



# Primary vs. Secondary Behaviours

**Primary:** Our actions are guided by our own unique brain strengths and differences.

**Secondary:** When we are judged and attacked we build defensive and protective walls.

Consider whether behaviours are primary (from the brain) or secondary (walls built to protect):

*"Others find it challenging to understand me [primary] at times and this makes me feel left out [secondary]."*

-Youth with FASD

## Brain Differences (Primary)

- Challenges communicating thoughts clearly
- Processing speed delays
- Inattention/Impulsivity
- Memory problems
- Difficulty reading social cues (tone of voice, body language, sarcasm)
- Difficulty interpreting abstract concepts

## STRATEGIES

- **Identify challenges:** keep an open mind; use an empathetic approach; search for and repair breakdowns in communication
- **Develop healthy friendships:** share something important; develop self esteem by helping a friend and appreciating personal cultural heritage
- **Be proactive:** role play important conversations with a trusted person

## Protective Responses (Secondary)

- Frustration
- Aggression
- Shutting down
- Isolation/Giving up/Task avoidance
- Anxiety
- Overly dependent on others
- Substance use

