**A mother's story**

***Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)***

An internal resource created by

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***Transcript:***

***Tell us Ryan's story to start with:***

Well basically before Ryan was diagnosed- I mean we’ve got a really strong bond and we're really close . He - we had a lot of difficulties from, you know, from a young age school was never a happening thing he was so frustrated all the time.I didn’t understand I thought he was just being a normal child and no one seems to understand what was really going on for him. You know - school was happening and no it wasn’t happening and so he didn’t have any friends he felt lonely - in his - when he'd get really anxious to get really violent. I just thought he was being really naughty because that was everyone was saying. He's being naughty .you kmow, you should be disciplining him more. Ryan and I became so exhausted - we were just battling each other all the time. It was like a battlefield you didn’t know when the next explosion was going to be. I couldn’t go and have a cup of coffee, you know, something would happen and I'd have to drop what I was doing. Everything before he was diagnosed was - I didn’t have a life, for me I had no space for me and for me I felt that, you know, he’s my child, you have children, you put everything into your children you put all of your self into your children, but with Ryan it was more than that it was three thousand percent.

***You knew it was different?***

I knew it was different from an early age I just didn’t know what.I would just keep going day to day, you know, I was doing what professional... like parenting programs and do what they suggest and…..

***What kind of help did you have? What kind of advice and programmes did you have?***

I went through Bernardo’s parenting programs. I went through I think it was a Life Wise parenting programme, different suggestions. I went through counseling to try to help me with him, with Ryan. It got to a point where I ended up on medication to help keep me calm so I could deal with Ryan so that we could deal with the situations because I was... I was losing it big time and I became depressed because I was losing it with my child and I didn’t know why I was losing it with my child so badly because Ididn’t know how to control it. I didn’t know how to deal with him. I put him into care I ended up having to put my son into care because I didn’t know how to cope any more

***How old was he then, about?***

Just before he turned 7, he’d have been about six and a half, six, six and a half. At school he was biting the teachers, kicking the teachers, the pupils. I hadn’t even left the school grounds after dropping him off … And so we were together, basically 24/7, you know, a lot of the time and that was just too much. School actually helped me at that point contacted CYFS and eventually we got him in to CYFS. He was there for two years, his caregivers became exhausted. He eventually came home to me because like “Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, I've done these community skills courses, you know. At Unitech, you know, I can do this. I was ,like, still disciplining him like a normal child for his age and I couldn’t go to work, couldn’t go to school because he was struggling at school. He didn’t understand the teachers at school but he didn’t understand why he didn’t have friends either, you know, because of how it was for him. He struggled, his whole life.

***Can you tell us about getting the diagnosis? how that all happened? how did you find out about it? what happened?***

I met Ryan at child youth and family with the police and they... I left them there 'cause I just couldn’t take him home, I just couldn’t do it. This was the last straw and that was on the Tuesday, so he was hanging around at the CYFS office every day. Friday, Valerie’s actually gone in and actually spoken with him and has put forward a caregiver for him to go to and then I think a few days later I found out about the diagnosis.

**What was that meeting like with Valerie can you tell us about that?**

I felt “overw..”,i felt like, overwhelmed but I felt really that like a weight has been lifted off my shoulder. Finally, a diagnosis. You know, I don’t like kids being diagnosed with this, this or this. But for Ryan there was something there and he needed to be diagnosed in order to be able to move forward to try and work with him to help him. And so, I was just grateful absolutely grateful. Gutted in the fact that I felt really guilty that I was the one that caused it in the first place. And then I ended up, I actually went into counseling to be able to help me deal with my feelings and my therapist really helped. You know we had to come to terms with this is what’s happened, this is what you do next.

***What differences started happening for Ryan after all of that? and you, between Ryan and you?***

Valerie gave me some strategies she gave me a book a little booklet to read and so I read that. I went online and got some information and she also just said to me you know you speak in a quiet ….like, I speak to him in a quiet tone, not too many demands, one to two instructions at a time, and, you know, if he's in that mood don’t just don’t even reason... you know, let it be, just let me if he wants that space let him be . Whereas before ,I wasn’t doing that. It would be do as I say, you know, this is what’s got to be done it’s got to be done now and Valeries taught me to just sort of, like, come back down, come down to his level and like he's a toddler type of thing. And, less is best.

***Did you have to change things in the house? anything in the environment?***

What I've had to learn for me not to do is change the furniture around. That was a huge, he could not handle it. His room; I will not touch his room this is his room I’ve been tempted to but I have to leave it alone because it's his space. I have to respect that, whereas before, it would be whatever, you know. I’m just going to go and change it, you know, and stuff like that. Now it’s like, no, he doesn’t like change. I mean I knew he doesn’t like change anyway but now I know theres a reason why and so I respect that, you know, more.

***What about working with other people? other professionals? other caregivers?***

Like with his caregivers, because he was with his caregivers for two years I worked in with what they were doing at their place to try and keep it consistent across the board so he wasn’t unsettled. But the more time he spent at home I kind of found him just that little bit hard to sort of keep it to the same as what they were doing because like we don’t have a car like the caregivers you know and the schools you know can take the kids out on activities they can take them here they can do this and they can do that they've got a vehicle. And there’s technology that’s accessible within the school and the home. So at home when he came home it was like we've got no car we've got no technology, you know, we had none of what he was used to having. So for Ryan it’s been really difficult for all of that he’s had to learn to re- adjust and it’s a lot harder at home to follow through with what, you know, school and the other caregivers do, you know, because it’s all.. everybody works differently and I found at home I didn’t have those resources, it was just me, you know? It’s not going to be the same as outside that square, you know, inside that square I’ve got to think outside the square for us.

***Overall, getting the diagnosis and the advice has made a big difference to Ryan?***

Its made, it has made a huge it has made a huge difference he is so much more settled Ryan is so much more settled. When Valerie came on board I thought oh my god thank you and then she started talking to, and working, with the school and CYFS they were working with me. It wasn’t just me working with them we were working together. We became as one and I just felt validated you know I just felt yay! finally! I’m being heard! because I didn’t feel I was being heard before.

***What does the future hold?***

I feel that the future is looking brighter; so much brighter. Ryan’s going to get a job that he’s going to be interested in. We're going to work with him to his abilities. We've done a, you know, be, within the disability services but the something that he’s can, that he's going to like doing. I think that the future is going to be really good for Ryan with all the right supports and services in place.

***Is there anything else you would like to say? Is there something else you would like to make a statement about ?***

I just, no matter what the struggles are in life with your child, you know, or your children, with this, going along the journey, it’s hard but don’t give up.

Never ever give up.