

# Students with FASD

Simple strategies for behavioral  
and academic success

Deb Evensen, MA



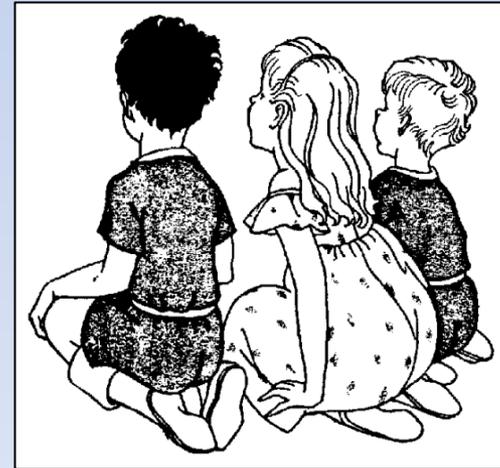
Children with FASD are:



the educational system's  
*Canaries in the Mine*

# What currently happens to most students with FASD?

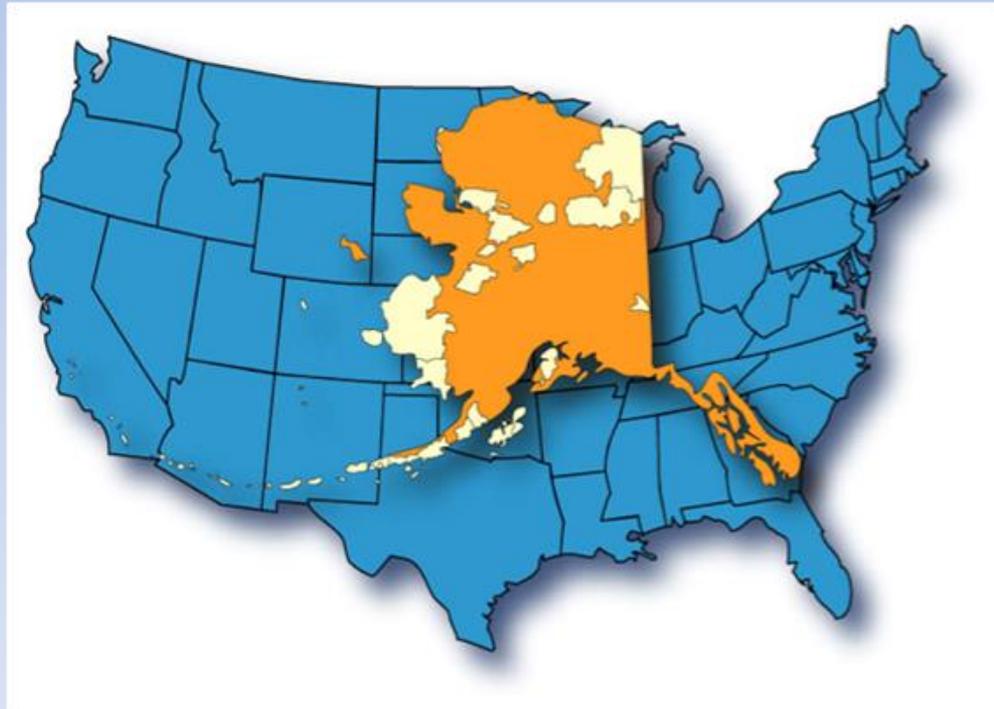
- Early Childhood - *when they do/perform the best they're going to do in our system*
- Elementary Grades - *we start to see problems*
- Middle/Junior High - *they start to fall through the cracks*
- High School - *we lose most of them*



# The Edge of the Cliff...



2-5% of all children in the US have a FASD  
-Dr. Phillip May 2011



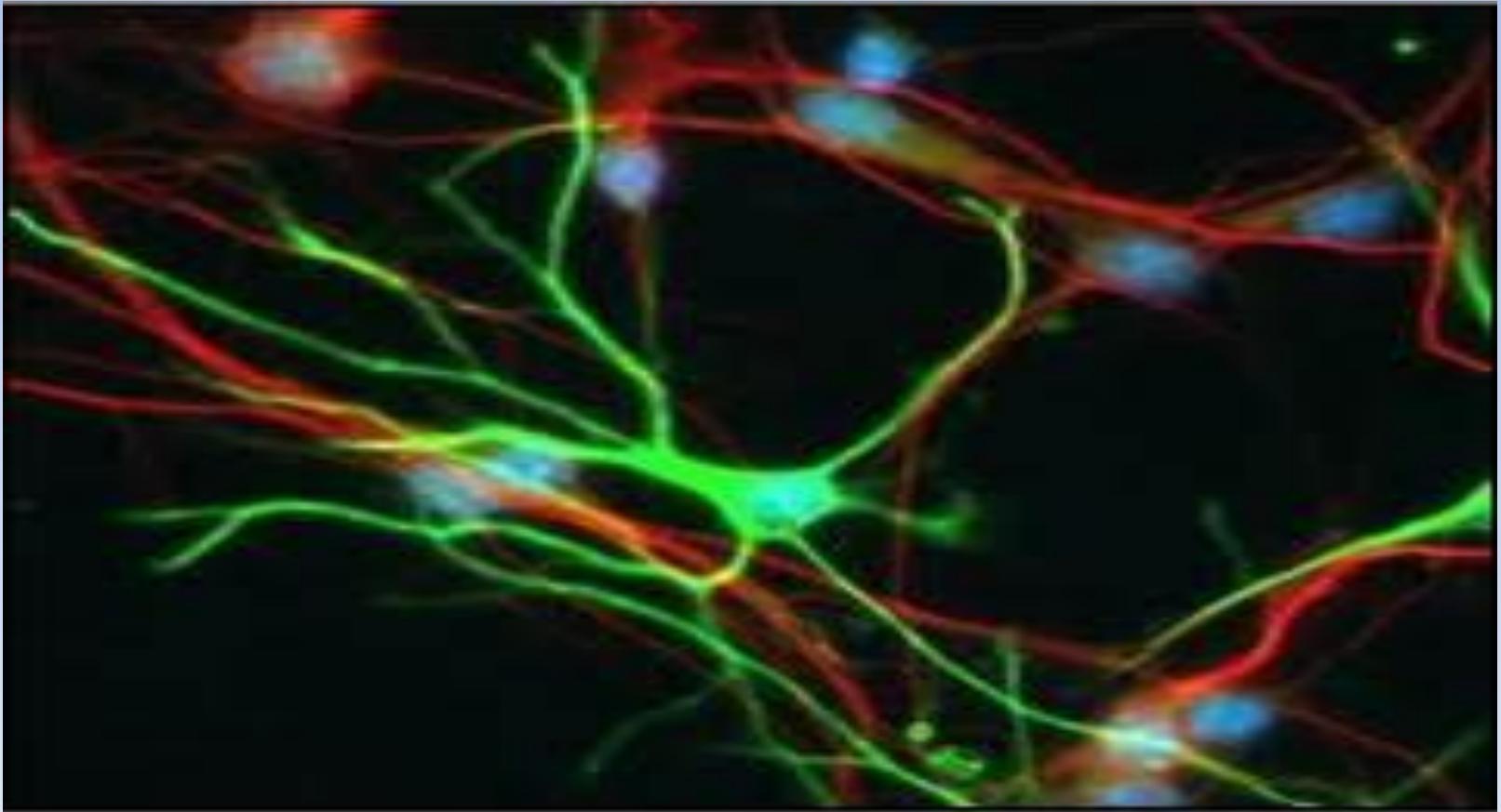
“This of the unjustness of having an affliction where  
you appear to understand more than you do.”

Stuart Whitley

Minister of Health & Social Service

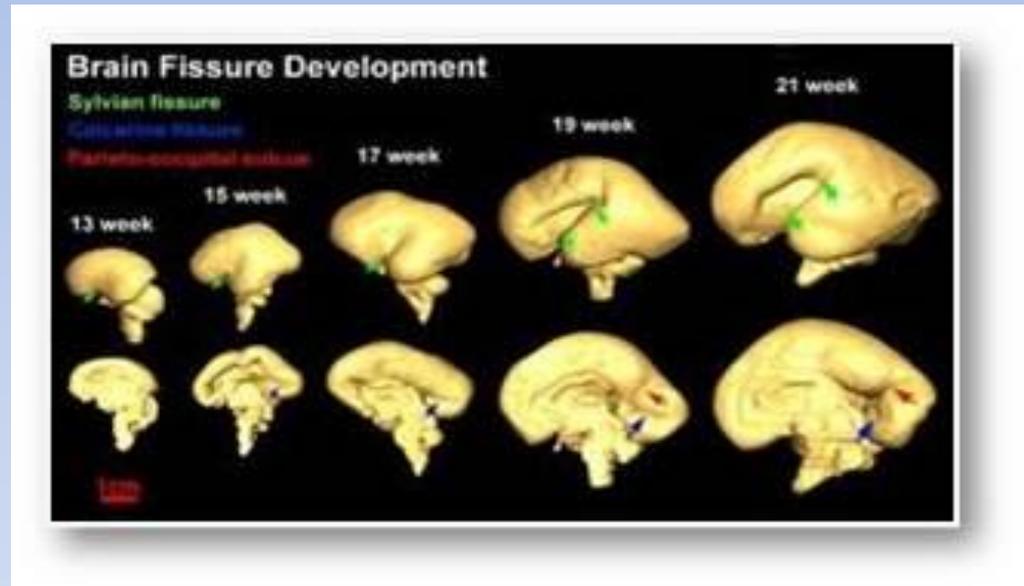
Yukon Territory, Canada

*Prenatal Exposure to alcohol causes the brain to actually be “built” differently ...*

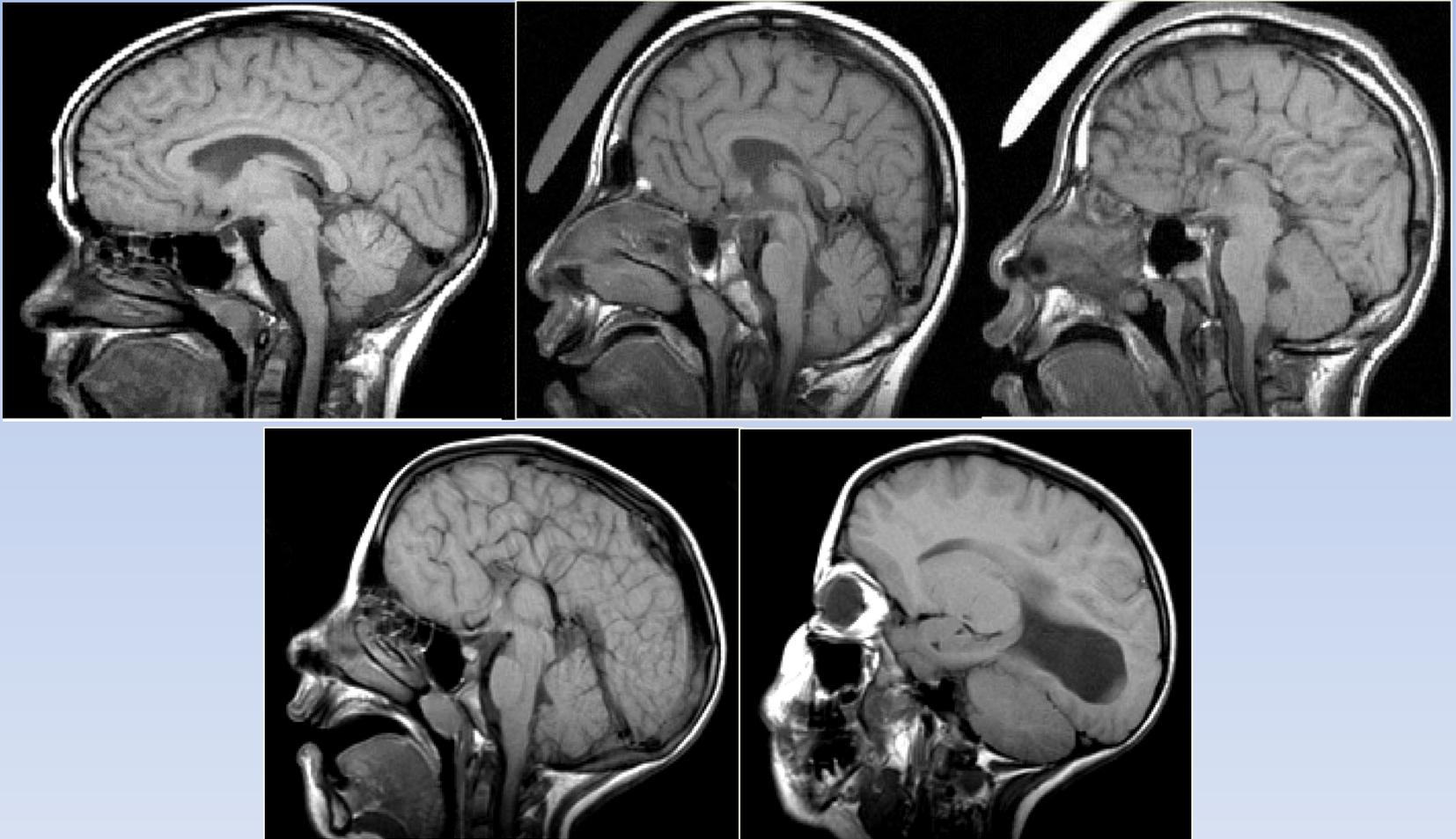


# Lamination of Brain

- *From 6 weeks of gestation on*
- *The way cells go together to form the brain*
- *The most important part of brain development is how the brain is organized: brain stem-midbrain-  
limbic-cortex*



# Corpus Callosum **Abnormalities**



- Mattson *et al.*, 1994; Mattson & Riley, 1995; Riley *et al.*, 1995

## And to add to the Problem:

- Many children who were prenatally exposed to alcohol also suffer through Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

# What Are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

## **Child Abuse**

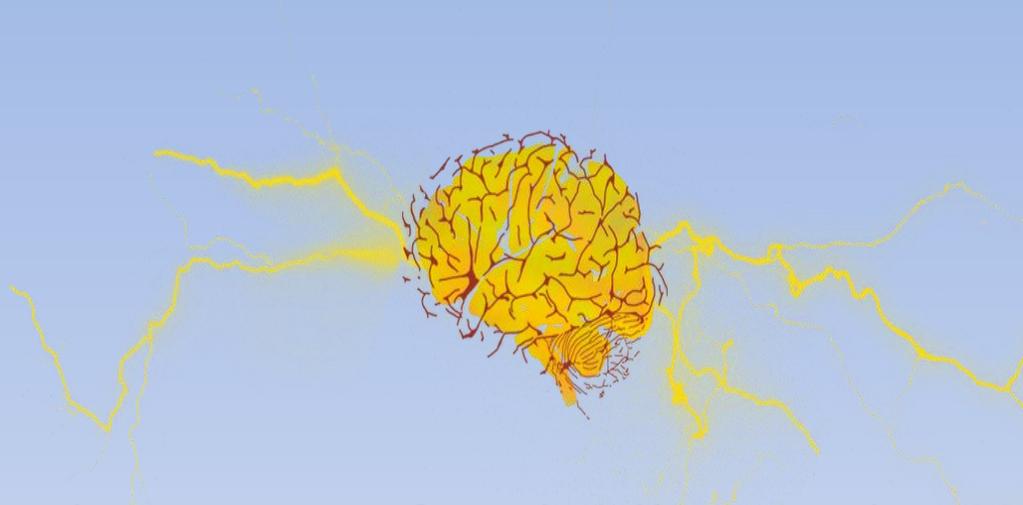
- Sexual
- Physical
- Psychological/emotional

## **Childhood Neglect**

- Physical
- Emotional

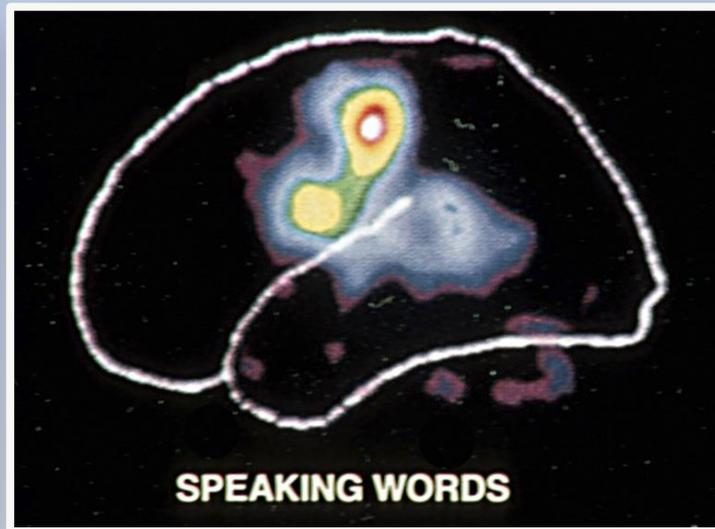
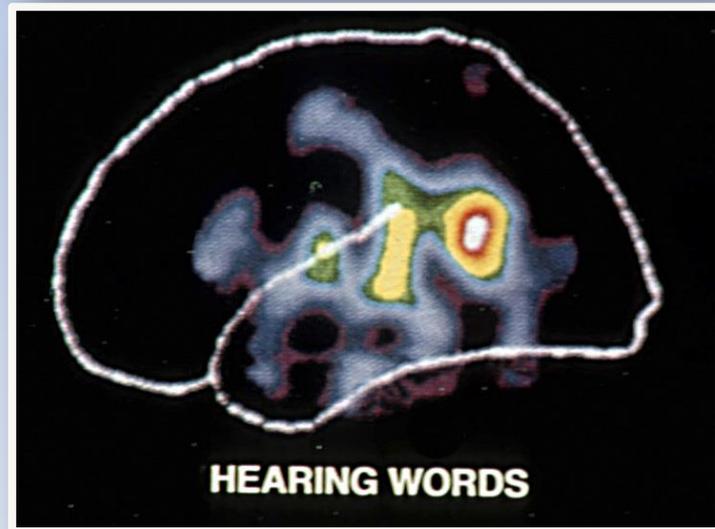
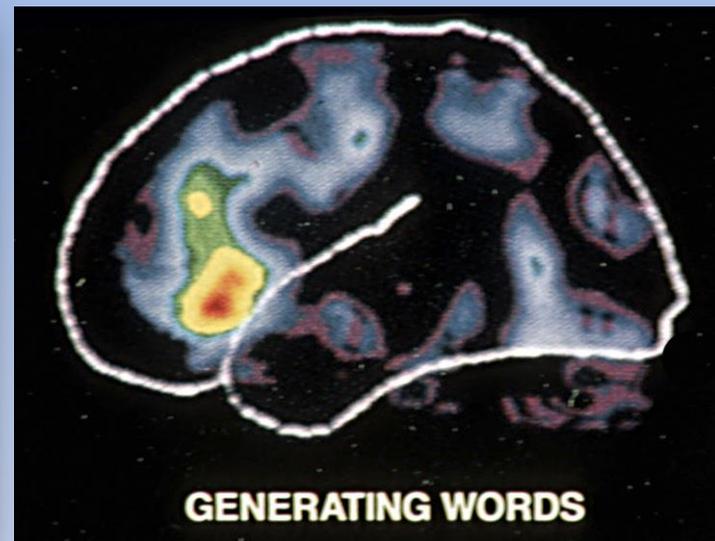
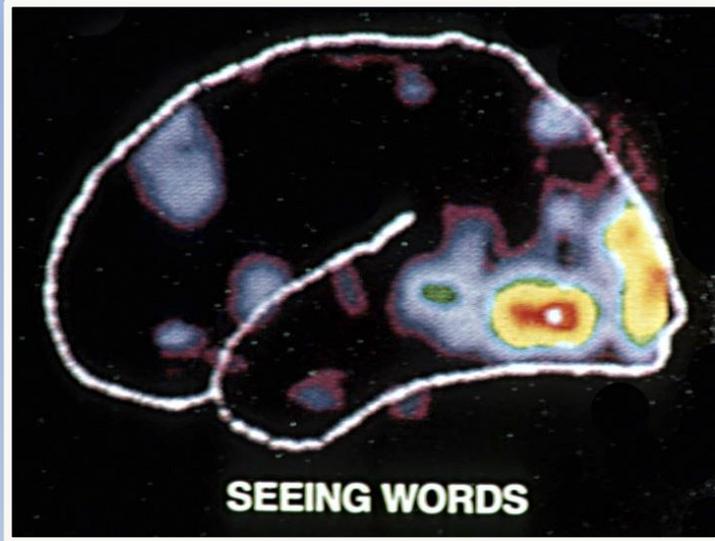
HANDOUT: ACEs questionnaire

# When Stress Becomes Toxic It Disrupts



## The Architecture of a Child's Developing Brain

- Brain circuitry for dealing with stress is very sensitive during fetal and early childhood periods
- Excessive stress programs the brain and stress hormones to over-react to stress

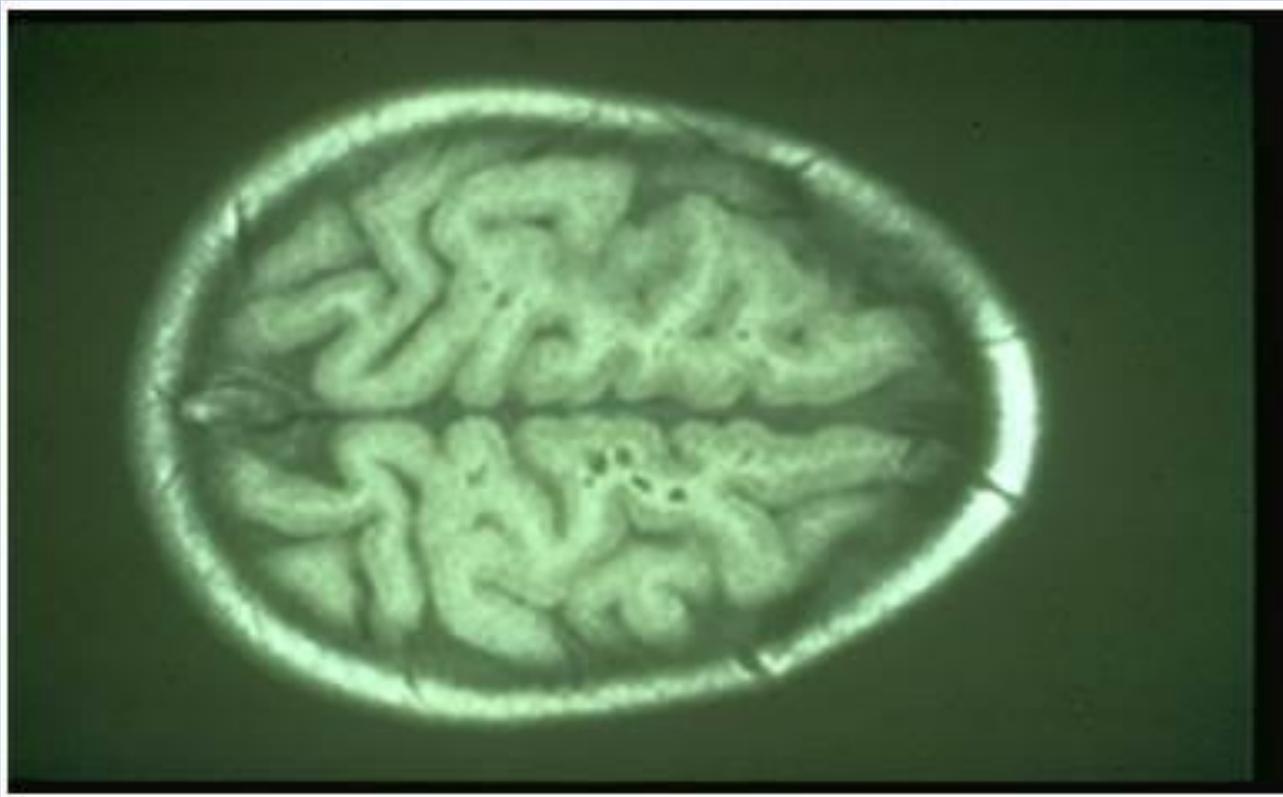


# Problems Processing Information and “Ongoing Information”

- *Input*
- *Integration*
- *Memory*
- *Output*



For a student with FASD,  
inconsistency of performance *is* normal ...



# Information Processing Deficits

## **Means** Difficulty with:

- *Abstract reasoning*
- *Generalization skills*
- *Memory*
- *Time*
- *Anxiety and frustration*
- *Socialization and skills of independence*

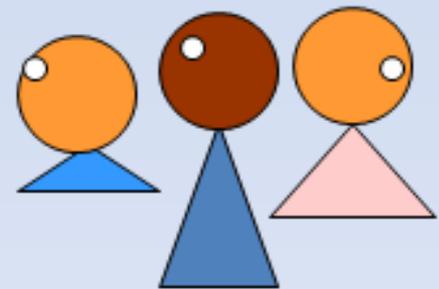
***Brain damage that affects  
impulse control and judgment ...***



Information Processing deficits *may look like*  
*oppositional behavior* when not recognized and  
understood.

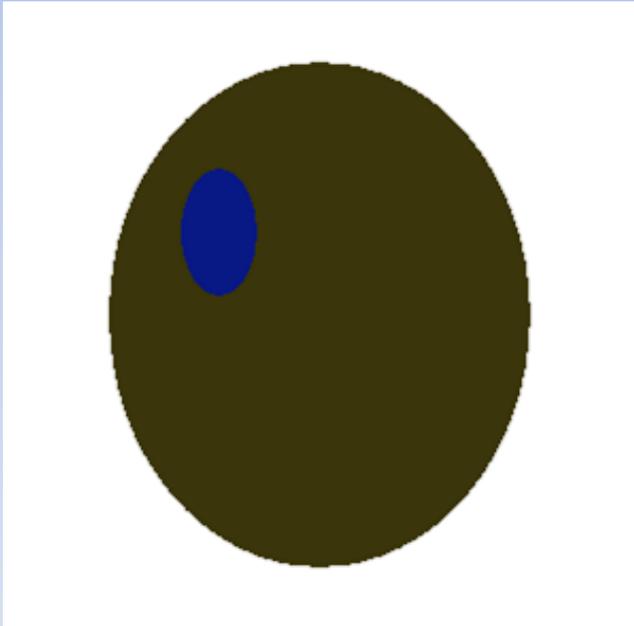
# “Cartoon Brains”

Kee Warner

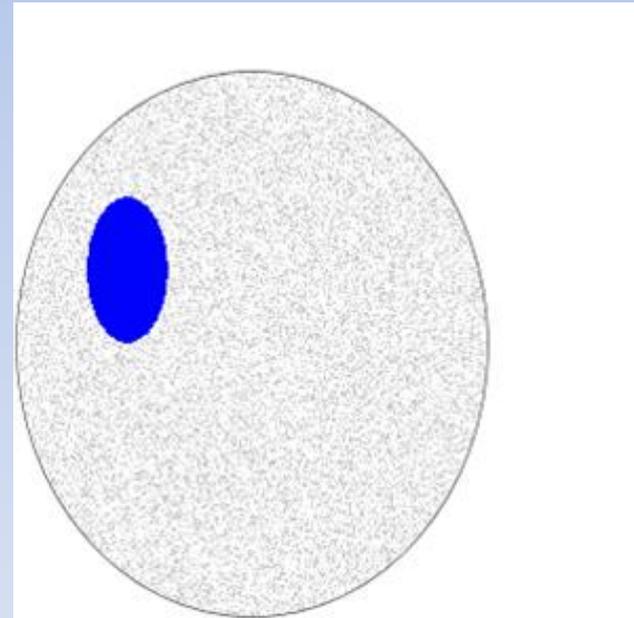


# A Simple Cartoon Comparison of Brain Activity Levels

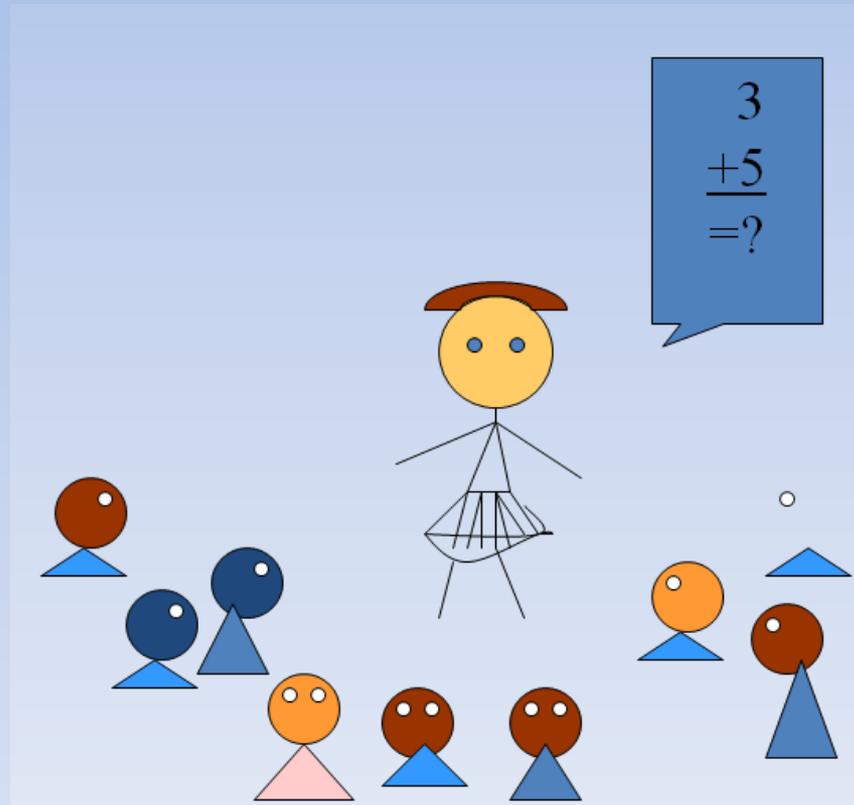
**Student with FASD**



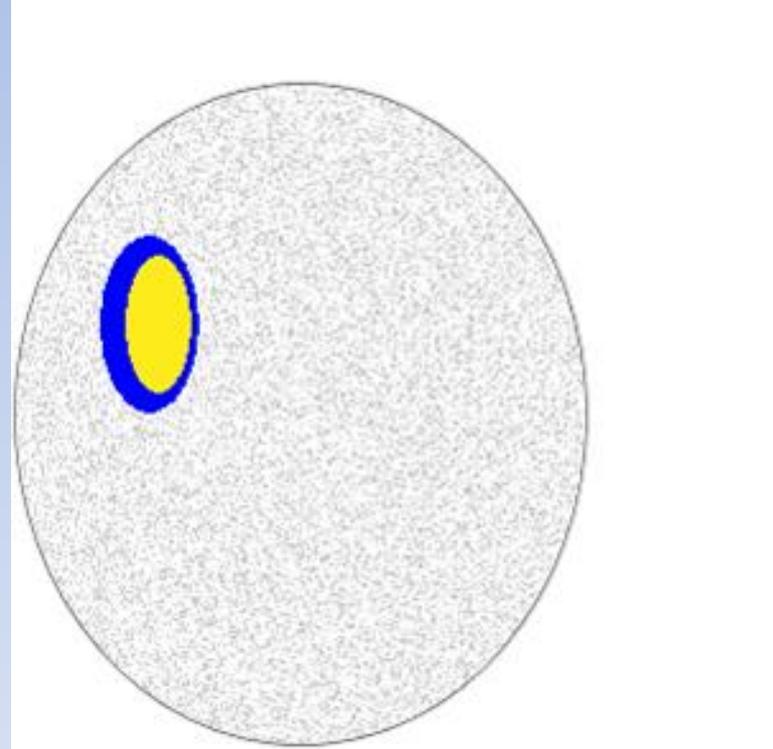
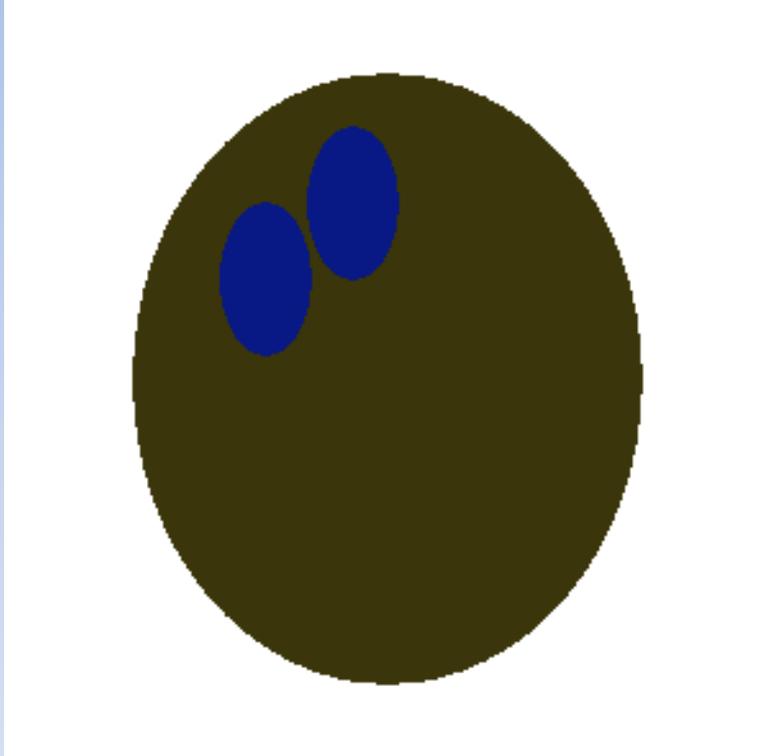
**Student with FASD**



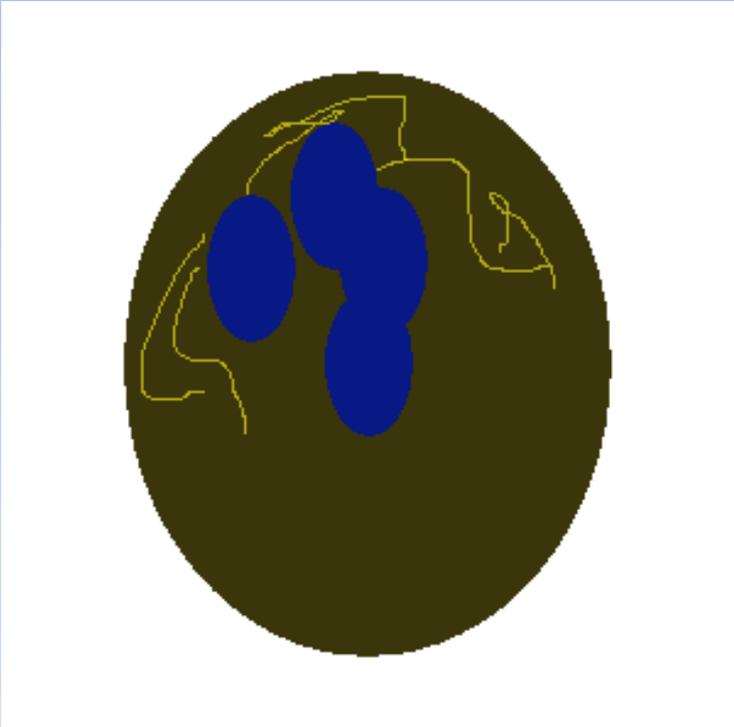
# Teacher giving an instruction.



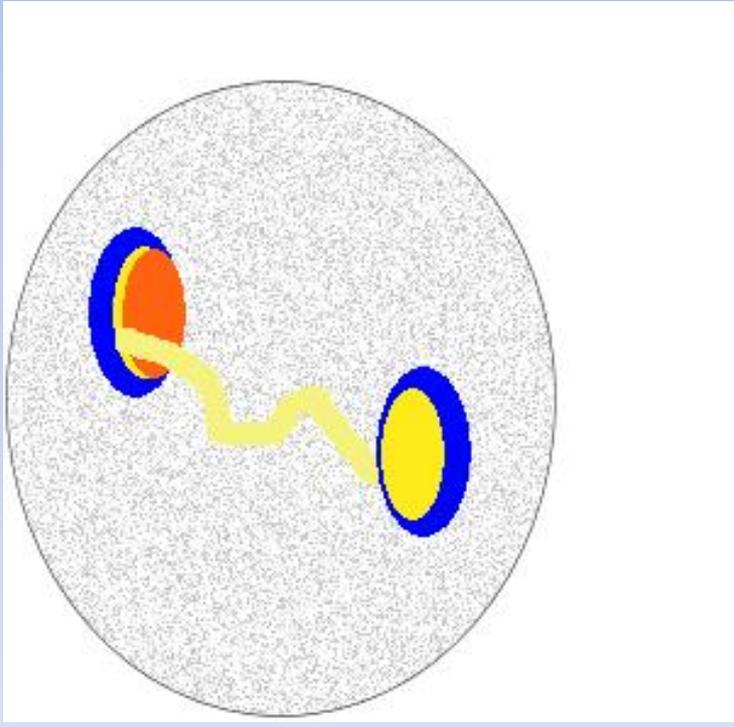
# Hearing the Instruction



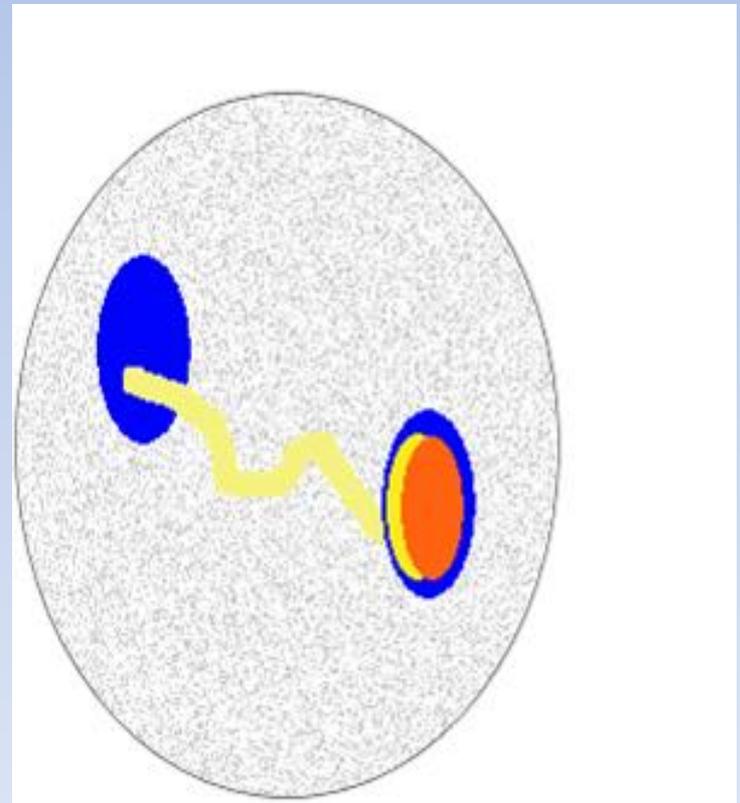
# Sorting the words



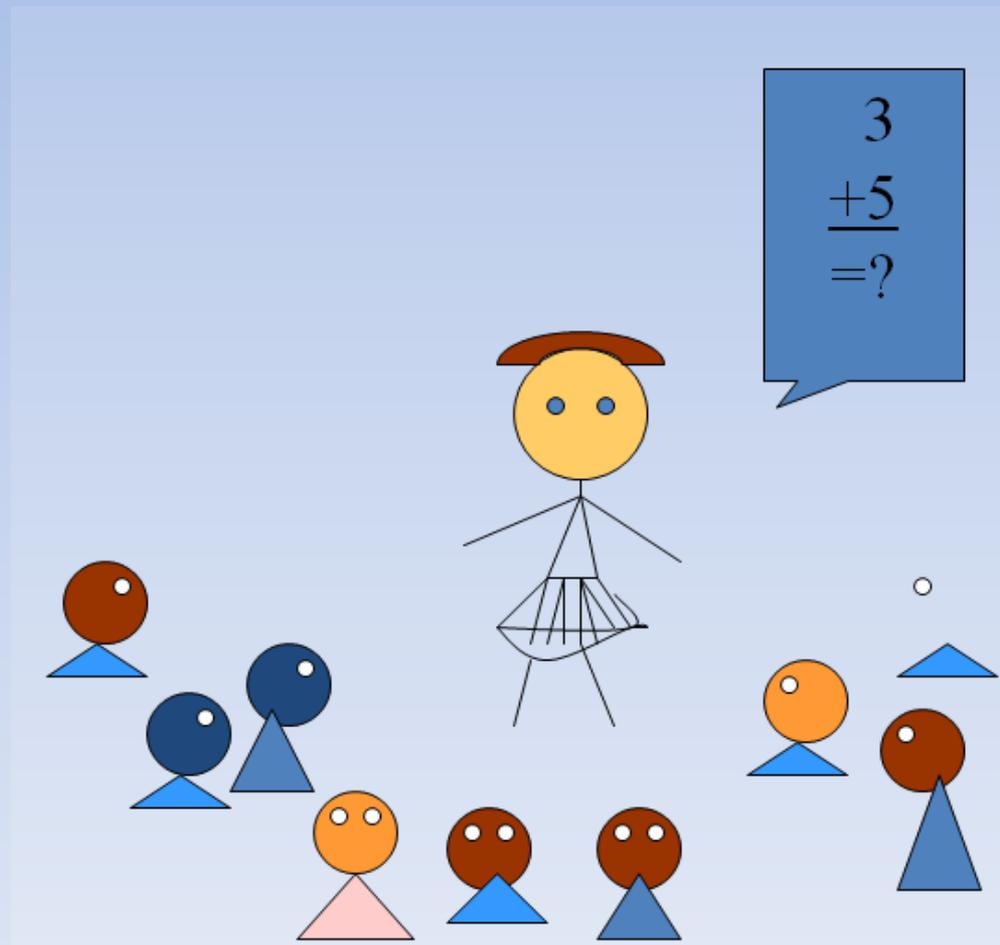
# Calculating



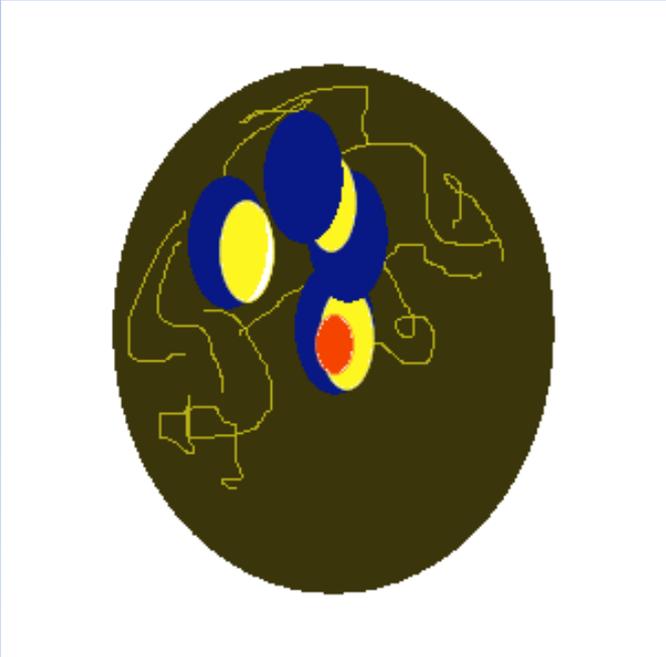
# Processing Words



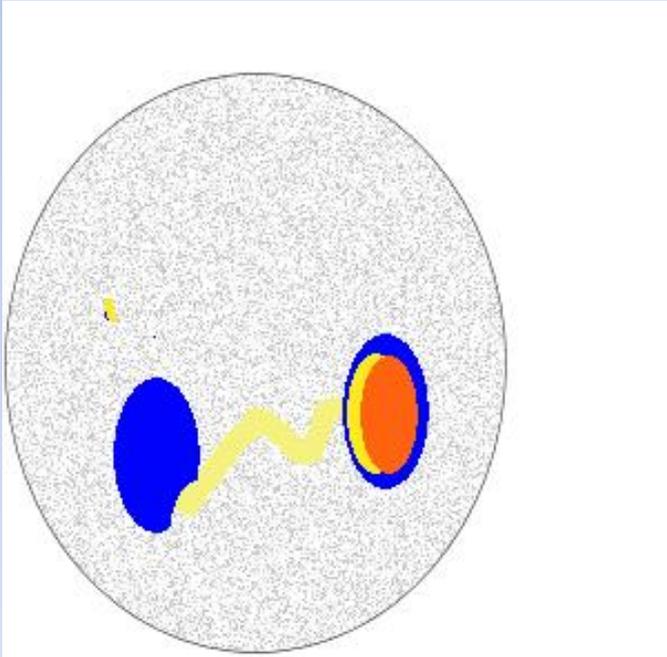
# Repeating the Instruction



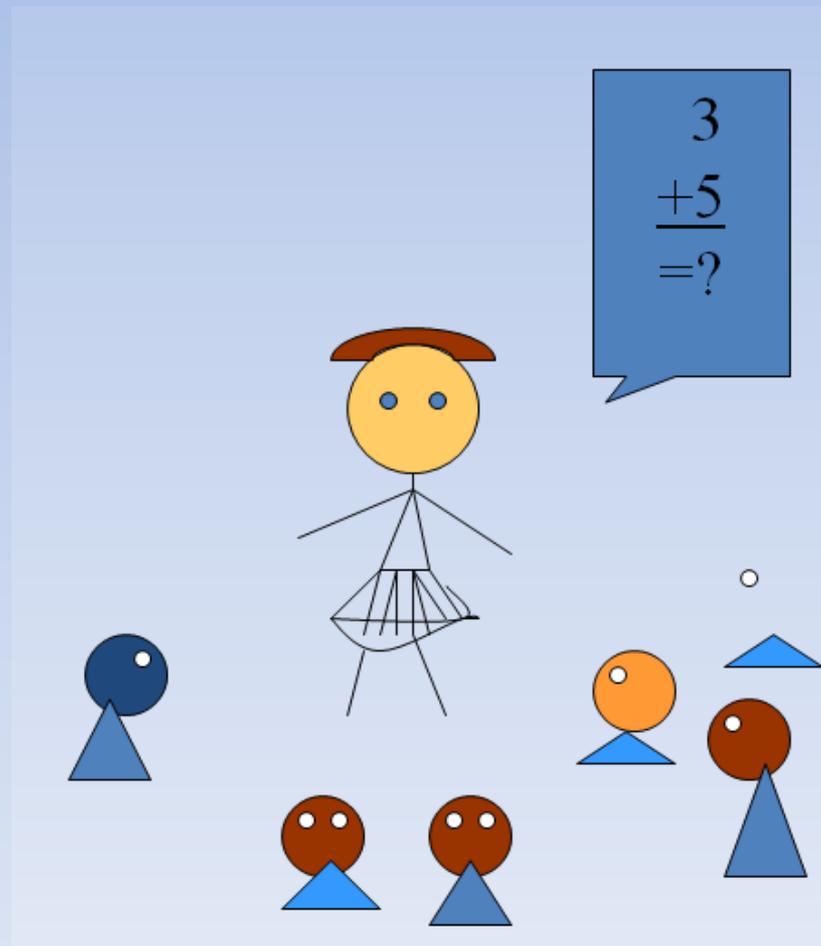
# Counting on Fingers



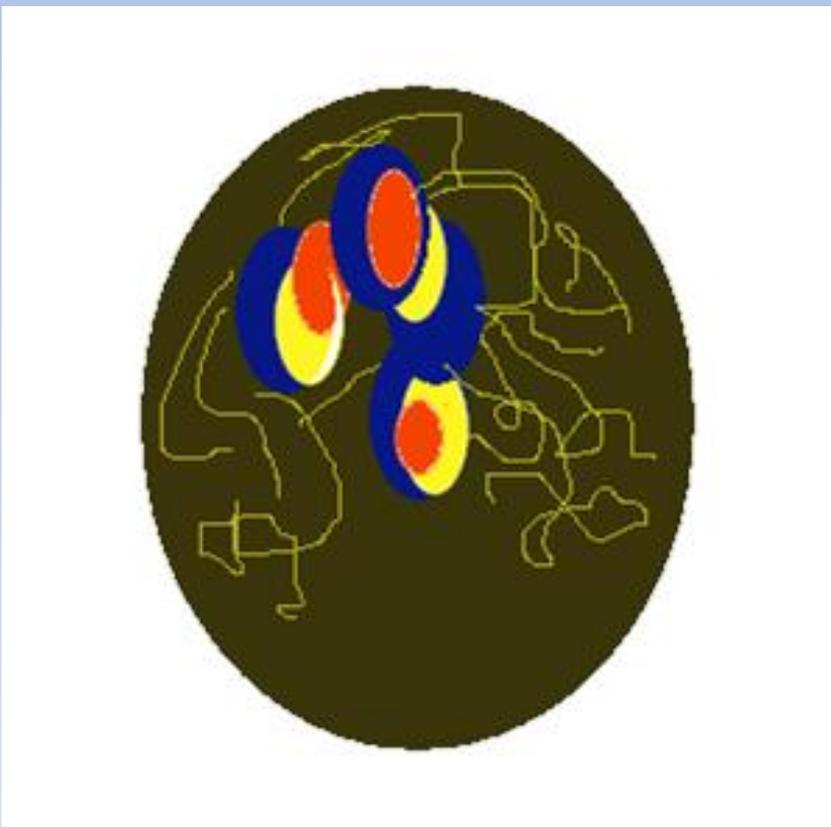
# Writing



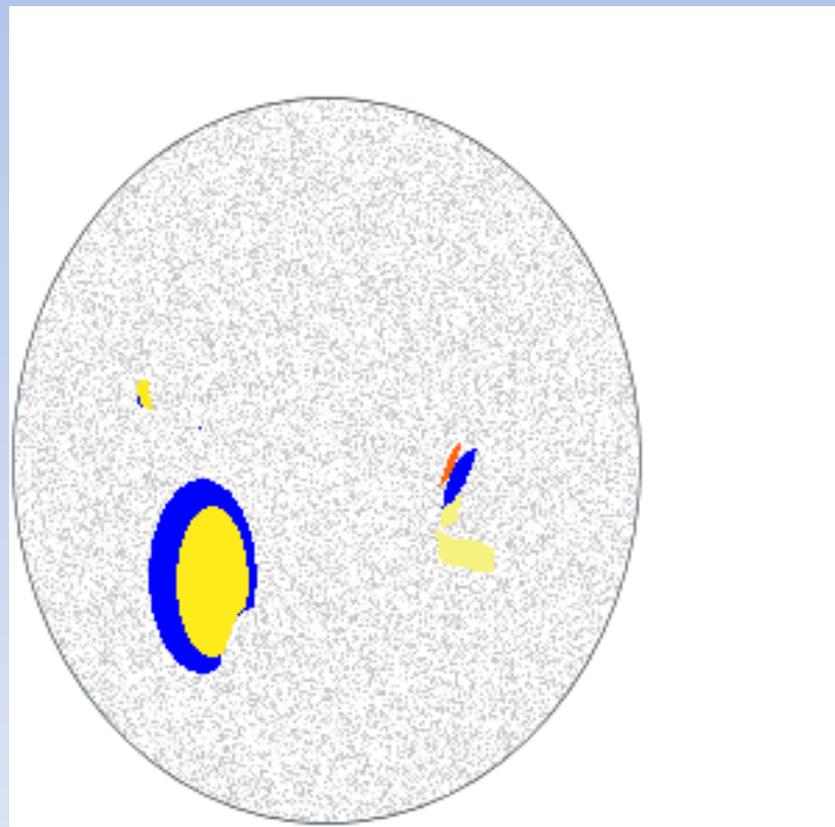
# Another Repetition



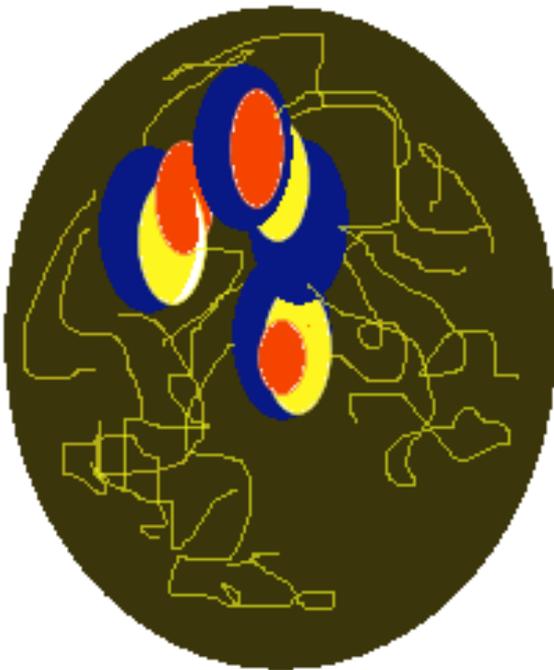
## Translating from Fingers to Number Symbols



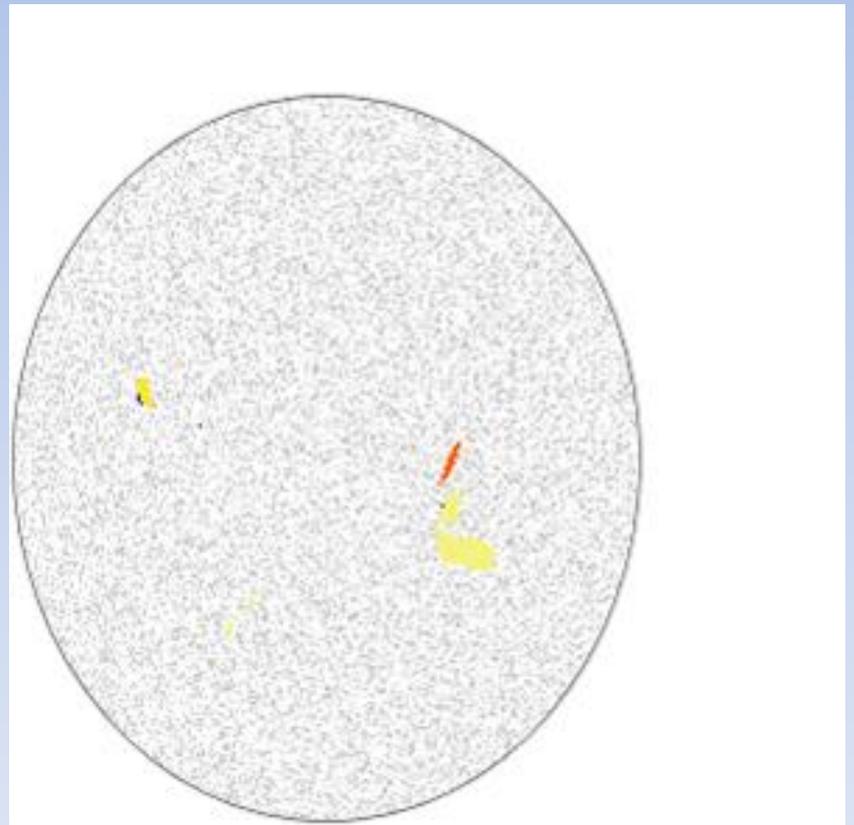
## Returning to Resting



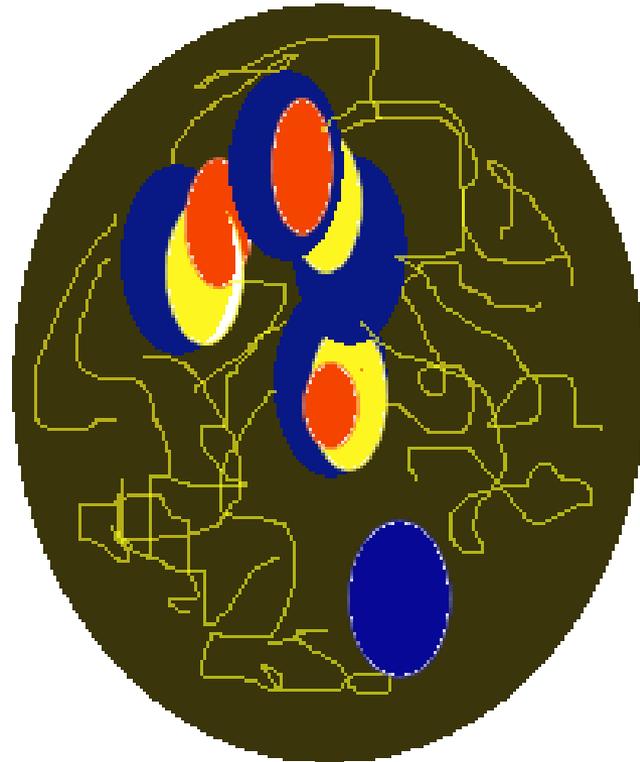
## Finding numbers



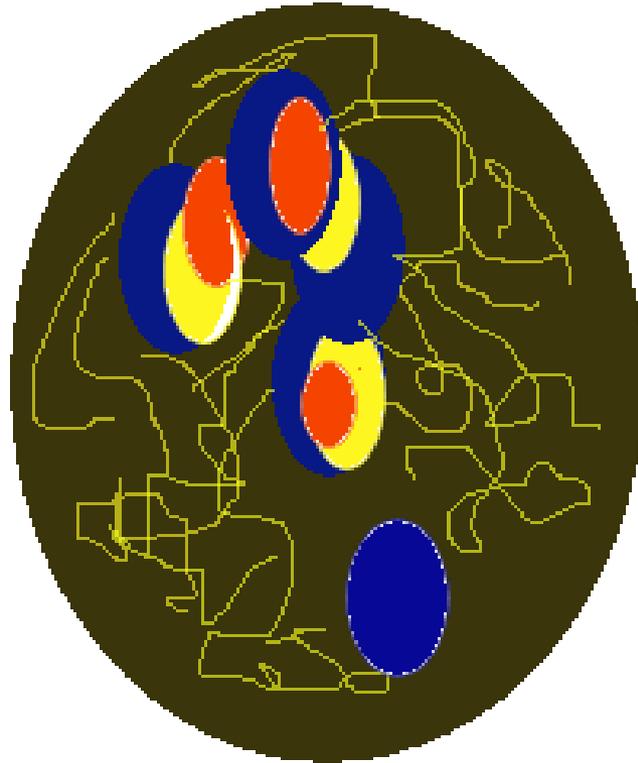
## Resting



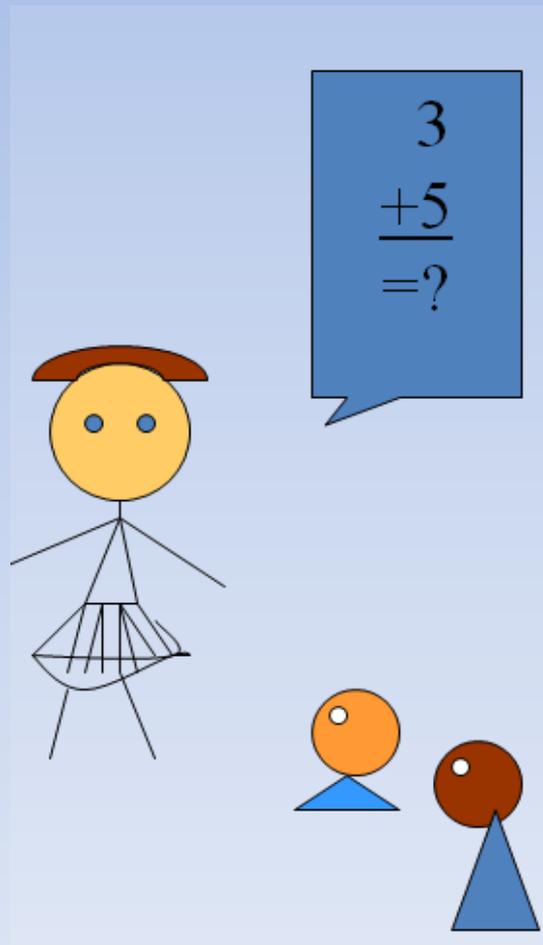
# Picking up pencil



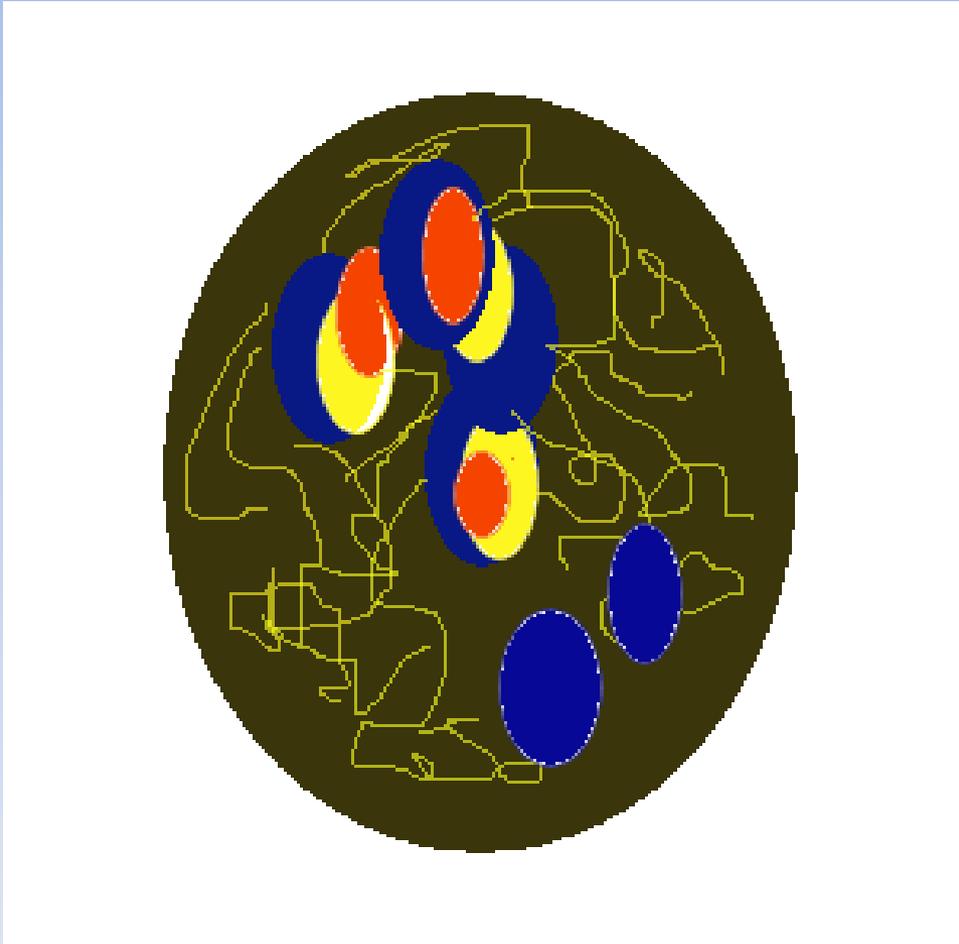
# Searching Memory



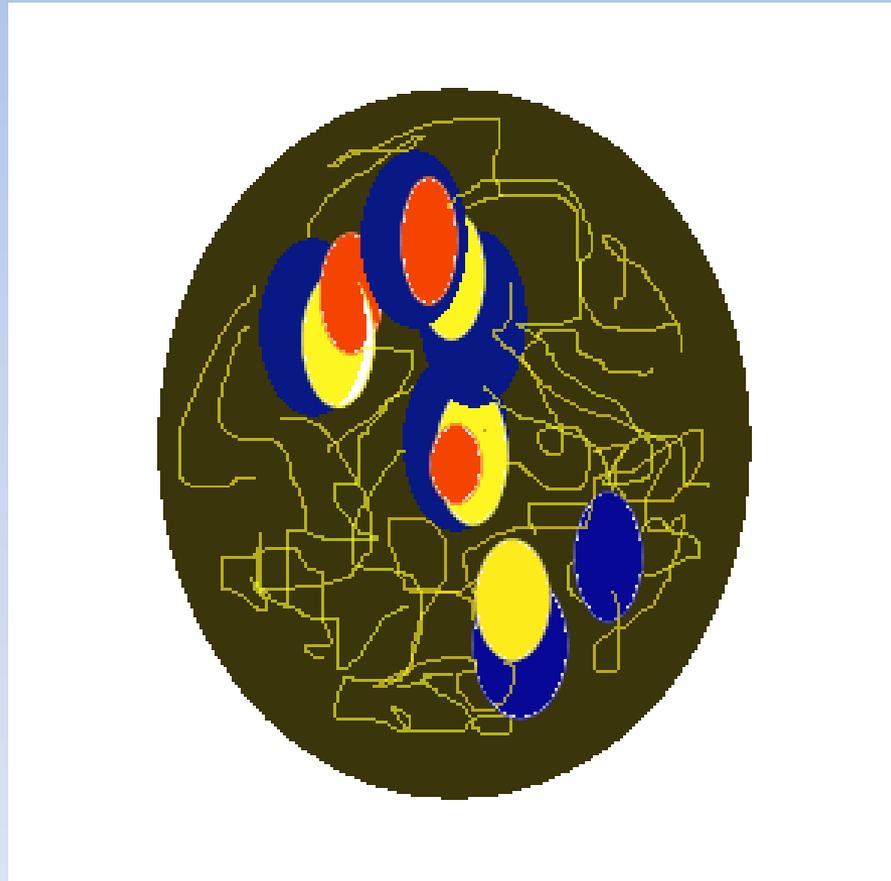
# Another Repetition



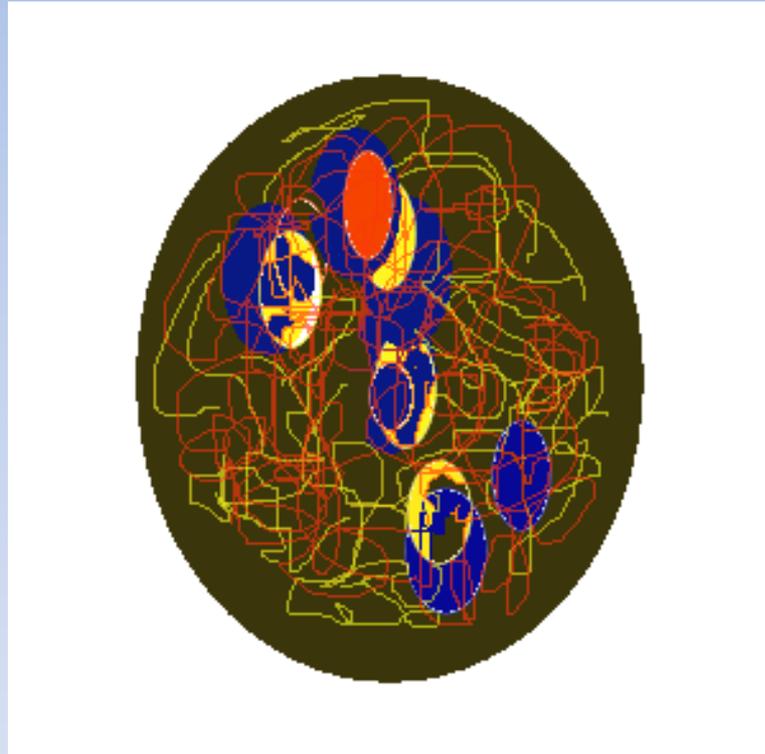
# Possible Repetition of All above steps



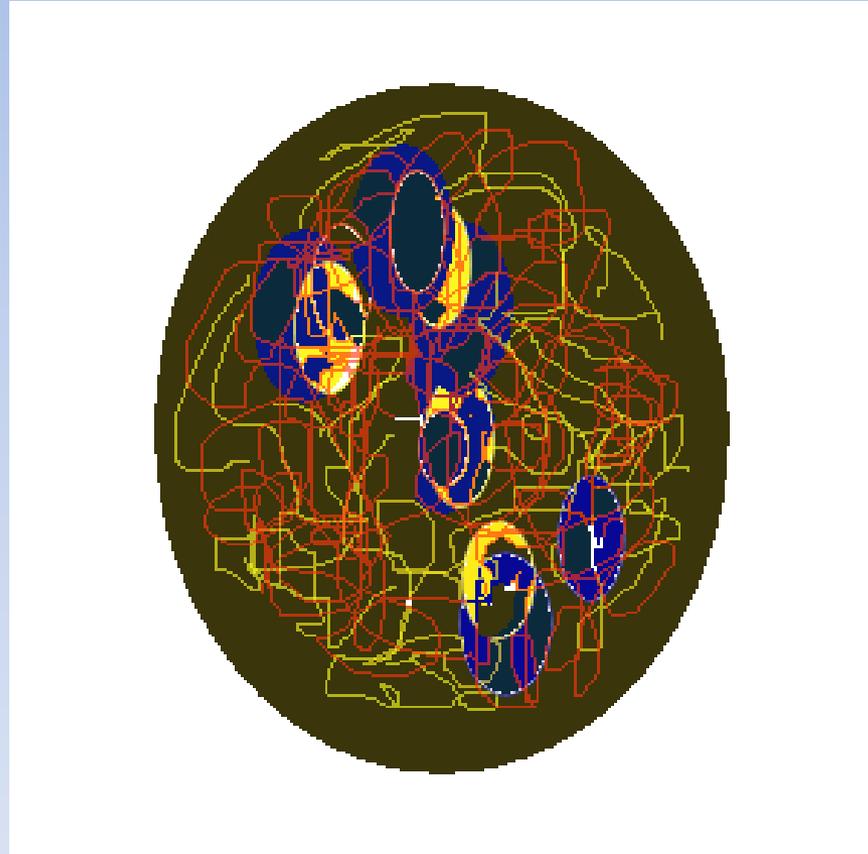
# Calculating



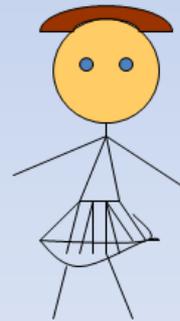
# Writing



# Slowly Returning to Resting

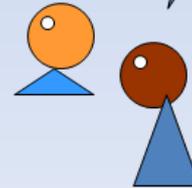


Good  
work,  
Dan.  
Good  
work,  
Linda.



$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \\ +5 \\ \hline =8 \end{array}$$

Whew!



# Reality

Why is a typical school day or job training day such a struggle for individuals with FASD?



- Because the school day is based on Learning Theory and Learning Theory assumes that students can process information in a consistent manner.
- But students with FASD don't process information in a consistent manner...



# Learning Theory

Assumes that the Student is capable of:

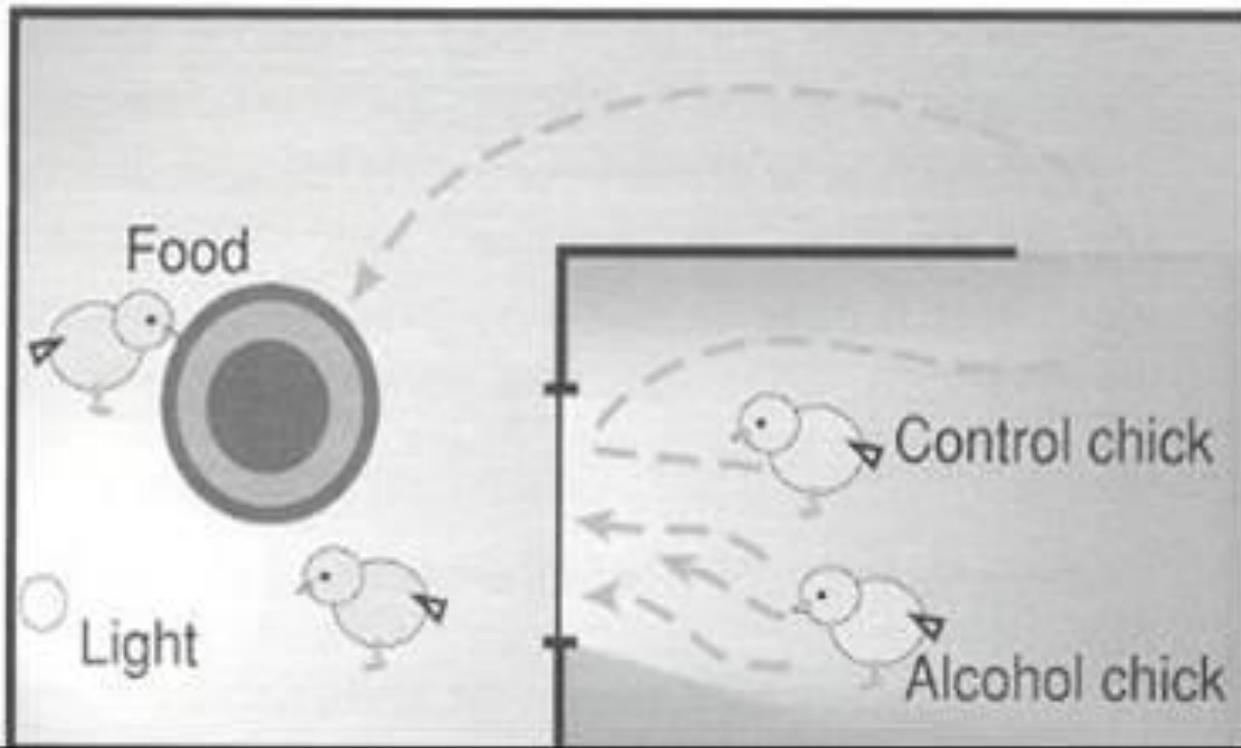
- *Learning a rule or principle*
- *Understanding the underlying concepts of that principle*
- *Remembering these concepts*
- *Generalizing this learning to many different situations*

# What Happens When...



Learning Theory runs  
into FASD?

## Alcohol Chicks Fail Detour Learning Test



By not paying attention to the specific brain-based differences in individuals with FASD; our educational, social service, mental health, and legal systems are trafficking in children with FASD.

--Sue Hemple

## Quotable Quote / Well Said

*“For adults with FAS, 80% are unable to live independently -- regardless of IQ.”*

*-Streissguth et al.*

# ~~What are We Ignoring?~~

16 years



Developmental  
Age  
vs.  
Chronological  
Age

< 8 years



# STUDY: Comparison of Social Problem-Solving Ability

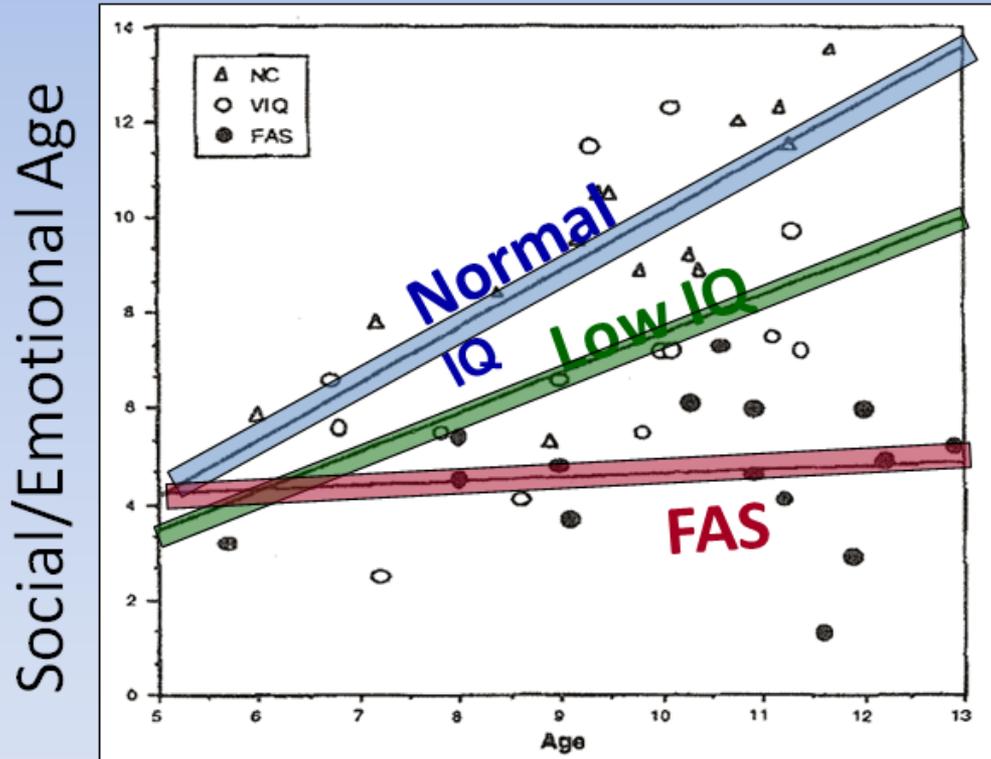
*by Ed Riley and Sarah Mattson*

- *Children with FAS*
- *Children with same IQ (no FAS)*
- *Control group (normal children)*

# Social Abilities Assessment

- *Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales*
- *Parent Version*
- *“VABS-II”*
- *Administered by school psychologist*

# Vineland Scores



----- Chronological Age -----

Chronological Age

# Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale II



# Behavioral Expectations of Children with FASD



Chronological Age-  
Appropriate

vs.

Developmental Age-  
Appropriate

- Evensen & Malbin

# Chronological Age Expectations: Typical 5-year old...

- *Go to school*
- *Follow 2-3 instructions*
- *Interactive, cooperative play*
- *Share*
- *Take turns*



# Developmental Age with FASD: 5-years going on 2-years...

- *Take naps*
- *Help mommy*
- *Follow one instruction*
- *Parallel play*
- *Active*
- *My way or no way!*



# Chronological Age Expectations: Typical 18-year old...

- *On the verge of independence*
- *Maintain a job and graduate from school*
- *Have a plan for their life*
- *Budget their own money*
- *Organize*
- *Accomplish tasks independently at home, school, and job*

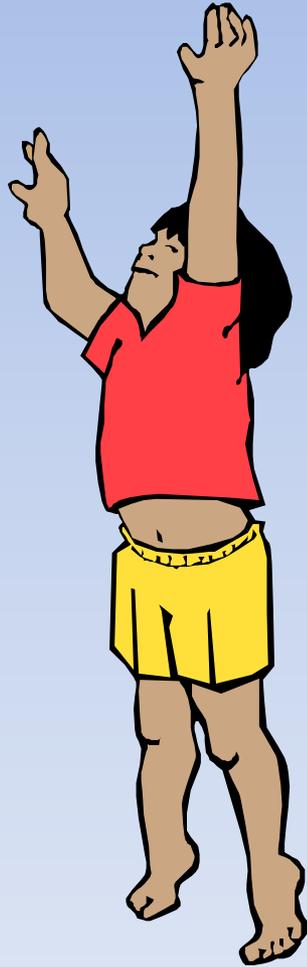


# Developmental Age With FASD: **18-years Going on 9-years...**

- *Needs structure and guidance*
- *Limited choices of activities*
- *In the “here and now,” very little future projection*
- *Giggles, curiosity, frustration*
- *Gets an allowance*
- *Gets organized with help of adults*
- *Boundary issues. Just learning...*



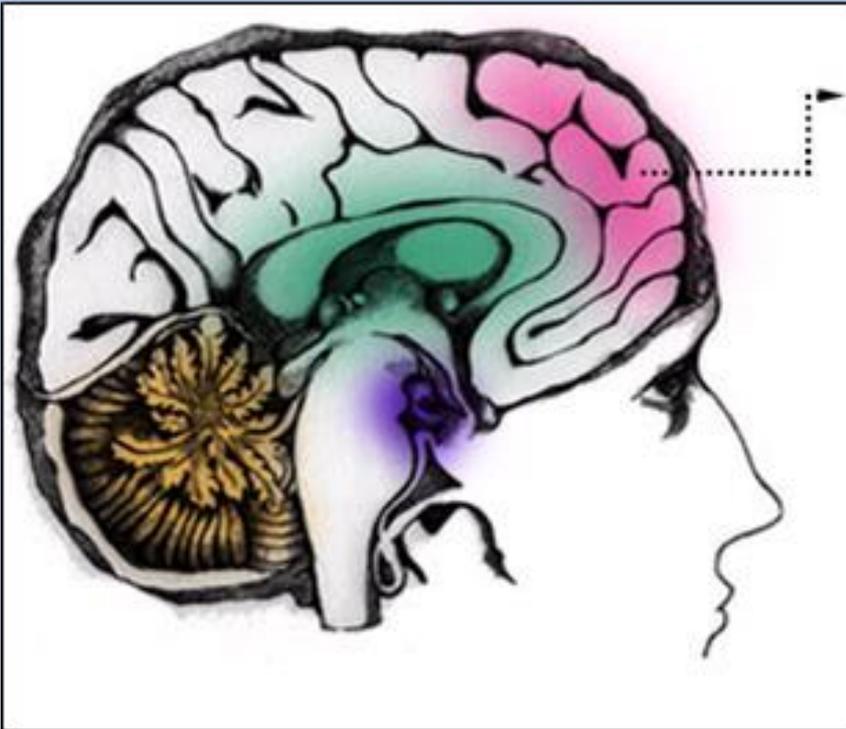
Adolescents w/FASD = **Stretch Toddlers**



*We have to get children with FASD to their  
mid 20's instead of just 18 years old*

***WHY??***

# THE BRAIN'S CEO



## Frontal Cortex

- Impulse control
- Judgment
- Problem solving
- Emotional processing & self-control
- Language
- Organization & planning
- Motivation
- Goal setting behaviors

25+ instead of 18



Avoid the Cliff !



## Ask 4 Thoughtful Questions

1. What is my student/client's ***Developmental Age***?
2. Would this behavior be more normal/typical if that was his/her actual Chronological Age?
3. What is it that the person ***does not understand***?
4. How can we help develop appropriate ***Habit Patterns of Behavior*** with or without current deeper understanding?

# 8 Magic Keys



C

C

R

R

S

S

S

S

## 8 Magic Keys

1. Concrete
2. Consistency
3. Repetition
4. Routine
5. Simplicity
6. Specific
7. Structure
8. Supervision

\* Master Key

# \* Master Key

Trusting Relationship (Sister Suzette)



# True Story

## Tlingit Indian baby born near Hoonah, Alaska

- Mother late stage alcoholic
- Many episodes of abuse and neglect in early years
- His plight was neither caught by OCS nor the school system
- Rendered him basically homeless at the age of 11 in Juneau, Alaska

So.. What happened to our  
little Tlingit baby boy?



meet Morgan Fawcett

Vision for the future