

Raja and Neil's FASD Book Club

The Complexity of Attachment Issues in FASD

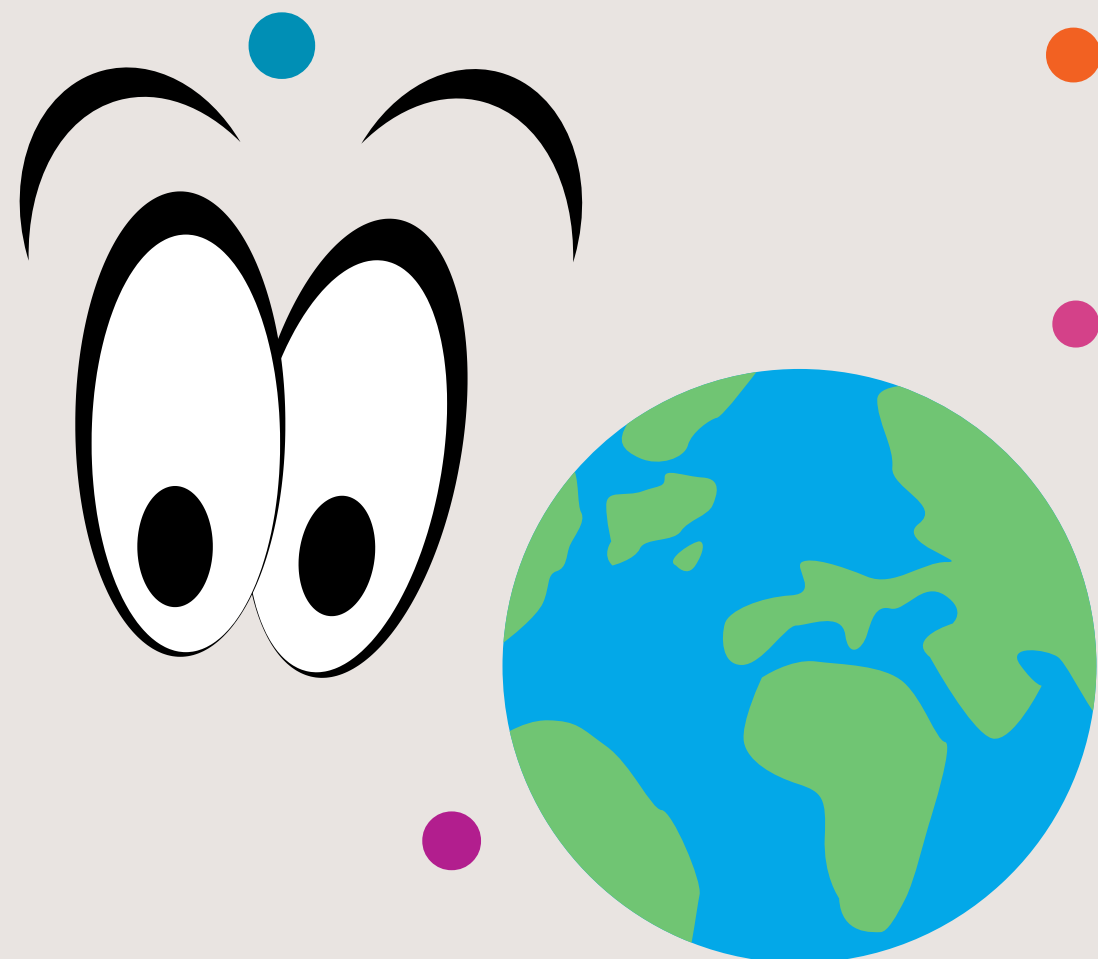


Helen Oakwater talked about attachment issues and FASD, and how they are caused in different ways, but can also overlap and be mixed up.

Helen is an adopter, an author, and an adoption expert.



An attachment is a relationship between two people that is made over time, like the one between a child and their parent or another loved one.



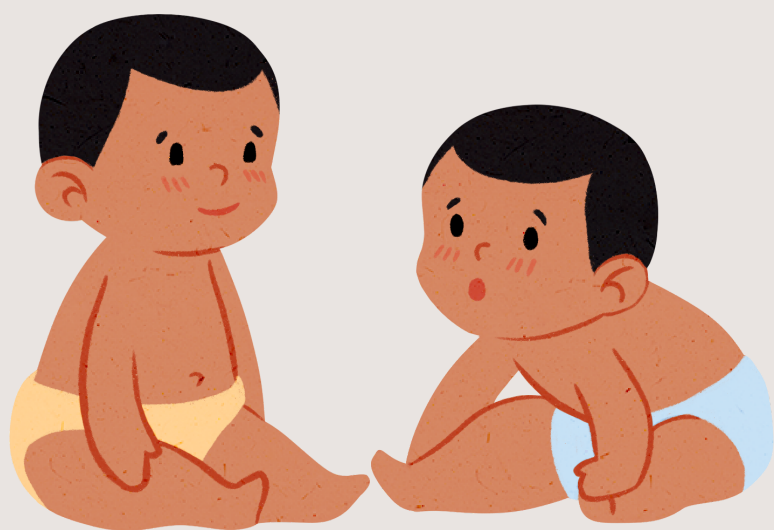
These relationships are important and can change how people see the world.

Attachment timeline in babies



0-6 weeks

'Asocial' - the baby will make noise in any situation, around anyone.



6 weeks - 7 months

The baby will try and make an attachment with anyone around them. This is called 'Indiscriminate Attachment'.



7-9 months

The baby will have a stronger attachment with their favourite parent or caregiver. This is called 'Specific Attachment'.



10 months +

The baby will have attachments with multiple people, and can feel safe around people other than their parents or caregivers. This is called 'Multiple Attachments'.

What is trauma and how does it make people feel unsafe?

Trauma normally shows itself in one of two ways:



1 - People can get overwhelmed and become upset by something that has happened to them or because they are feeling an emotion they don't understand.

2 - Or they feel they might die.

This trauma can make people feel unsafe



People who develop healthy attachments with their parents or caregivers when they're young will usually feel safe when people they love and trust are around them.

People who develop poor attachments when they're young can often feel unsafe even when there is no need to, or even when people they love are around. This is because their ability to detect threats has been 'miswired' by trauma.

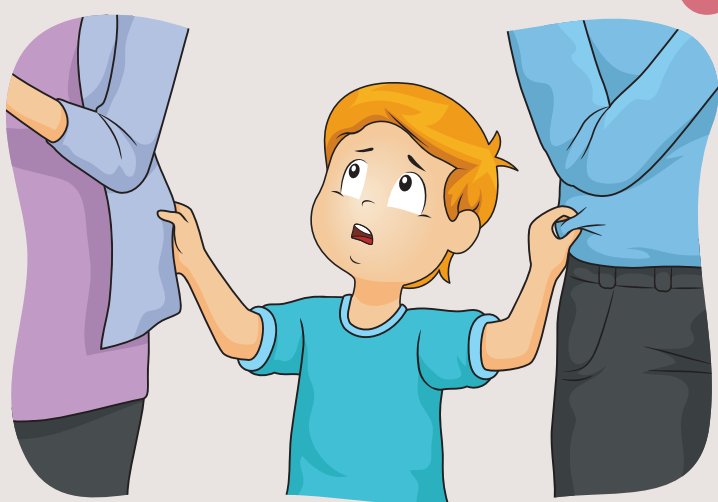
How FASD and trauma can get mixed up



FASD and trauma can get mixed up, because people with FASD and people with trauma can both have attachment issues, but for different reasons.



A baby could be affected by alcohol before it is born and have FASD. They could have parents or caregivers who are kind and supportive, or they could have unkind parents or caregivers.



They could not have FASD, but have parents who are unkind.



Because trauma and FASD can look similar, it's important that people get the correct assessments to help decide whether they have FASD or trauma, or both.

Different types of maltreatment

Maltreatment is when someone treats another person in a way that is wrong, and it can cause trauma. There are different types:



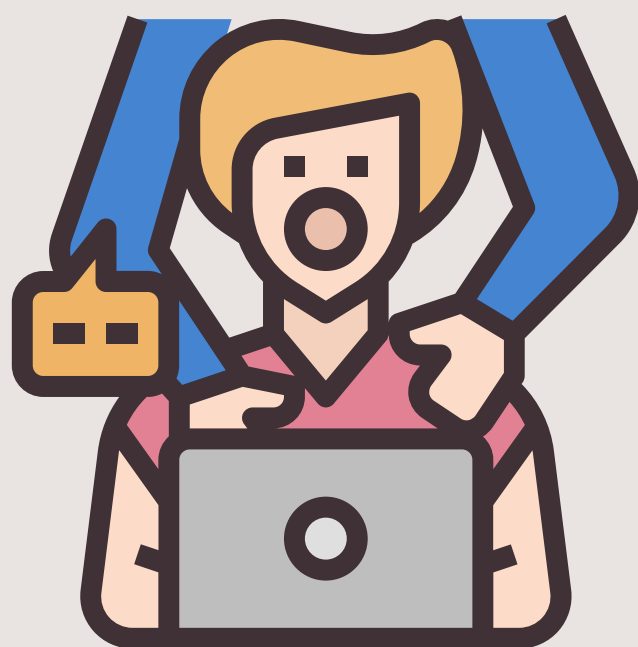
● Neglect - when someone isn't shown the love and attention they need.



Physical abuse - when someone physically hurts another person.



Emotional abuse - when someone makes another person feel bad or ashamed.



Sexual abuse - when someone uses sexual contact with another person or speaks in a sexual way to someone that makes them feel uncomfortable.



Fear - when someone makes another person feel afraid.

What is healthy attachment?

A healthy attachment between two people is formed when two people are good to each other.

Healthy attachment with loved ones at a young age can make children see the world in a good way.

Below are examples of the ways that a person who had healthy attachments when they were young sees the world.

"I am safe"

"I can trust adults"

"There is a place for me here"

"The world is ok"

"I'm okay"

"I am cared for"

"I am valued"

"People care for me"

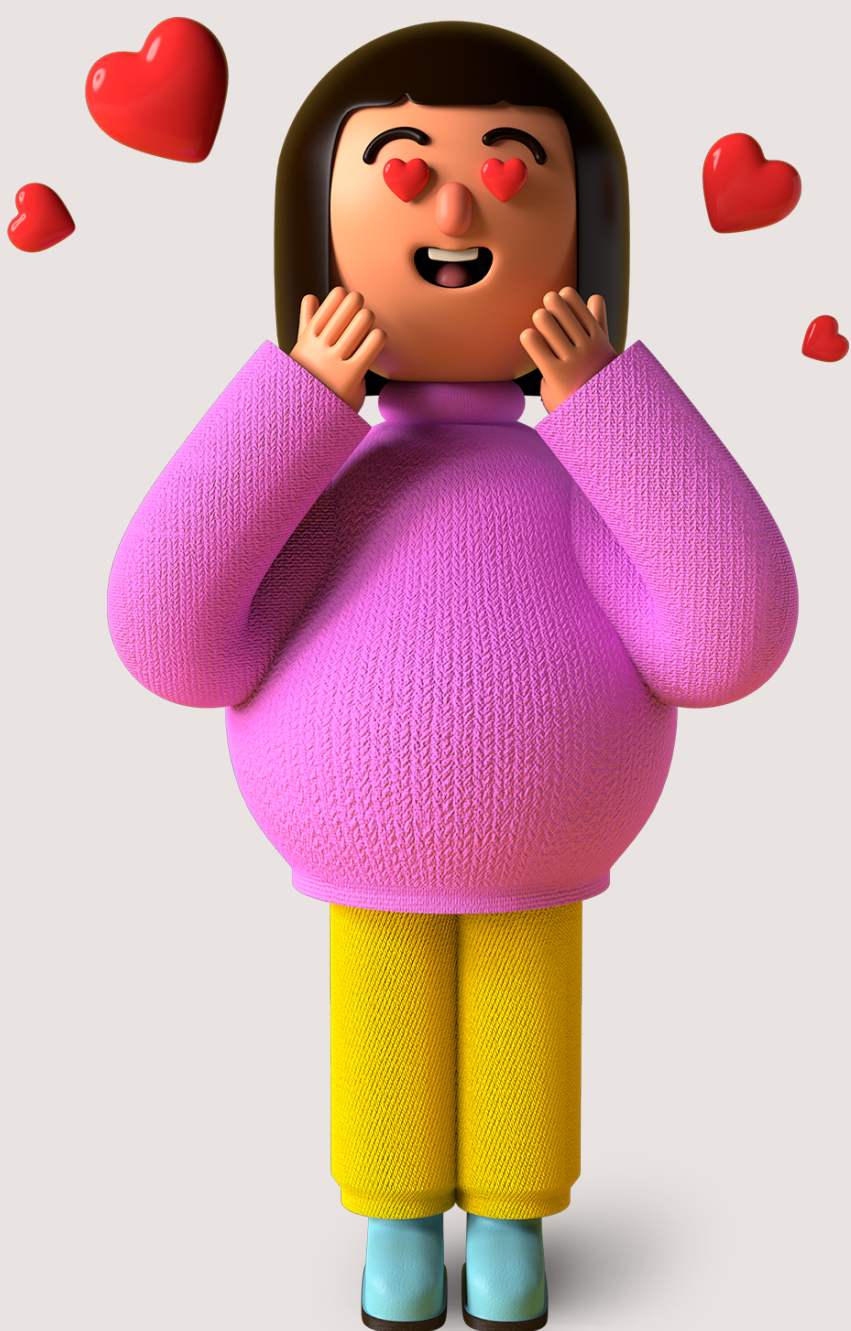
"It's a safe place"

"I am special"

"I am important to them"

"I am loved"

"People love me"



What is poor attachment?

A poor attachment forms when two people are less than good to each other.

People who didn't have healthy attachments when they were young might see the world in a negative way.



Below are examples of the ways that people who had poor attachments when they were young might see the world.

"Nothing is important"

"I am not cared for"

"I am not safe"

"Dangerous, unpredictable place"

"It's a hostile world"

"People hurt you"

"I'm alone"

"I'm ignored"

"The world is not ok"

"I'm terrified"

"I'm bad"

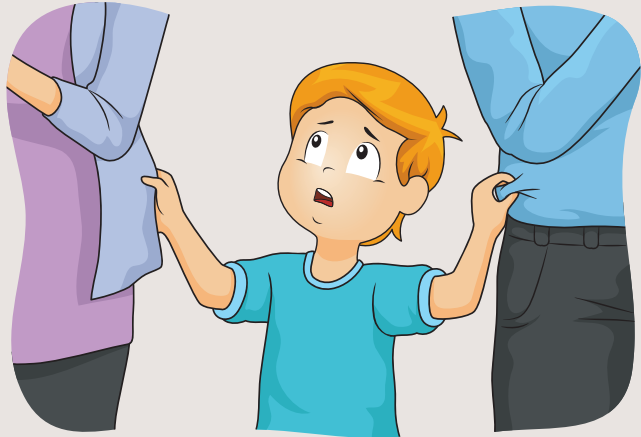
"I'm not valued"

"I'm unlovable"

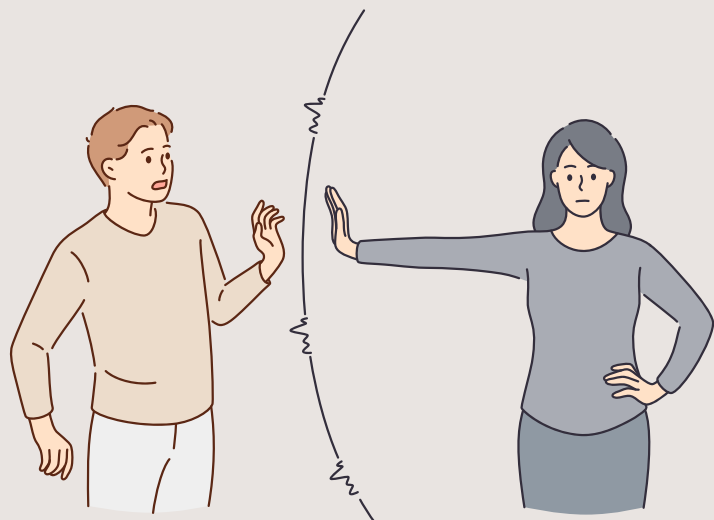


Insecure caregivers & insecure children

An insecure caregiver or a an unhealthy caregiver will probably have 3 main features.



1 - They may be distant or appear not to care enough.



2 - They might avoid being around their child or be controlling.



3 - They might be chaotic, and blame other people or even their children for their mistakes.

This can make their child insecure as well.



They might be very dependent on other people, or try to control them.



They might push other people away and refuse help even when they need it.



They might be angry, fearful, or sad.

Toxic parenting

Classified by Susan Forward

- There are different kinds of toxic or unhealthy parenting as classified by Susan Forward



Verbal abusers - people who use words to make people feel bad.



Physical abusers - people who get angry and take it out on their children with force.



Sexual abusers - people who behave in a sexually inappropriate way towards children.



Inadequate parents - parents who focus on their own problems more than their children.



Controllers - parents who try to control their children with guilt and emotions.



Alcoholics and drug abusers - parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol and can't always control their behaviour.

FASD, trauma, and parenting expectations

- Particularly when parents or caregivers foster or adopt a child, they might not know whether the child has been exposed to alcohol in the womb or whether they were mistreated.



Parents or caregivers might not be prepared for a child with additional needs.



They may assume their child has been traumatised, and parent the wrong way by accident.



Parents or caregivers may become frustrated when their parenting doesn't work as expected.

FASD, trauma, and teaching expectations

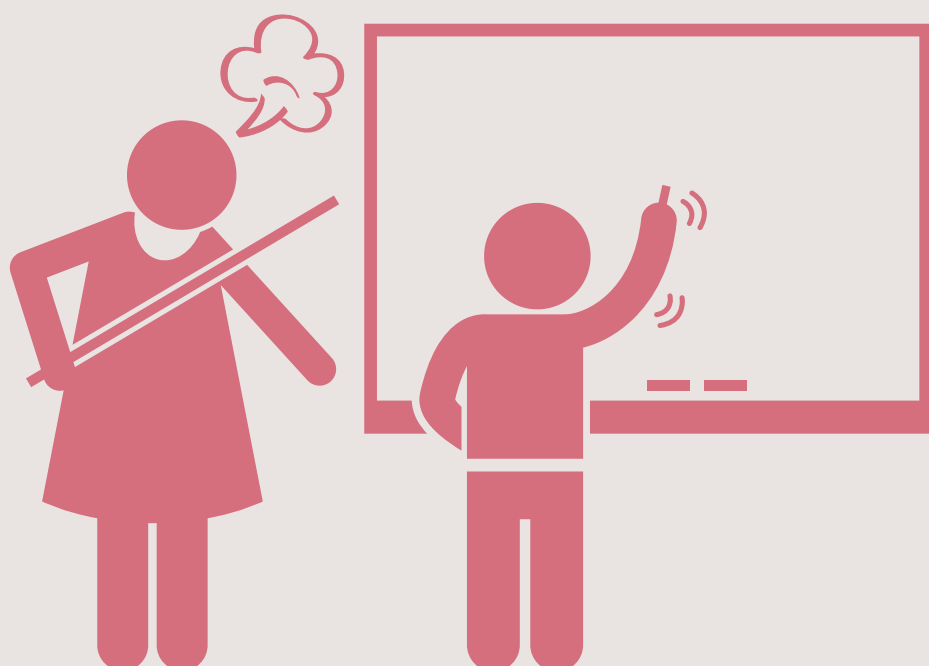
This lack of knowledge about the child's past can also lead to problems at school.



Teachers may not know they are teaching a child with additional needs.



Like the parents / caregivers, they might treat a child with FASD as if they've been traumatised instead.

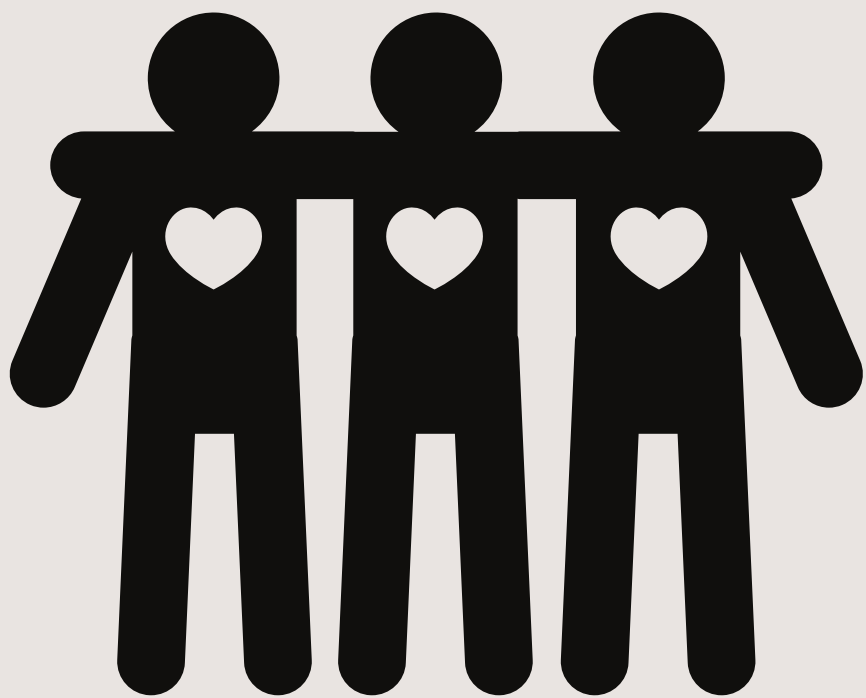


The teacher might become angry with a student who appears to behave badly, when actually they 'can't', not 'won't' do something.

Diagnosis is important



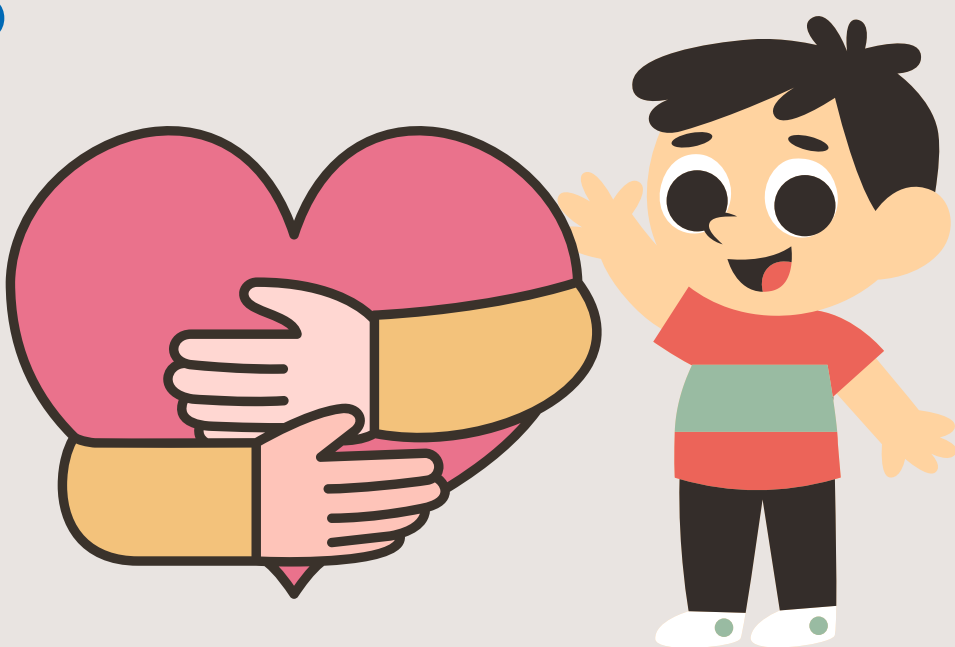
It's very important that children have proper assessments to decide whether they have FASD or trauma, or both.



This can help them get the support they need.

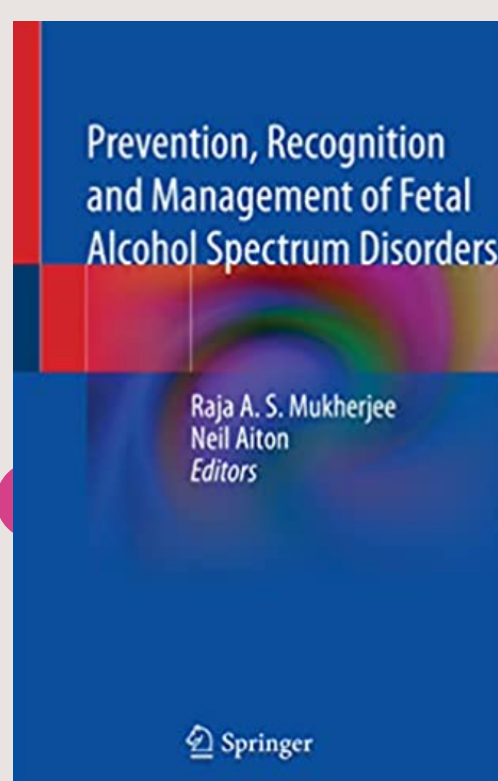


Helen says parenting or teaching a child is like looking at them through bubble wrap - the image is fuzzy and wonky.



Getting a diagnosis helps people see the child more clearly, and give them the right help.

What is Raja & Neil's FASD Bookclub?



Prof Raja Mukherjee and Dr Neil Aiton wrote a book for other doctors about FASD. But they hope more people can access the information.



In this online book club people who wrote chapters give 15- minute talks about what they wrote and then they answer questions.



After each book club, the talks are shared on National FASD's YouTube channel.



You don't have to read the book. It's expensive because it's for libraries and universities. But if you want to order it, it's here:

<https://tinyurl.com/RajaAndNeilFASDBook>