**Video transcript:**

**FASD - FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AND EMPLOYMENT**

FASD is a more common disability than Down Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy.

FASD is usually invisible and is perhaps less understood in the world of employment.

With the right environment and support, people with FASD can get on with using their particular talents productively.

This video shows principles of FASD support in an employment setting to encourage other employers.

Joseph Heke is the owner/operator of a concreting business. He and his crew work across the top of the North Island.

Jo employed and developed Michael, a young person with FASD, to become a useful employee.

Jo intuitively adjusted the supervision and environment which helped Michael's FASD.

*Jo speaking:*

"He came to work. As we worked for a couple of days I could see how some simple things for us would be more difficult for him, and I explained to him in helping them to know his condition it would also bring a sense of tolerance and understanding towards his way of working. All the working boys always swore at him every day out of frustration of working with him. But they, at the end of the day there was always the happy banter and camaraderie that was there.

"He smoked all the time, yet he bought a packet of smokes once a month. And what that meant is he would go hunting the site for cigarettes, and he would disappear for I'd say half and hour maybe twice a day outside of our breaks looking for a cigarette. And so he became well known on every site we went to and yeah everyone at work had their personal jokes with him regarding his habits and his ways.

"Even though we'd been doing the same work process on the same job for six months, I'd ask him to carry on and he'd look at me as though it's his first day on the job. I said 'OK, you have to remind me that we have to work at things one step at a time, one step at a time', and just drill in these processes so he can become comfortable with our systems for completing our work.

"I found he always increased and improved in degrees. I understood that he could keep increasing and progressing. So prompting was reduced, so at the beginning of the day we'd talk about what needed to happen and I suppose I would delegate everyone to their areas of what had to happen. I made everything a process so that you could become familiar with things, and feel grow in confidence. Yeah, we knew his strengths and could put him areas that he feel comfortable so he could work and take care of an area, we wouldn't have to worry about that, and it would be done.

"The other guys that I did work with, they still struggle at times to remember the processes, so I had had a couple of years of patience, working with them as well and then transferring these techniques over to Michael."

*Question from audience:* "What made you persevere with Michael when most employers would give up when looking for cigarettes on the site for half and hour at a time. What made you keep going?"

*Jo speaking:*

"He had difficulties in life. He was moving around, yet he would still get himself to work on time by public transport. So with that, I thought to myself, oh I could give this guy a pay raise, he's determined and committed, even with all of his obstacles, and I thought that was very worth tolerance and chances."

*Question for audience:* "Yeah - how much supervision did you need to give him?"

*Jo speaking:*

"Through the process of working he built his confidence in certain areas. I would ask him if he wanted to do those things or if he wanted to stretch himself out and start something new. Probably 80 percent of the time, he'd say, 'Aw no, I'll just do this', which was fine, easy for him. As long a everything was marked out for him, he could follow along and do what was needed. Now and then he would say 'Oh, I'll try that', which was fine I was happy with 'Yeah, good on you!' Once again, I'd set things up for him, so he could follow through as well. And, I felt you could see when he understood things. So when I felt he understood, I'd watch him at the start and he could follow through on the process, I would let him go. As time progressed, the supervision so to speak was reduced as well.

"Michael was a good worker, but his problems weren't at work all the time. He came from not a stable living environment. There's a time when he wasn't paying his board of which I knew he had the financial means to do so. So understanding his ways and limitations, I felt I could extend a little but, and help him to help himself. And that's what I tried to do, was help him to help himself. Yeah I didn't do things for him. If I did step in, the agreement was that he was to make back, which he did, on doable terms. It was never ever fixed terms that if there was a failure, penalties would come. It was flexible and doable.

"Like I think, I don't think they were difficult for him, not difficult for others, and so a little bit of time to help him sort through his difficulties his problems, the things that could have overcome him, his financial obligations, his living arrangements, it wasn't difficult for me to help him."

*Question from audience:* "Do you think then, some of the key things for us working with other employers is that it's important understanding the context of the person's life and their story?"

*Jo speaking:*

"I think it always helps. Cause then you can understand why they are the way they are. I do things in the hope of that he would get better, that would make it easier for me. If young people would go into committed to, first thing, committed, it would mean a lot to an employer. If they had the will and the endurance to increasing themselves at work, an employer would smile upon that, and he would be happy with having him there. As they get better, there's a sense of value that you'd take them, regardless of other problems. It's still frustrating, but they're still of worth and value, so you keep them there. He made things better for me, easier for me, and so, I would do things for him."

*Final words and credits:*

Jo Heke accommodated FASD needs and developed a productive employee. Every employer/employee relationship and workplace is different. FASD support principles are transferable.

FASD Eyebite cards have been used in this video. They provide useful FASD-informed tips which can be used to support positive interactions with people who have FASD.

This video was made for Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Thanks to Joseph Heke, Michael & Dingwall Trust. (Michael is a fictitious name.)