



Down Syndrome Association
of Greater St. Louis




SIMPLE ANSWERS TO KIDS' QUESTIONS ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME

Information to Encourage Friendships


The contents of this handout have been reprinted from "Simple Answers to Kid's (not so simple) Questions About Down Syndrome" by United Parents Support for Down syndrome, a volunteer organization of parents of children with Down syndrome based in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago.

WHAT IS DOWN SYNDROME?

Down syndrome is something that causes differences in the way a person looks and learns. No two people with Down syndrome are quite the same, but they are often extra flexible in their joints, have small eyes, ears and noses, and grow more slowly than others



WHY DO SOME PEOPLE HAVE DOWN SYNDROME?



People with Down syndrome are born with one extra chromosome in some or all of their cells. Chromosomes contain the directions that tell your body what color your eyes and hair will be, how big your nose will be, whether you will be a good singer, and many other things. When a person has an extra chromosome, it mixes up the body's directions a little. That is why people with Down syndrome look a little different and have to try harder to learn. Nobody knows why some babies are born with Down syndrome, but we do know that it is nobody's fault.

WILL DOWN SYNDROME GO AWAY?

No. Down syndrome is not a sickness. Most people with Down syndrome are very healthy. You can not "catch" Down syndrome. The only way to have Down syndrome is to be born with it.

WHY IS IT CALLED DOWN SYNDROME?

A doctor named John Langdon Down was the first to write about this condition. It's not called that because we should be "down" or sad or depressed about it.





WHY IS IT SOMETIMES HARD TO UNDERSTAND MY FRIEND WITH DOWN SYNDROME?

Many people with Down syndrome have trouble learning to talk. Many little kids first learn to communicate by using their hands in sign language. Kids with Down syndrome also benefit from having a teacher help them learn to talk (a speech and language pathologist), but the best teachers are other kids!

CAN PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME LEARN?

Yes! People with Down syndrome can and do learn, but have to work much harder than others, and may need more time and extra help. Kids with Down syndrome usually can participate in most school activities.


DO PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME GROW UP?

Yes! In adulthood, many people with Down syndrome have jobs, go to college, live independently, and support their communities. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability, and dedication.

DO PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME HAVE FEELINGS?

Yes! Just like everyone, people with Down syndrome have feelings. They can feel happy, silly, sad, sorry, or upset - just like you. People with Down syndrome enjoy friendships and family and can be hurt when someone teases or makes fun of them - just like you.

WHY DOES MY FRIEND WITH DOWN SYNDROME ACT DIFFERENTLY THAN OTHER KIDS?



People with Down syndrome have difficulty with language and talking. Many kids with Down syndrome want to interact and play with their friends, but don't know how, or are afraid they won't be understood. Kids with Down syndrome get overwhelmed when too many things are going on at the same time.

CAN I HELP MY FRIEND WITH DOWN SYNDROME?

Yes! Play with and talk to people with Down syndrome. If they are having trouble playing a game, give them time and extra help, or ask them what game they want to play. Be clear in what you are saying. Find out what your friend likes to do and what kinds of things you have in common. You are more alike than you are different.

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