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Social Development For Individuals With Down Syndrome: An Overview (Down Syndrome Issues & Information)



Synopsis

Social development includes social interactive skills with children and adults, social understanding and empathy, friendships, play and leisure skills, personal and social independence and socially appropriate behaviour. Each of these areas of development is discussed, drawing on the available research literature. Social understanding, empathy and social interactive skills are strengths for children and adults with Down syndrome, which can be built on throughout life to enhance their social inclusion and quality of life. The opportunity to establish friendships may be affected by social independence and by speech and language and cognitive delay. Parents and teachers need to think about ways of increasing the friendship opportunities of children during primary school and teenage years. The importance of friendships with both typically developing peers and peers with similar disabilities is stressed, as is the need to develop play, leisure and independence skills. Most children and teenagers with Down syndrome have age-appropriate social behaviour, but some children do develop difficult behaviours which cause family stress and affect social and educational inclusion. Information on the types of behaviour which may cause concern is included and attention is drawn to the high incidence of sleep difficulties as they influence day time behaviour. Strategies for encouraging age-appropriate behaviour are discussed and ways of preventing and changing difficult behaviours are outlined.

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