

## **A LETTER FROM ONE BIRTH MUM TO ANOTHER**

Dear you,

Before I start, I am sending one huge empathetic hug. A hug that I needed 10 years ago, and a voice in your head that is saying, "please trust me, it really is going to be ok!" here is why.

I have sat in the chair that you are sitting in right now. A multitude of emotions screaming in my brain. Shock, relief, horror, sadness, guilt, shame, regret, anger...

I could go on and you know I could, but we, the birth parent of our beautiful child who has just been handed the one diagnosis that actually makes sense to us, FASD, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, have to settle down with this news, digest it and ask ourselves "what now?"

I'll tell you "what now?" Now is where you make sense of your child's behaviours. Now is where you go "YES THIS FITS, AT LAST." Now is where you learn. join groups and research. Now is where you start paving the way for your amazing child to be the best that they can be.

Just know that the diagnosis FASD does not render your child a 'statistic' and it does not leave you with a future of remorse and guilt. This diagnosis is the door to finding your child's talents, their 'thing' if you like. This is where you become the leader and stand in front of the educators who are saying "it's the parenting style, it's just bad behaviour, it's a choice," and you tell them, "listen to me, this is what my child needs, and if you will not provide it for them, I will find someone who will." This is where you put your guilt to bed and instead, turn in into pro action, not re action.

This is also where you find an understanding ear for yourself, you need it! To help your AMAZING child, you have to take time to understand your regret. Regret will not move us forward and regret will not change the next step. So help yourself to help your child which will help you. In turn, you will help all those that have been misunderstanding your child and judging you. You will be educating them in FASD. Stand strong, stand firm, and stand proud. It hurts. I know, my tears have been many and my pain deep, but, those tears DO turn to tears of pride when we see our weakest moments turned into our strengths and our FASD becomes a future not a failure.

With compassion, respect and understanding

Jan Griffin, birth mum to my amazingly talented son Rossi.