

your Brother or Sister with



Down's syndrome

Information for Teenagers

Growing up with a brother or sister with Down's syndrome can be fun, but sometimes you might find it difficult. Remember that all brothers and sisters feel like this about each other sometimes.

What is a Sibling?

When you hear someone using the word 'sibling', they mean a person who is a brother or sister of someone.

What is Down's syndrome?

Down's syndrome is as a 'congenital condition'. This means that it is a condition that you are born with. You can't catch it or pass it on to anyone else.

Inside our bodies are cells, and inside each cell are chromosomes. Most people have 46 chromosomes, 23 from Mum and 23 from Dad. Babies with Down's syndrome are born with an extra number 21 chromosomes in each cell. This means that they have 47 chromosomes instead of 46. So the only difference is that people with Down's syndrome have one extra chromosome.

People with Down's syndrome can look a little like each other but they look more like their own brothers or sisters or their Mums and Dads.

Your sibling will probably like the same sort of things that you do, but sometimes they might need extra help from other people to do them.



Emotions that Siblings may experience

You may feel lots of different emotions about your brother or sister with Down's syndrome. You may feel: happy, sad, annoyed, embarrassed, jealous, guilty and protective towards them.

Occasionally, you may find that you worry about your brother or sister. Sometimes it helps to tell someone how you are feeling. Other siblings, parents and even your brother or sister with Down's syndrome may have felt the same way too.

Sometimes when something is driving us mad, we feel the need to let off steam. Try to be aware of how you feel and instead of taking it out on someone else you could try:

- Going for a run or a walk.
- Writing down everything you feel in words or drawing a picture of how you feel. You might want to keep them, show them to someone or simply throw them away when you feel better.
- Writing down all the positive things that people have said about your brother or sister with Down's syndrome.

As a sibling, you may already be aware that people react in different ways towards your brother or sister. Sometimes your brother or sister may be treated in a way that makes you feel embarrassed or angry.

How to deal with other peoples attitudes

- Try to tell people about Down's syndrome.
- Try not to become defensive, although this isn't always easy.
- Try to control your own anger. Remember it's not personal.
- Try to remember your own attitudes. Maybe you had some of the same thoughts before you had a brother or sister with Down's syndrome.
- Talk to someone who might understand how you are feeling.

Enjoying your relationship with your brother or sister

- Give yourself space, you also are an individual with your own needs.
- Stop being hard on yourself, you can't be perfect all the time, even if it feels as if you have to be.
- Accept that the feelings you have are normal and that others share them too.
- Don't feeling guilty.
- Accept your brother or sister for who they are.
- It's good to talk about your feelings to others.
- Try to do lots of fun things together.
- Talk to your brother or sister about things that you are doing.
- Remember all brothers and sisters argue at some point, whether they have Down's syndrome or not.



Down's Syndrome
SCOTLAND helping people realise their potential

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