

Kellie

After we had five kids of our own, my husband and I knew that our family wasn't complete and decided to adopt two children from Russia. We were told in advance that Grace was severely handicapped and would never be normal; but Keith seemed perfectly healthy and well-adjusted. Then after a few years in the USA that prognosis changed, as neither Keith nor Grace developed normally. With a little research I discovered that Grace's biological mother had admitted to drinking while pregnant, which explained her unusual facial features, a frequent mark of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). Keith's background was impossible to determine, however, as he was abandoned in a train station in Russia with no identification. While outwardly he shows no signs of FASD, their doctor has determined that he, too, suffers from FASD and between the two of them they demonstrate the wide spectrum of symptoms that can be present in children with FASD. It is especially challenging when a child looks completely normal like Keith, everybody expects him to act normal. They just don't understand the challenges that these children face with actual brain damage.

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Also, we need to do a better job of getting the word out that the message is not: If you're pregnant, don't drink. The message is: If you're sexually active, don't drink. If they're pregnant, it's already too late.

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