

In Barbie's Words...

My Mother died when I was six, because she was very sick, and I could not do a thing about it, even though I knew why she got that sick. I would blame myself sometimes, telling myself, "You knew what was in that bottle was not water. Why didn't you stop her?"

I drew myself in more and more as the years went by. Elementary school did not help me get over the pain. The kids treated me different, as if I had the plague. I did not understand why.

Then one day while I was walking to class, a girl from one of my classes wanted to beat me up. When I asked her why, she replied, "Because you're retarded." I was shocked. Why would she say that?

I started to think about it, and could not figure it out, until one day I was asked a simple math question, and I could not figure it out. The problem was times tables. I was not very good at it in 5th grade, like the other kids. It frustrated me when I knew how slow I was in learning. My grandparents always tried to help me with my homework, but in the end I would get mad and quit.

Animals were my escape from all the pain I was feeling. I felt alone because no one wanted to be my friend. The only way to get a friend was to tell my sad past. I did not want people to be my friend because they felt sorry for me, so I made my own world, where I was liked for who I was. This world of mine lasted all through middle school.



When I began high school, I decided to work hard and try to make friends. I went to each class, worked hard, and tried to talk to anyone. Finally a girl named Crystal came up to me, and we started talking. We became friends instantly. I was so happy, and we had all our classes together.

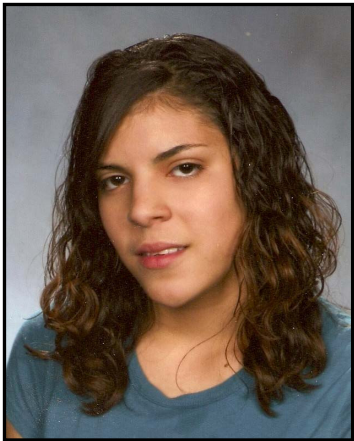
Each year in high school, it got easier to make friends, and I became less shy. I even had a couple boyfriends. Things were finally going good.

Until one day I was visiting the doctor, and my Nana talked about FAS, that I had it. My world was turned upside down, all the unanswered questions made sense. That I could not learn at a normal pace was because of this FAS.

I had to tell my best friend. But how would I explain this to her? My mind started to race. "What if she won't like me no more," I asked myself. The best thing to do was swallow my pride and tell her. The next day I sat her down and told her. When I finished, she didn't do what I was expecting her to do. She looked at me and started laughing! When I asked her why she was laughing, she simply looked at me and said, "So do I. It's nothing to freak about." I was so glad she told me that, because I had the courage to tell my other friends. I found out that half my friends had FAS. I knew when I met them that there was something that made us all click with each other.

So with that behind me, I was able to make it through high school and graduate and be the woman I am today. I am 18 now, and I'm learning to be a dog trainer.





Barbie is a bright and beautiful young lady. She was adopted and raised by her grandparents since she was one year old. Barbie was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) when she was still very young. Her grandparents were open and honest with her about her diagnosis, but it was hard for her to understand what that meant.

Barbie has an IQ in the normal range, but was enrolled in special education. At age 18, she has written language skills of age 16, reading comprehension of age 10, math skills of age 9, and problem solving skills of age 8.

Barbie's grandparents have educated themselves about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and they continue to seek support and assistance to help Barbie succeed in a safe, supportive environment.

What do teens and young adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders need?

A "REASONABLE" Plan:

- Remove invisible barriers, such as denial, stigma, blame.
- Educate everyone at all levels about the nature and neurology of FASD.
- Assessments, such as IQ, Vineland, functional assessment, journal.
- Service plan based on individual needs, capabilities, and talents.
- Objectives with reasonable expectations to ensure success.
- New definition of "success" (survive) and new dream for the future.
- Acceptance by everyone of the reality that FASDs are brain disorders.
- Build a Circle of Support to nurture, guide, and mentor the individual.
- Life-long plan for sustaining that support so he/she can thrive..
- Everyone is responsible for FASD, its prevention and intervention.

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A story about how a shy young woman came to terms with having a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

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