

REDEFINING SUCCESS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS WITH FASD

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“Success is a moment” – Marsha Teichman

Success is not one thing, or one place, or one time. There is no “right” meaning, and there is no “wrong” meaning for success. There is only what works for you. It is a whole bunch of things that happen one at a time, over time. Each experience is a success by itself. Each time you do what you were trying to do, you are succeeding. The rest is not important. What matters is that you keep on trying.

Being successful is made up of all those little successes. Most people with FASD work very hard at succeeding. They are among the most successful people there are.

Success does not mean going to college, or even finishing high school! It could be that it is managing to stay in class all day, just for today! It could be that it means remembering your homework, this time!

It could be that success is going to your job interview without freaking out. Or maybe it's letting the instructor help you start the day all over again in the middle of the morning when everything is going wrong.

It does not have to mean finding a full-time job or being able to live on your own without help. It might be finding a part-time job or being able to volunteer a few days or hours a month. It might be helping out at home. Or it might not mean any of these things.

It could be that it is hitting a punching bag instead of another person. It could be that it is remembering to finish what you are supposed to do (some of the time). Maybe, it is being able to get up on time without your mother nagging you.

It might be that success is not going with friends when they go to do something wrong. Or it could be saying “no” to alcohol or drugs. It could be that it is walking away from someone who wants to fight with you.

It could be that success is saying you are sorry for something you did not mean to do, but did anyways.

Success could be asking, or letting a good person you know and trust help you when things go wrong.

Maybe it is talking to others about FASD and helping them to understand your disability. It could be acting as a good role model for younger children with FASD, to show them that they can make it.

Success might be allowing others to help you with your children, or with birth control.

Success might mean knowing you need someone else like a parent or advocate with you when you talk to doctors, or lawyers or teachers or social workers. That makes you smart, not dumb.

Success might be letting someone help you with money, to make sure you have enough for the things you need and want.

Success is always trying your hardest, even when others do not believe you are. Success is doing the best you can, at that moment.

Success means knowing who you are, and accepting yourself just the way you are, even if you aren't perfect. But then, neither is anyone else.

What does success look like in you?