



Language & Terminology

Words can either help individuals to lead more complete and enriching lives or alternately can reinforce stereotypes that are degrading and limiting. Over the years, terminology has changed.

In Australia, the current term for the diagnosis is: “Down syndrome”

There is no apostrophe ‘s’ after ‘Down’ and small ‘s’ for syndrome

Avoid referring to someone as “suffering from” being a “victim of” or “afflicted by”, the condition, rather the person “has Down syndrome”. Likewise, avoid using terms such as “poor”, “unfortunate” or “pitiful”.

Refer to the “chance” of having a baby with Down syndrome rather than the “risk” of having a baby with Down syndrome.

Stress the individual first

A child with Down syndrome
An adult with Down syndrome
A baby with Down syndrome
A person with Down syndrome

A person with Down syndrome is not a Downsie, a Down syndrome or a Downs child.

Each person has his or her own unique talents, skills and strengths. Try not to believe or reinforce stereotypes.

People with Down syndrome don’t need sympathy, just support

An individual with Down syndrome is an individual first and foremost. The emphasis should be on the person, not the disability. Down syndrome is only one of the many words that can be used to describe a person.



Avoid generalisations

People with Down syndrome are not always happy and not all love music. As with everyone else in their community, they have a wide range of likes and dislikes and experience a range of emotions according to their circumstances.