

Tips for working with individuals with Down syndrome

1) Person-First Language

Remember that individuals with Down syndrome are just that; individuals! We are not “Downs” or “Down syndrome kids/adults.” We are people first, so please always address us that way. Remember that we are way more than a diagnosis!

2) Slow down!

Sometimes it may take me longer to process what you are saying. Slow down! Don't talk to me like I don't understand you, but please give me some processing time (usually 10 seconds). If you wait for what I have to say, you won't be sorry!

3) Clear Directions

It is sometimes difficult for me to follow multiple directions at once. Please be clear and concise! I do very well when you “show” me, rather than “tell” me. Visuals or bulleted-lists work well!

4) Be Positive

I can achieve just about anything I set my mind to! Hold high expectations for me and provide encouragement. Being positive with me will help encourage success!

5) Include Me

Just like anyone else, I want to be included. Please talk to me and include me. Get to know me as a person! You'll be glad you did.

MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.

Truth: Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 800 births is a child with Down syndrome. There are currently 250,000 people in the U.S. with Down syndrome, with 5,000 births per year.

Myth: Down syndrome is hereditary and runs in families.

Truth: Most cases of Down syndrome are sporadic, chance events. In general, Down syndrome does not run in families and a sibling or aunt has no greater chance of conceiving a child with Down syndrome.

Myth: People with Down syndrome have severe cognitive delays.

Truth: Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. IQ is not an adequate measure of the functional status of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome have great potential if given opportunities.

Myth: The life expectancy of people with Down syndrome is 30.

Truth: Thanks to advances in medical and clinical treatment and opportunities to thrive, as many as 80 percent of adults with Down syndrome reach age 55, and many live longer.

Myth: Behavior problems and depression are just part of having Down syndrome.

Truth: Often, medical or mental health problems go untreated due to the assumption that it is typical of having this genetic condition. Complete examinations by appropriate health care professionals should always be pursued.

Myth: Children with Down syndrome are placed in segregated special education programs.

Truth: Children with Down syndrome are included in regular academic classrooms across the country. Students may be integrated into specific courses or fully included in the regular classroom for all subjects.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome may be unable to work.

Truth: Businesses seek young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are employed by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability and dedication.

For more information about Down syndrome, visit www.kcdsg.org.

