



Teacher Notes for Student Presentation

Teenagers who have Down syndrome are just like all other teenagers, in that each one of you is different. Like each of you, they have their own way of doing things, of understanding and of interacting.

Teenagers with Down syndrome need to be recognised for who they are. We are all making a voyage through life and the world. For some of us, there will be a few extra problems. We all hope to be happy being who we are, and the teenager with Down syndrome can be too, if he / she is surrounded by the same love and trust that we enjoy. If they are respected, they can become independent individuals with a lot to contribute to society.

Respect does not just 'happen' ~ it develops when we

- listen to each other
- get to know each other
- sharing with each other
- trust each other

Down syndrome is the most common, identifiable cause of a learning disability. Having a learning disability can mean that children may be

- Slow to develop
- Slow to learn to talk, walk and play

For a teenager with a learning disability, extra help may be needed with

- School work
- Solving everyday problems
- Free time activities and pastimes
- Shopping
- Using transport independently

New interests, friends and school work pose challenges for teenagers with Down syndrome. What is expected of them as they begin to live their own lives?

What Can You Do to Help?

Some people just don't know anyone with a learning disability and avoid anyone they think is different. They feel awkward because they might not understand or know what to do. As more young people meet people with a learning disability, they will feel more comfortable

- Look at how far your classmate with Down syndrome has come and the hurdles he / she has overcome
- Value their good sense of humour
- Value their good company
- Praise him / her to your other friends and let others know of their achievements
- Give them a hand
- Help them to do things for themselves so that they can be recognised as being the same as other people, as a member of a group of friends

It is good to question how people treat others with a learning disability. Some people do not understand that everyone is important.

In an accepting society, helping others and encouraging them to be more confident is valued.

The teenager with Down syndrome is more like every other student than they are different. Students with a disability such as Down syndrome are just as diverse in their personal characteristics, behaviours, interests and learning aptitudes as any group of students

Goals

- To become as independent as possible in their personal care and social lives
- To develop a positive self-identity, self-confidence and self-esteem – *to feel good about themselves*
- To develop a network of friends, personal relationships and leisure interests
- To progress their cognitive, speech and language, and academic skills, and prepare for work

Profile

Professor Sue Buckley sums up the situation thus:

“Individuals with Down syndrome are people first, with the same rights and needs as everyone else. Their development is influenced by the quality of care, education and social experiences offered to them, just like all other people.”

Down syndrome is the most common identifiable cause of learning disability

Down syndrome is a genetic condition caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21. A baby born with Down syndrome has three copies of chromosome 21 instead of the usual two.

- Research has identified a profile of developmental strengths and weaknesses, specific to individuals with Down syndrome
- This profile makes their learning needs different from most other children and teenagers with similar levels of cognitive ability

Social Understanding & Social Interactive Skills

- Most teenagers are socially sensitive and understand non-verbal cues to emotions e.g. facial expression, tone of voice, body posture etc.
- Many teenagers show good empathy and understanding of social behaviours but may not have the language ability to explain how they feel or to negotiate social situations.
- They can behave appropriately in showing concern, expressing emotion or becoming upset.
- Sensitivity can make teenagers with Down syndrome vulnerable as they will quickly pick up on negative emotions such as dislike, anger or rejection.
- As they are usually not able to explain how they feel, their distress will be expressed in behaviour

Motor Skills

- By post-primary school age, gross and fine motor skills may still be delayed
- This delay will affect participation in games and P.E.
- It will also affect handwriting
- Fine & gross motor skills will improve steadily with practice and most teenagers can use the mouse and keyboard to operate a computer at 11 years of age.

Speech & Language

- Speech and language skills are more delayed than the teenagers' non-verbal understanding and reasoning abilities

Reading Ability

- Often a strength as it builds on visual memory skills
- Reading activities can be used to teach spoken language

Working Memory is the mental workplace in information can be temporarily stored and manipulated during complex everyday activities such as:

- Understanding language
- Listening to another speaker
- Decoding an unfamiliar word whilst holding the meaning of the previously decoded text in mind
- Writing whilst formulating the next part of the text
- Engaging in mental arithmetic

Working memory development, particularly verbal short-term memory, seems to be specifically impaired

This has consequences for the teenagers' ability to learn a spoken language and to process information

Visual Memory & Visual Processing

- Strengths
- Teenagers with Down syndrome should be thought of as visual learners and all teaching should be supported with visual materials

Number

- Number seems relatively more difficult for teenagers with Down syndrome, with number skills often delayed

Health Issues

Most teenagers with Down syndrome, like typically developing teenagers, may be affected by *any* type of illness

Of those disorders prevalent in people with Down syndrome, there are several of particular importance

- Hearing
- Vision
- Infections
- Heart Disorders

Hearing

Teenagers with Down syndrome tend to have a significantly higher incidence of hearing problems than any other groups and studies have indicated that about 50-60% of teenagers will have some problem with hearing

Vision

There are a number of eye disorders of special relevance to Down syndrome. The commonest are:

- infections of the eyelid
- conjunctivitis
- long / short sightedness

Puberty & Sexual Health

- Teenagers with Down syndrome experience the same physical and emotional changes during adolescence as other teenagers
- Their sexual and emotional needs are the same as those of the rest of the population
- It is important that teenagers with Down syndrome learn as much as possible about the ways in which their bodies are changing and about taking care of their personal hygiene

Mental Health

- A large percentage of people with Down syndrome of all ages tend to talk to themselves and / or have imaginary friends.
- In virtually all cases, this is perfectly normal It is now generally accepted that self talk is merely a form of thinking aloud and serves an adaptive function by helping to think about the various tasks and problems of daily life

Speech & Language

Learning to talk is one of the most important things that we do. It is the basis of our social, emotional and cognitive development. Consequently, progress in learning to talk will benefit every other aspect of our lives

For children with Down syndrome, speech and language skills are often significantly delayed, more so than their non-verbal abilities

- Communication skills are usually good
- Vocabulary is delayed but grows steadily
- Understanding is ahead of expression
- Grammar is more difficult ~ tend to use just nouns / verbs {basic meanings & words}
- Clear speech is more difficult

Importance of Speech & Language

- Words for Knowledge ~ vocabulary size
- Language for remembering, thinking & reasoning
- Language for self-control & planning
- Language for dealing with emotions & worries
- Language for communication with others
- Language for friendships

Using sign to facilitate language and clear speech

Lámh is a signing system designed for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and communication needs in Ireland

Lámh is based on Irish Sign Language {ISL}, although there are some differences;

[1] Some signs are adapted to be more representative of the actions or objects for which they stand;

[2] Simple hand shapes are chosen where possible, rather than the more difficult finger spelling of ISL

[3] Natural gesture is incorporated as much as possible

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Communication Goals

- Strategies for greeting & leave taking
- Initiating and continuing conversations
- Telling & listening to stories
- Telling jokes
- Making friends
- Sharing worries
- Sharing feelings

- Resolving conflict
- Making requests
- Giving instructions

Social Use of Language

- Introducing self
- Asking name
- Opening conversation
- Talking to people
- Joining in everyday conversations
- Shared experiences

Conversational Skills

- Initiating & Responding
- Taking turns
- Listening
- Interest in others

Expressing Emotions & Feelings

- Vocabulary to target words for everyday emotions e.g. happy, sad, excited, frightened and angry
- Language for developing relationships, special friends, boy / girlfriends ~ appropriate vocabulary and appropriate ways of expressing themselves
- Language for sexuality

Visual Learners

- Pictures rather than words
- Viewing videos / examples of work / demonstrations
- Seeing a sample of the finished product first
- Reading the end of the story first
- Reading stories with humour / excitement / adventure
- Visualising actions / scenes / characters / while reading
- Learning phonics / skills / vocabulary in context
- Finding visual cues in texts (charts / graphs)
- Using graphic organisers ~ illustrating in chart form
- Writing down what they need to learn ~ note taking
- Working with different media ~ colours, textures etc.
- Using artistic means to express what they learn
- Doodling / drawing while listening
- Writing out words during spelling games
- Being shown the correct version of what they have done wrong
- Having neat organised workplaces ~ visual order.

Hands-on experiences as often as possible!

Chinese Proverb

I hear and I forget

I see and hear and I may remember

I do and I understand

What is Social Development?

- Social interactive skills
- Social understanding & empathy
- Play, leisure & recreation
- Socially appropriate behaviour
- Personal & social independence
- Friendships & relationships

Pupils must adapt to the child/teenager with Down syndrome, not the child/teenager with Down syndrome adapting to all other pupils

What is a Friend?

- Spend time and do things together
 - Have fun with, make you laugh
 - Shared experiences
 - Same wave-length
 - Take care of one another
 - Acceptance
 - Loyalty
 - Shared interests and activities
 - Genuineness
 - Commitment
 - Intimacy
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- Are the friendships reciprocal?
 - What is the nature of the friendship?
 - Is the student a ghost / guest or a full member of the class?
 - Is the student treated differently ~ are certain behaviours accepted that would not normally be accepted by the group?
 - Feeling that you belong is crucial to personal development and self-esteem;

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