

DOWN SYNDROME PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH TEXAS
BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES
FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

Information in this flyer was reproduced with permission from *Supporting Positive Behavior in Children and Teens with Down Syndrome: The Respond but Don't React Method* by David Stein, PsyD and published by Woodbine House.



FACT

30% of children with Down syndrome have a diagnosable behavior condition.

WHY?

Individuals with Down syndrome have brain differences such as:
Reduced growth in the frontal lobe, smaller brain stem and cerebellum, and problems in the temporal lobe & hippocampus.

What Does That Effect?

Socialization

- Hyper-aware (Hypersensitive)
- Hyper-engaged
- Aggressive problem solving
- Social/Emotional Radar
- Not pick up on social cues/norms
- No impulse control
- Cannot process consequences

Language

- Understand more than they can verbalize
- Difficulty formulating thoughts into words

Processing & Memory

- More visual and less verbal processing
- Prefer repetition versus change

Motivation

- Lack motivation
- Frustrated easily and can quit trying

What Can I Do?



Reinforce the behavior you want to see.

Every behavior has a purpose - try to figure out the reason behind the behavior.
Escape and avoidance? They don't like math, so they retreat.
Attention Seeking? Siblings/friends laugh when they do something.

Redirection/Choices

If they are being disruptive, give them a task to do or find another activity.
Offer choices - Would you like to clean your room or feed the dog first?

Structure

Try and make things as structured as possible, but throw some changes in every so often because they have to learn to deal with change.

Incentives

After you finish reading you get screen time.
Use social motivators - praise them in the moment doing something well.
Point out others doing a good job (peer modeling)

Visuals

Create picture schedules that takes them step-by-step through routines; once they have the routine down, remove the visuals slowly.
Time is an abstract concept, so using timers can give them an audible sign that they need to move on.

Ignore the behavior

Unless it is a safety issue (a child running into the street), it is okay to ignore the behavior.



WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?

Avoid raising your voice.
Avoid using long sentences.
Avoid reasoning with the child.

**BEHAVIOR IS LEARNED -
EARLY INTERVENTION IS KEY!**