

How to Support Individuals with Down syndrome



Use "people first language." Individuals with Down syndrome are individuals! They are not "Downs" or "Down syndrome kids/adults." They are people first and so much more than a diagnosis.



Never ever use the r-word for any reason. The R-word is the word 'retard(ed)' and hurts because it is exclusive, offensive and derogatory.



Show patience and respect. Individuals with DS generally understand a lot more than they are able to express, but they have extraordinary gifts they can share when given the opportunity.



Maintain clear but high expectations. Structured routines are comforting and reduce frustrations. Tools include descriptive/visual schedules, setting deadlines, explaining timeframes and breaks. Communicate changes with a notice and explanations, when possible.



It is always good to ask if extra assistance is needed with a task instead of making assumptions and jumping in to help. They may need extra time for guidance and assistance; however, it is just as important they are allowed independence and tend to ask for help when needed.



Include them in conversations and activities as an equal participant. Use age appropriate language, adults are adults.



Don't talk louder, talk slower and allow more time for processing and response. If there is difficulty in communication repeat back what you think they are trying to say. Give him/her time to speak – you won't want to miss what they have to say.



Use simple and clear directions or routines, as it can be difficult to remember multiple steps. They tend to do better with concrete rather than abstract terms and work best when given specific short-term goals.



Some tasks or requests may be perceived as more challenging to an individual with DS or they may simply not have the confidence or energy to respond appropriately. Great methods for helping them move in the right direction are using "first/then," giving limited choices, redirecting, ignoring attention seeking behaviors, pairing preferred tasks/items with non-preferred tasks or taking a break.

Resources about Down syndrome:

There are lots more resources to get up-to-date, accurate information at www.somethingextra.org.

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