



## What to say to children about Down syndrome

*“Down syndrome is nobody’s fault... and you can’t catch it”*

*These are some ideas which may help you to formulate the right thing to say to brothers and sisters and other children.*

‘Some people are born with Down syndrome – they don’t catch Down syndrome and it does not go away – it’s just part of who they are.’

‘He has Down syndrome – it’s not anybody’s fault, and it does not make him very different from you.’

‘Having Down syndrome does not stop him from learning things. It just means it’s harder to learn things than it is for you. He may have to work hard to learn something that you find easy – but you can help him learn.’

‘People who are born with Down syndrome usually take longer to learn things than other people. Sometimes they can be a bit slow at doing things and you have to be patient. It’s good to learn to be patient.’

‘He is still learning about ... (eg using the toilet) because having Down syndrome means he takes longer and has to work a bit harder to learn things than some other children. It’s OK to take longer and soon he’ll know just what to do.’

‘Everyone with Down syndrome has things they are really good at too – what do you think he is (/will be) really good at?’

‘People with Down syndrome often look a bit like each other, but they also look like their brothers and sisters and parents.’

‘Sometimes she needs more of my time and help than you do, but I love you both the same.’

‘Because she has Down syndrome she has to work harder to speak clearly than other people. Sometimes she doesn’t speak clearly but you can ask her to say it again and speak slowly and clearly.’

‘She may find it harder to learn to do things than you do, like walking and speaking clearly. But she will learn to do these things, just as you did.’

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'If people are rude or say unpleasant things (stare, tease etc) about Down syndrome, it is usually because they do not understand what Down syndrome is – so we can help by telling them a bit about it.'

'Having Down syndrome does not mean that it is OK to behave badly. Everyone needs to learn how to behave well. It will take him longer to learn what is OK to do and say, than it takes for other people. Try not to get cross when he does the wrong thing – tell him it's not OK and show him how to do it right'.

'It is hard for him to tell you about his feelings so he does something to show you instead, and it may not always be a good way of showing it.'

'If she does something silly, don't laugh, just show her a better way to do it.'

Down Syndrome Victoria, January 2009