



## Things we wished we'd known before having a child with Down syndrome:

### **Your child will be as unique and as similar as any other child.**

They will have their favourite toys, TV shows, foods, music and clothes. They might be great at football or love to paint, and there will be things that they are not so good at or don't enjoy as much, just like any other child. They will certainly let you know what they don't like! They will look more like you than any set of 'features' you will read about in a book.



### **People with Down syndrome are not always happy!**

Be prepared for a tantruming 2 year old and a stropky teenager! People with Down syndrome go through every emotion, just like everyone else. It is true though that they do bring a special kind of joy to everyone they meet. They will amaze you every day with their humour, wit and charm.

### **Your child will not be excluded from society.**

Today, your child is more likely to attend mainstream school than ever before. You will know what is best for your child, YOU will become the expert. They will go to the birthday parties and the sleep overs, they will make friends. They will have relationships and may get married. They can attend college or have a job if they want to. They will need a little more support to accomplish these things, but the world is a place of opportunity for young people with Down syndrome.

### **You will cope.**

At one point or another we have all thought, 'I can't do this', whether it be at diagnosis, in the middle of the night when your child will not sleep, when you are at your child's hospital bedside or just at any point of any given day. It is completely normal to have these moments of self-doubt but you are far stronger than you think. Most of the time you will just get on with whatever life throws at you, because you love your child and they love you! You are the best person for the job of being their parent.



### **Our lives will not just be an endless cycle of medical appointments.**

There is no denying that Down syndrome can mean that your child is more likely to have some health conditions such as a heart defect, sight impairment or hearing loss, but thankfully we live in a time of medical advancement and these things are dealt with quickly and effectively. Many of us parents have been through medical treatments and surgeries with our children, so we are able to advise and support you through the worrying times. You will soon realise you have a real tough little cookie on your hands!



### **We wouldn't change our children for the world.**

For many parents receiving a diagnosis that their baby has Down syndrome can be a difficult time. Many of us felt overwhelmed, scared of an unknown future, shocked and sad. Then as we spoke to more people who have a child with Down syndrome and got to know our babies, our fears, concerns and sadness dissipated. Parents realise that a baby with Down syndrome has the same needs as any other baby, to be loved and cared for. Some of us felt that we wished our child didn't have Down syndrome but after time we now see past the condition and love and cherish our child with Down syndrome the same as our other children, and genuinely would not change our child for the world.



**My child will be able to achieve.**

There is no denying it, things may take your child longer to achieve. And it can be difficult when you compare with other children but a child with Down syndrome can and will do whatever they put their mind to, they may just need a little more help and time to get there. And when they do you will feel elation for them, and your heart will burst with pride. It is a feeling like no other. Take the opportunity to relish the slower pace, you get to really enjoy and notice all the little things they achieve that sometimes you can miss in this busy world.



**I didn't need to worry about the future.**

No-one knows what the future holds, so try not to worry about what may happen and live for the moment. Enjoy your child, knowing that whatever obstacles are put in front of you there are people that have been in the same boat and are still here to live to tell the tale (and give you their advice and support).

**Having a child with Down syndrome will not have a negative effect on my other children.**

Every family is different of course, but studies have shown that people with a sibling who has Down syndrome love them dearly and it has made them better, more caring people. They may still fight like cat and dog though!

**Just how happy I would be.**

There may be some difficult times, days when our kids drive us mad, days when we are worried sick, but most days we feel like the proudest parents on earth and we are bouncing on air. This journey you are on will be the making of you.



**Down syndrome doesn't define us as parents either.**

You are still the same person you were before your baby came along. Your perceptions and priorities may change along the way, but you are still you. Everyone's situation is different of course, but for most of us life hasn't changed too dramatically. Many of us still go to work, go on family holidays and have nights out. We are all very different people with our own interests, skills and views. We do share a special bond though and it makes us a great big family.

