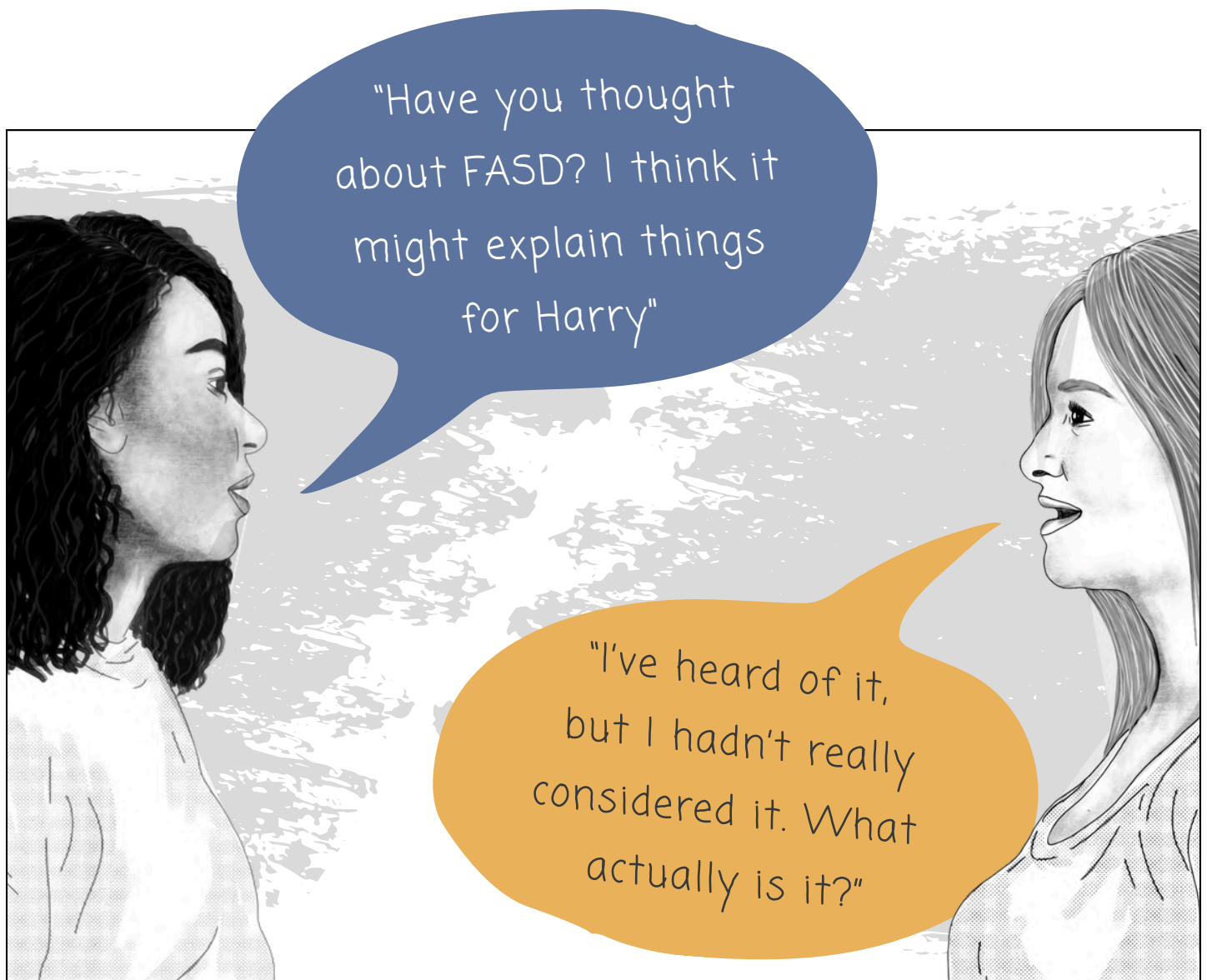


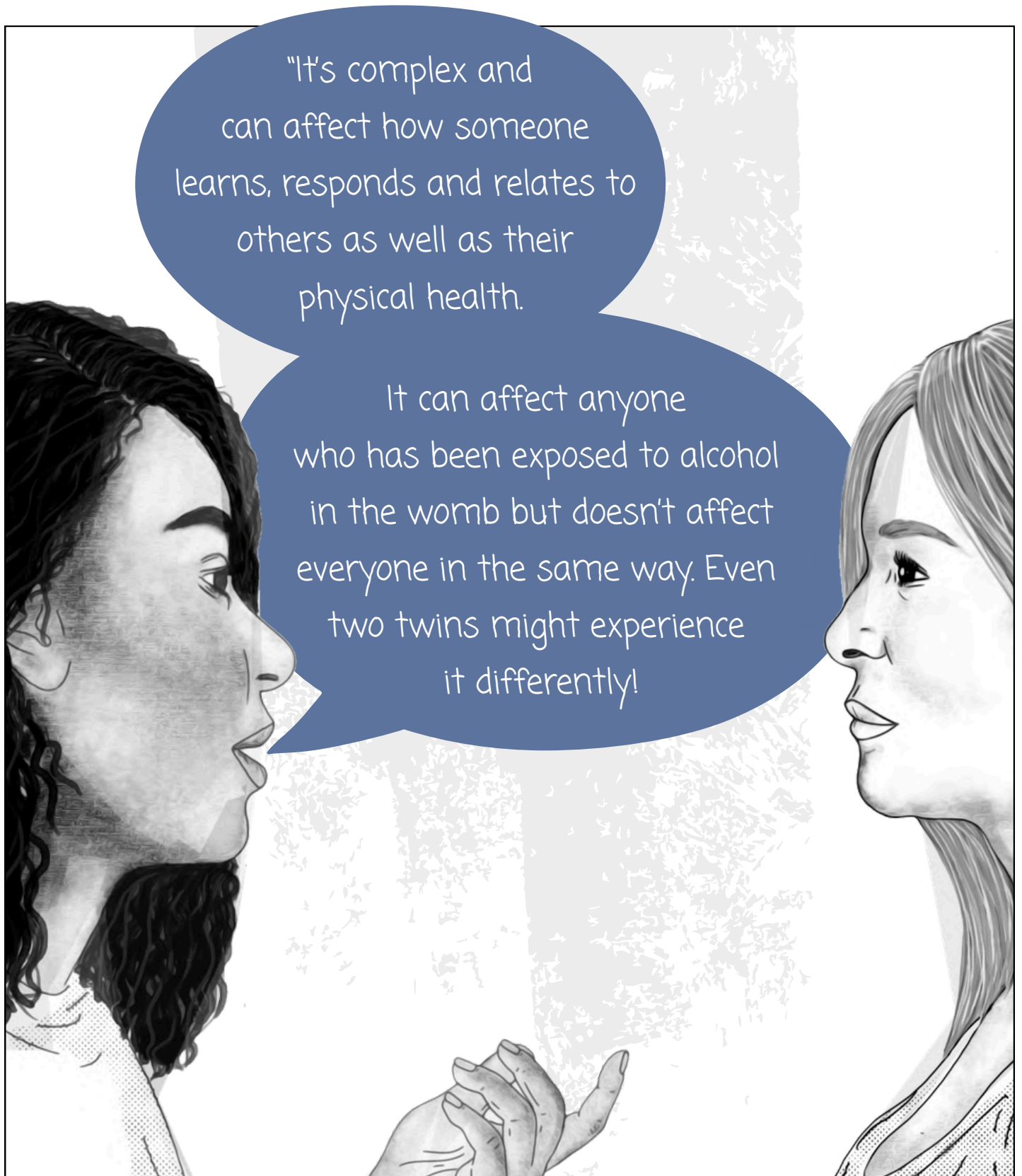
FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

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WHAT IS IT, WHAT WOULD WE NOTICE, AND HOW CAN WE SUPPORT?



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a condition that impacts how someone's brain and body develop as a result of exposure to alcohol before they were born. There is no 'safe amount' of alcohol drinking during pregnancy because everybody processes alcohol differently.



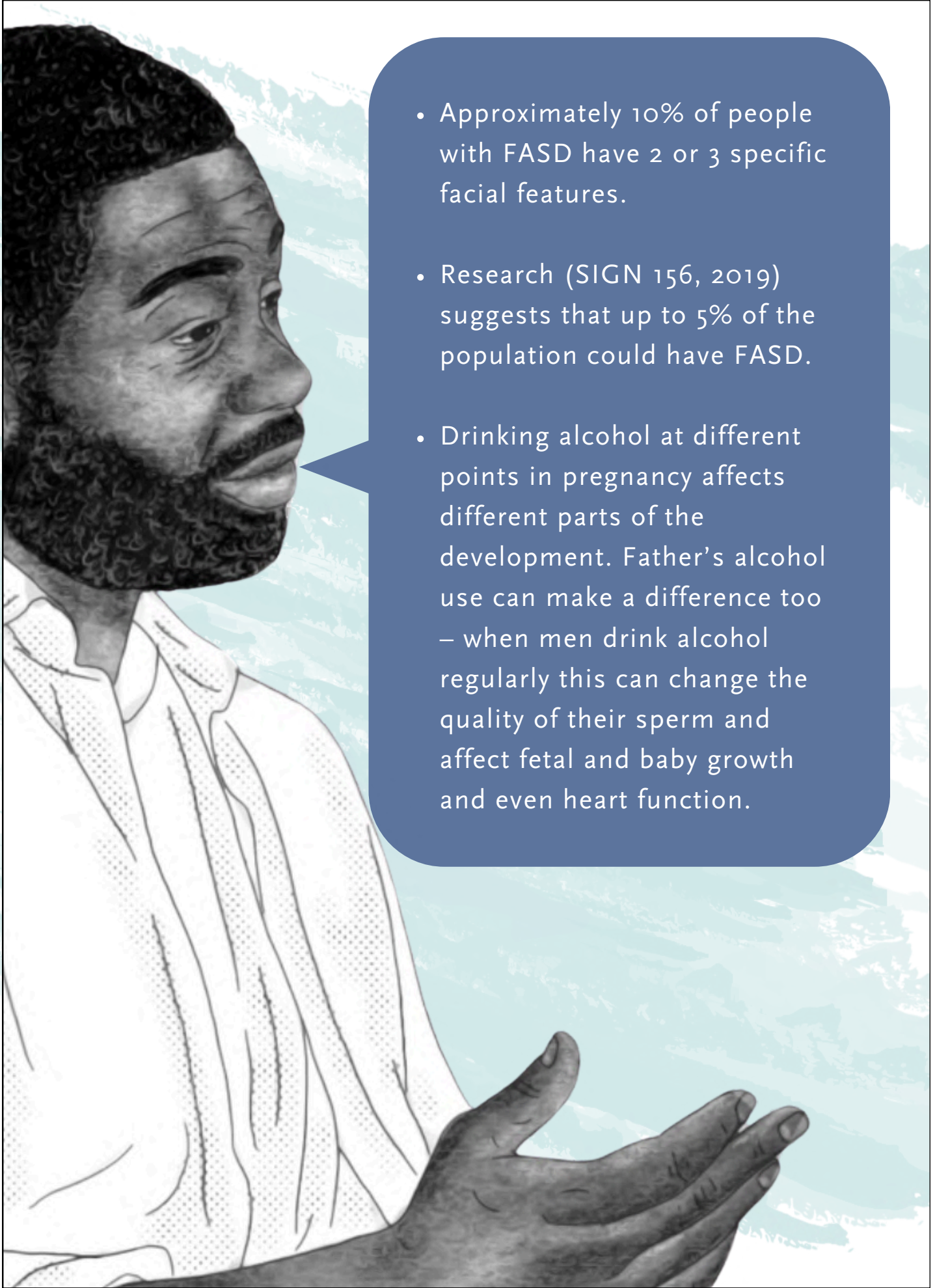
FASD affects people in many different ways throughout their life and, like everyone else, each person with FASD is unique with their own strengths and struggles. Some people with FASD also have ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia or movement and sensory issues so getting an assessment is really important to understand individual skills and needs.

HOW DOES ALCOHOL CAUSE THE DAMAGE?

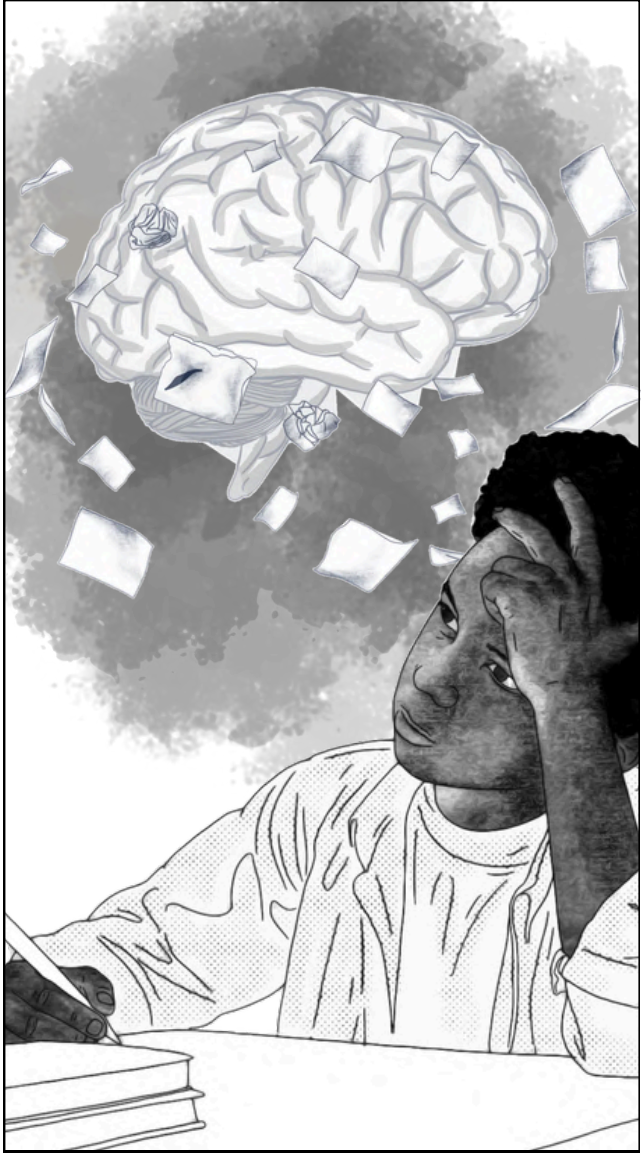


FASD is caused when a baby is exposed to alcohol while developing in the womb. Alcohol is a toxin that passes to the developing fetus and can't be processed by its body because it isn't developed yet. The alcohol impacts how the developing brain cells grow, travel and connect. This can cause still birth or miscarriage or babies being born prematurely. It can also lead to permanent long-term changes in brain structure and nervous system development. Sometimes the functioning of other bodily systems including the heart, the digestive system and the immune system is affected too.

DID YOU ALSO KNOW THAT...

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- Approximately 10% of people with FASD have 2 or 3 specific facial features.
 - Research (SIGN 156, 2019) suggests that up to 5% of the population could have FASD.
 - Drinking alcohol at different points in pregnancy affects different parts of the development. Father's alcohol use can make a difference too – when men drink alcohol regularly this can change the quality of their sperm and affect fetal and baby growth and even heart function.

A PERSON WITH FASD WILL STRUGGLE WITH AT LEAST 3 (AND SOMETIMES MORE) OF...

- Regulating their emotions and controlling impulses.
 - **Paying attention, sitting still or focussing on tasks or instructions.**
 - Cognition, including often having a 'spiky profile' where different skills have developed at different rates and not all in line with chronological age.
 - **Managing relationships with other people and understanding social situations.**
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- The illustration shows a person with dark skin and short hair, wearing a light-colored shirt, sitting at a desk. They are looking up with a distressed expression, their hand resting on their forehead. Above their head, a large, detailed brain is depicted, surrounded by numerous small, floating rectangular pieces of paper or fragments, suggesting a fragmented or overwhelmed mind. The background is a dark, smoky or cloudy grey.
- Planning and sequencing tasks, managing and understanding time, moving between activities and tasks.
 - **Memory, including 'confabulation' where they seem to make up events to bridge the gaps in what they're able to remember or recall in the moment.**
 - Managing movement, fine motor skills and/or overwhelming sensory environments.
 - **Understanding language and instructions (often when spoken communication is, or seems to be, a strength).**
 - A smaller head/brain size (microcephaly).
 - **Academic achievement.**

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILIES LIVING WITH FASD

Parents and young people with living experience of FASD say they need and want:

Timely access to both assessment AND ongoing specialist therapeutic support.

Professional, evidence-based support from people who REALLY know and understand FASD.

Not to be defined by their FASD - it's just one part of them.

A safe space or support group with other parent and caregivers

Schools, school staff and SEND teams who can be responsive to the wide range of needs that children with FASD have, while also growing their strengths.

Professionals they meet to be informed about what FASD is (and isn't) and not to be dismissed.

WHEN SHOULD WE 'THINK FASD'?



Because people with FASD are best supported by caregivers and professionals who understand their profile and their needs, early assessment and identification is really beneficial. Thinking about FASD might be important when:

- A pregnancy was unplanned or confirmed late and either parent drank alcohol before and in the early weeks, or the baby's mother drank alcohol at any stage of pregnancy
- Parents/caregivers and professionals are working really hard, and things are getting worse or just not changing
- There is a gap opening up in abilities between the individual and others their age. Or their development seems to have got stuck; their chronological age doesn't match developmental stage in various areas (known as dysmaturity)
- There are already concerns about or diagnoses of Autism, ADHD, motor or movement problems
- There are significant problems with organising themselves and their things, planning and regulating emotions and behaviour (known as executive functioning)
- There are language and communication differences – particularly social communication, and where expressive spoken language is strong compared to understanding
- Confabulation is present - this can look like lying but there is no intention to deceive. It is a memory and 'reality monitoring' issue where people 'fill in the gaps' with information that they 100% believe to be true because they want to answer but can't access the accurate information/things have got muddled in the memory
- There is variation in abilities and performance on different days

WHO CAN SUPPORT?

The following organisations have information and support for people with FASD, families, professionals and the general public:

BEACON HOUSE SPECIALIST FASD SERVICE



We provide specialist FASD assessment, therapy, consultation, supervision and training, visit our website page for more information:

www.beaconhouse.org.uk/specialist-fasd-service

ADOPTION UK FASD HUB

FASD Hub Scotland provide a support service for parents/carers across Scotland who live with children, young people and young adults who have a history of prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE), with or without an FASD diagnosis. Visit: www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub

ME & MY FASD

Youth-friendly site with resources designed by and for young people with FASD. Visit: www.fasd.me

NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR FASD (UK)

Leading UK charity supporting families, professionals and individuals with FASD. Visit: www.nationalfasd.org.uk