Brain Health and Development Growth Spurt- Functioning at a Higher Level.

“Brain Health”
If you were trying to get into better physical shape you would eat properly, exercise, and get plenty of sleep. Doing these things may also help you have a developmental growth spurt.

• Eat healthy foods. Limit the amount of sugar and junk foods you eat. Drink water, not sodas and sugary drinks. Stay away from artificial sweeteners, caffeine, artificial colorings and dyes.
• Get plenty of exercise daily.
• Get plenty of sleep.
• Practice good hygiene. This includes:
  o Cleanliness
  o Hairstyle
  o Physical appearance – what you wear
• Do not drink any alcohol or take street drugs.
• Do not smoke.
• Read! Choose things that are entertaining, positive and character building.
• Be aware of the way you talk and the words you choose. Profanity is negative thinking. Get rid of it.
• Participate in healthy safe forms of recreation
• Fight against negativity. Use positive self-talk.
• Learn to deal with your anger. Find positive socially acceptable ways to express that anger.
• Structure is vital. You need to organize both your room and your life.

You need to be careful of how much time you spend engaged with electronics. This includes the type of movies or TV you watch and the electronic games you play. You need to have healthy hobbies and healthy forms of recreation. For example: crafts, doing art, helping people, being involved in sports, church activities, and the YMCA. Focus on doing something healthy and being a hard worker. As a person with Fetal Alcohol, you need to be around people who care about you. You need to see the example of the people around you who are also doing well building a healthy brain lifestyle.
Unfortunately, I also have an example of the reverse of brain health, of going downhill. I received a phone call from a mother one day whose son was thirty. He was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol. He had been doing well. He had a job. He had met someone very special to him and they planned on getting married. He was happy. Life was finally going well. Then he was introduced to alcohol, and he started drinking a lot. He started missing work. His girlfriend told him that she did not want to live that way and he needed to stop drinking. If things did not change she was going to leave him. He told his mother, “You know if she really loved me, she’d stay with me regardless of my drinking.” His mother replied that if he really loved her, he would stop drinking. The price this young man was paying for drinking was far too high. He was going to have a wife and live a good life, but he was giving it all up for alcohol. That is really a shame.

In the workbook (www.hayskids.com), there is a copy of a letter from Ann Streissguth that has some really good advice for healthy lifestyles. Everyone should read it.

“Developmental Growth Spurt”
I’d like to talk to you about developmental growth spurts. A developmental growth spurt is when you are able to do things that you had not been able to do before. I’ve talked to several families who have family members that are in their late twenties to mid-thirties and suddenly, they were able to do things that they had never been able to do before. Living on their own, keeping a job, getting a driver’s license, making decisions that keep them out of jail are all examples of Developmental Growth Spurts. When you begin realizing that you have a problem, then you will be ready to accept help. It doesn’t mean that you are healed or that you are able to do everything, however you are able to do more things. So, just because you are not able to do something that you really want to do now, it doesn’t mean that you will not be able to do it later.

So be encouraged to make life choices that will help your brain. It could help you have developmental growth spurts so you can do more.