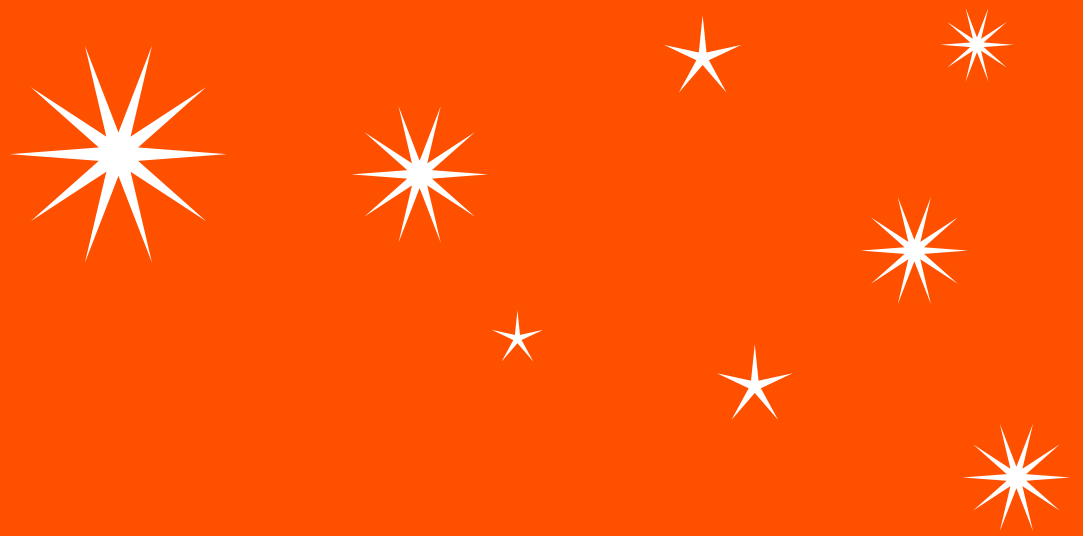


UPSIDE DOWN

The story of my
brother James

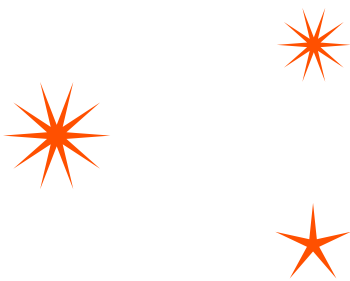


By
Liadh Hanley



I decided to write this book about my brother for a school book competition when I was 16. We were given the chance to write a book about a topic of our choosing. I chose to write about disabilities and in particular, Down Syndrome. From growing up with my brother James who has Down Syndrome, I am lucky enough to understand a lot about disabilities. This also means I have noticed how so many people have misconceptions about people with disabilities and treat them differently.

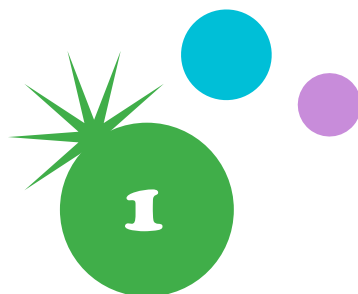
I felt a responsibility to share my experiences through my book 'Upside Down', that will hopefully teach children how to help, encourage and respect those with Down Syndrome. I hope you enjoy reading my book! - Liadh.

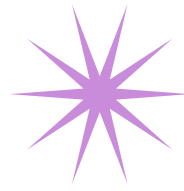


A disability is a condition that a person has that may make it hard for them to do things such as walking, talking, learning or writing.

If a person has a disability it does not necessarily mean they cannot do such things but that it may take them a bit longer to do.

Having a disability does not make a person less or more important than someone who does not have a disability.





If you meet a person with a disability you should treat them with the same respect and kindness as you would if you met a person that does not have a disability.

Meeting a friend who is a bit different to you can be a new experience for you.

You might find your friend different and unfamiliar at the beginning, but once you understand why your friend is a bit different and you get used to them, you realise your friend is fun to play with and really kind.





I have an older brother
called James.

James loves music, farming, hurling, swimming
and riding his go-kart.



I **love** James because he is kind, caring and hilariously funny.

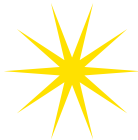
We love baking, watching Harry Potter and going to hurling matches together.

James has a disability called Down Syndrome.



So what is Down Syndrome ???

Down Syndrome is a disability that some babies are born with. It is a part of who they are and they will have it for the rest of their lives.





Here is the science part...

It is estimated that there are approximately seven thousand people in Ireland with Down Syndrome.



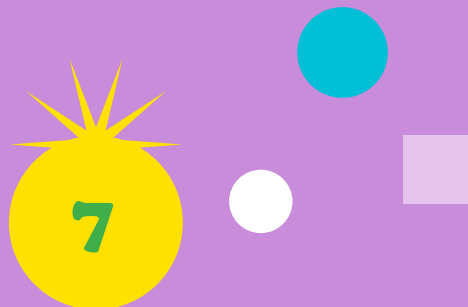


One in **564 babies** is born with Down Syndrome.

Most people are born with 46 chromosomes, but someone born with Down Syndrome has 47 chromosomes.

A chromosome is a structure within us that give us our traits and characteristics.

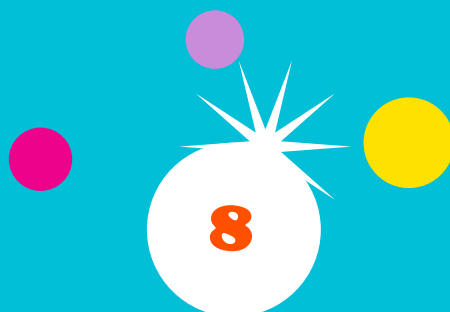
Chromosomes determine what eye colour, hair colour, strength and weaknesses we have.





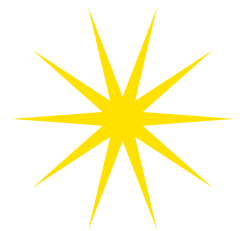
People that have Down Syndrome may have similar physical traits such as **eyes**, **ears** and **noses**.

People that have Down Syndrome are their own unique person with their own personality and abilities.





Everyone finds
something difficult.
Some people find
sports difficult.
Other people find
reading difficult.



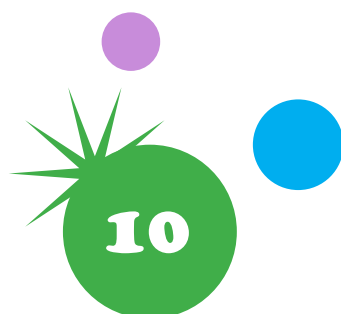
My brother, James is no different. He finds some things easy and some things hard.

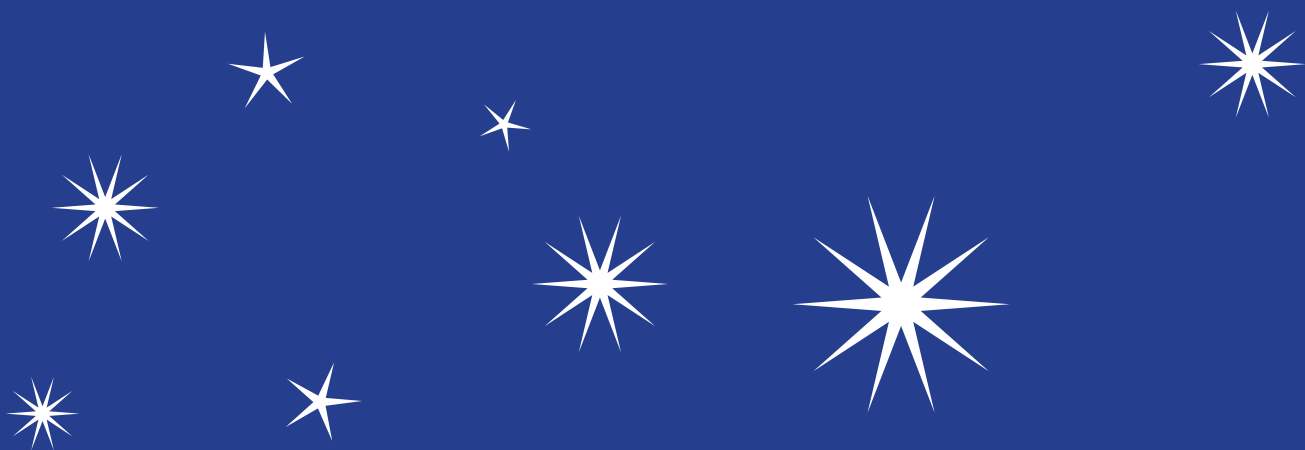




Those who have Down Syndrome might be born with muscle hypotonia which means they have low muscle tone. This makes it harder to move, react, stand up straight and talk.

Sometimes people with Down Syndrome find it hard to concentrate and remember little things such as Maths.





Sometimes it can be hard to understand what James is saying.

I have learned that **I must be patient with him** when he speaks slowly because he has important things to say.

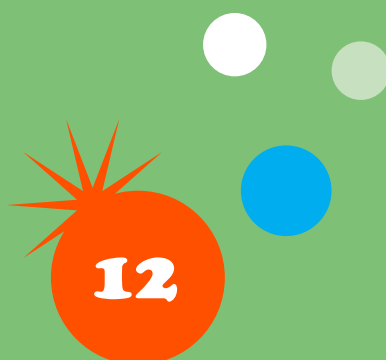
When he was a child, James attended speech therapy. A speech therapist works with people of all ages who have difficulties communicating. This helped James to talk slower and clearer.



A collection of white and yellow starburst shapes of various sizes scattered in the upper left quadrant of the page.

**James started in
mainstream primary
school when he was
6 years old.**

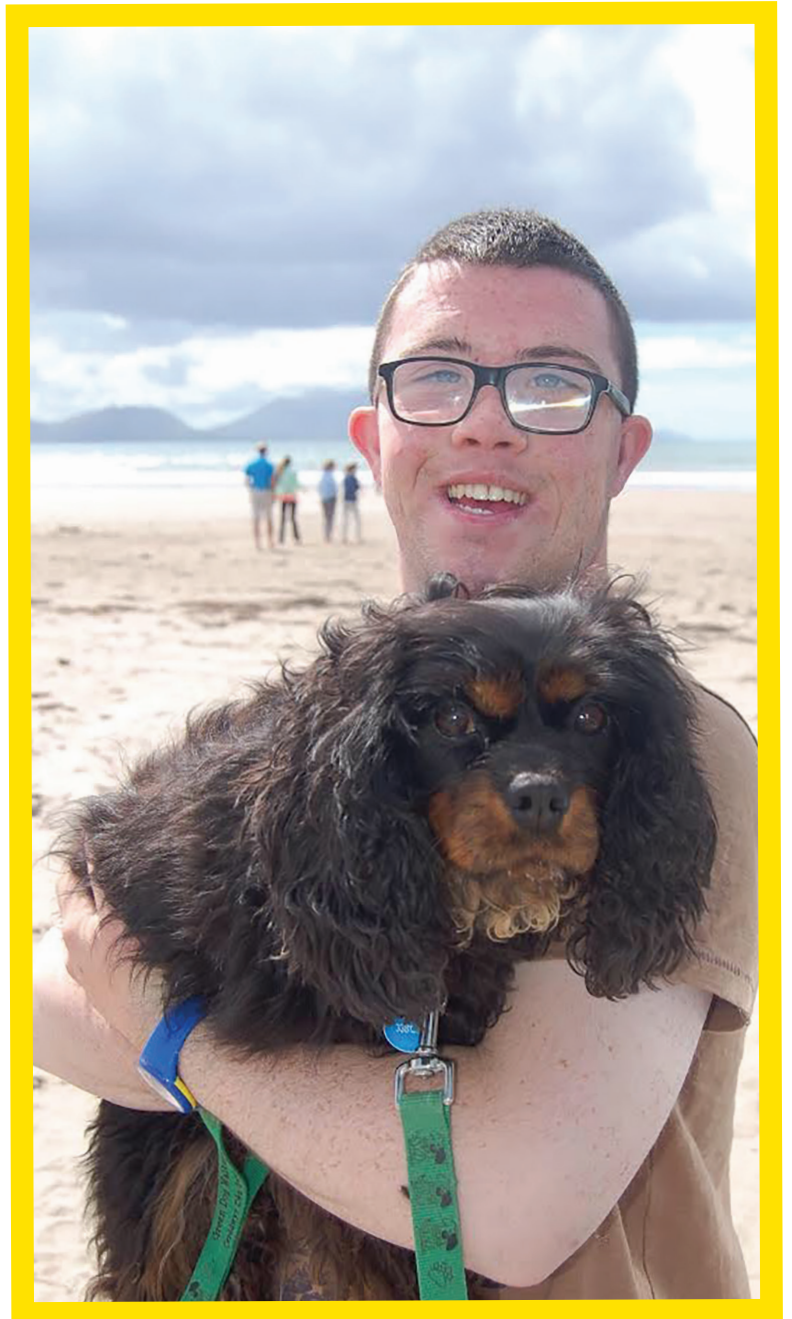
A Mainstream class consists of children with disabilities and children that do not have disabilities.



James sometimes had difficulty learning

so he had a helper
in his class
called Mary.

Mary assisted any
pupil in the class
that needed some
extra help at times.

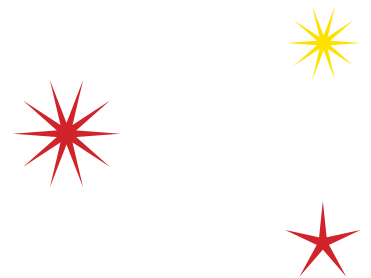


James went to a main-
stream school because my parents believed that
he could learn the same things as his
classmates who didn't have a disability.



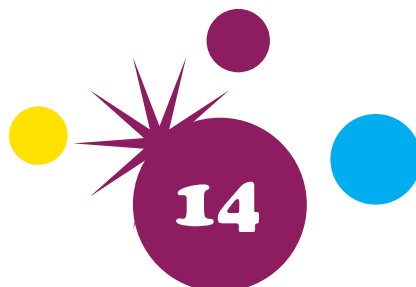


Sometimes James went out of the class for a short time so that Mary could help him to understand something difficult, such as Maths, in a quiet space.



54% of children with Down Syndrome will require glasses at some stage in their lives.

James has worn glasses since he was very young. This is why his worksheets in school might have bigger print than his classmates but he is still doing the same work.





Now for more science facts...

Some people with Down Syndrome may have problems with their hearts. This may make it harder for them to keep up in the playground or play sports.

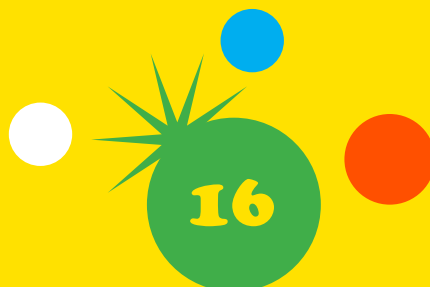
It does not mean they cannot play sports.



James has played sports including **athletics** and **swimming** since he was **five years old**.

He competed in many competitions in both sports and even travelled to Belgium for a swimming competition!!

When I see James working as hard as he does at his sports it inspires me to work hard to achieve my goals too.





**James is not only my
brother but my best
friend.**

It is great having a friend who has Down Syndrome. Treat them the same as you would treat your friends that do not have a disability. Be kind. Be patient. Include them in your games.



Ask them about their hopes and ideas. James and I always talk about what we want to be when we grow up. I want to be a teacher, James wants to be a farmer.

**Help them to understand
if they need to, but don't
baby them.**

Support them in everything they do no matter how big or small. "It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be."



Like everyone, someone that has Down Syndrome has a wide range of emotions.



James may sometimes get frustrated when he finds Maths difficult.

This is when he needs his friends and family to support him and help him to understand it better.

When our grandad passed away, I was very sad and so was James. We both miss him and James talks about him often.

People that have Down Syndrome are just as sensitive as everyone else.

It is very important to include your friends that have Down Syndrome in the playground like you include your other friends and never call anyone names or hurt their feelings.

Some people don't understand what they are saying when they use mean words towards other people. They may think it is humorous but no matter how a person uses those words it is always insulting and hurtful to whoever they are speaking about.

If someone is being hurtful or using mean words, it is important that you stand up for your friend or sibling. You may have to stand up even more for you friend with Down Syndrome as sometimes they may find it difficult to defend themselves.



Sometimes people stare at James because he looks different to them. If I know them, I explain to them about his disability and I help them understand that he is the same as them and that he is unique in his own way, just like everyone else.

It is important to teach your friends and classmates about disabilities where they might not have the knowledge.



Help others to understand that everyone is different. Not everyone is as lucky as you to have gotten to know someone with a disability.

It is important to teach people not to judge a book by its cover.

“When you judge someone based on a diagnosis you miss out on their abilities, beauty and uniqueness”.



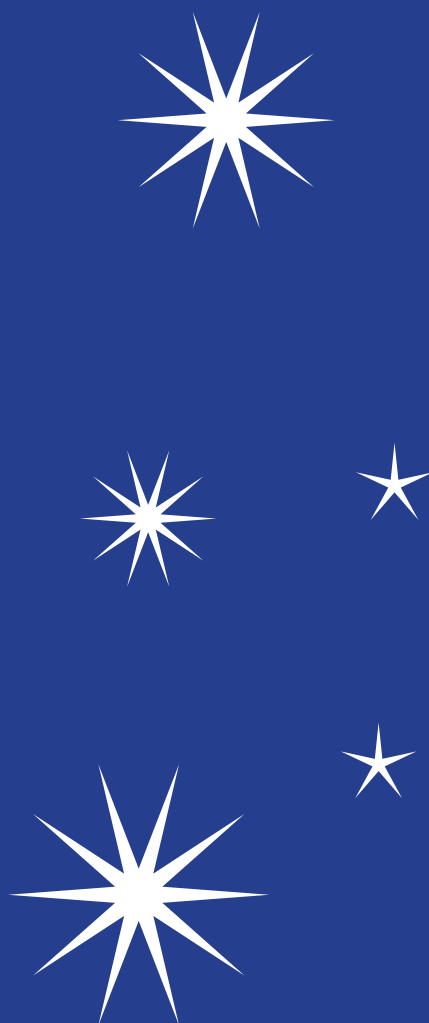
People that have Down Syndrome have abilities, strengths and weaknesses just like their peers.

Someone may have additional needs whether they have a disability or not. Adults with Down Syndrome all over the world lead full and independent lives.

James successfully completed his Junior Certificate and Learning For Living course in secondary school. He is now in college learning how to live an independent life. He gets the public bus three times a day.

He plays the bodhrán and successfully completed Grade 1 in piano. He is learning computer skills, money management skills, cooking, communication and art skills that will prepare him for a job in the future.





James has already achieved so much and has worked so hard to be where he is today.

I am so proud of him for achieving his goals.

James' disability has not prevented him from prospering in life.

Down Syndrome

is **NOT** a disease.

It is **NOT** a birth defect.

It is **NOT** contagious.

It is **NOT** a label.

Down Syndrome is a part of James.

It is a part of what makes him my amazing brother.

But it is not a definition of who he is.



Acknowledgements

There are so many people who have been so generous, helpful and supportive on the journey of 'Upside Down'.

I want to acknowledge my school and especially my English teachers for giving me the opportunity to write a book and share it with an audience.

I want to thank Norman and all the team at Cola Design for helping me put together this book. I never would have thought I would be given the opportunity to publish a book at 16! The team were so helpful and designed a beautiful book that I am so proud to share.

I also want to thank Mom, Dad, Cillian and Eimear who supported me every step of the way and gave me so much positive feedback. A special thank you to Dad for many late nights of sticking and glueing and trips to Vibes & Scribes!

I would like to thank all the staff and students in Shanbally National School who showed such a keen interest in my book and gave me such positive feedback. I hope the students will enjoy reading it in their libraries.

I want to give an important acknowledgement to Oonagh Cunningham for getting 'Upside Down' up and running and sharing it with so many people. Without Oonagh, this book would not have reached the large audience that it has. She was always so supportive behind the scenes and gave me the encouragement to go the extra mile with my book.

Lastly and most importantly, my brother James. Well, you should be thanking me for writing a book all about you! Thank you for inspiring every person you meet and for being an amazing big brother.

