They may form a youth gang and defer to the most dominant among them to be their leader.)</p>