Behavior Changes in Adolescents and Adults with Down Syndrome

Adult Down Syndrome Center
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Resource Library Link and Q&A

Link

Behavior Changes in Adolescents & Adults with Down Syndrome

adscresources.advocatehealth.com

Q&A

Skype Q&A

Type your question here.

ask | ask anonymously
Disclaimer

This information is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for a medical, psychiatric, mental health or behavioral evaluation, diagnosis or treatment plan by a qualified professional.
Adult Down Syndrome Center
Park Ridge, IL
Objectives

• Define behavior change
• Identify reasons for behavior changes
• Discuss strategies and solutions to address behavior changes
What is a behavior change?
Definition of behavior change

• A new action or pattern of actions that are atypical for an individual
Behavior changes – things to note

• Is the change in behavior interfering with the individual’s ability to function effectively?
• How does the change in behavior impact the family?
• What is the individual trying to communicate? — Needs, desires, challenges
Examples of behavior changes

• Appearing depressed, anxious, or stressed
• Exhibiting new obsessive compulsive behaviors
• Becoming agitated or aggressive
• Regressing
• Throwing tantrums or having meltdowns
• Being non-compliant
What can cause a behavior change?
Causes of behavior changes

• Health
  – Mental
  – Physical
• Social
• Sensory
• Combination
Mental health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- OCD
- Regression syndrome
- Situational stressors
  - Grief / loss
Physical health

• Sleep apnea
• Vitamin B12 deficiency
• Celiac disease
• Vision or hearing impairment
• Hypothyroidism
• Pain
• Alzheimer’s disease
Social

• Managing friendships and relationships
• Navigating situations at school or work
• Adjusting to changes in routine
Sensory

- Problems with the ability to process information received through the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, muscles/joints, balance) which impact a person’s ability to function in their daily life.
Combination

• COVID-19
  ▪ May be impacting all 4 areas
• OCD
• Grief / loss
How do we address behavior changes?
Approach

1. Decide if the behavior change needs to be addressed
2. Talk to your health care provider.
   - Address physical and/or mental health causes
   - Interaction between mental and physical health
   - Communication challenges
3. Utilize other strategies
Strategies

• Exercise
• Healthy eating
• Psychological support
• Structure / routine
• Sensory
Exercise

• Find what works for the individual
• Fun and social
• Incorporate it throughout the day
• Go outdoors
Healthy eating

- Incorporate all the food groups
- Routine for meals and snacks
- Eat with others
Psychological support

• Be aware of “empathy radar”
• Provide “in the moment” support when possible
• Work with a mental health provider
  – Consider therapies (e.g. music, art)
Structure / routine

• Visual supports
  – Pictures, words, or other images that are used to…
    • Help communicate
    • Share or manage expectations
    • Provide reminders
    • Teach new information
    • Facilitate understanding of challenging situations
Help communicate
Share or manage expectations

WEDNESDAY

7:00 AM
Wake up alarm
Get ready for work

8:00 AM
Breakfast

11:00 AM
Eat snack before work

11:15 AM
Walk to work alarm

11:30 AM
Work at Subway

11:30 PM to 1:30 PM
Clock out at work
Walk home

1:30 PM
Lunch

Activity

Dinner

9:15 PM
Call home to check in

10:00 PM
Bed time alarm

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When I get frustrated...
I will ask for help.

When I get frustrated...
I will do 5 pushups on the wall.
Share or manage expectations
Provide reminders
Teach new information

Strategies To Help Me Calm Down

**CALM BREATHING**
- pretend to smell a flower to inhale
- pretend to blow out a candle to exhale

**CALM THOUGHTS**
- squeeze hands
- count to ten

**CALM MUSCLES**
- be still like a statue
- be loose like an inflatable toy

New Way to Learn How to Tie Shoes
Tying shoes can sometimes be challenging for individuals with Down syndrome. We found this new technique that makes tying shoes a little easier!
After putting your shoe on, push the end of your laces into one of the extra holes at the top of the shoe.
Take one lace in each hand and make an X. Then loop the lace under and pull.
Facilitate understanding

Going for a sleep study

let's talk about death

maxiSHARE

For more information or to obtain any of our other publications, please visit www.downscotland.org.uk

AdvocateAuroraHealth
Sensory

• Sensory diet
  – Accommodations
  – Activities
Sensory
Sensory diet

• A planned and scheduled activity program.
• Highly individualized.
• Choosing from a menu rather than following a recipe.
• Helps prevent sensory and emotional overload by satisfying our body’s needs.
Sensory accommodations

• Used to address difficulties with sensations involving sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

• Examples
  – Sunglasses, dim lighting, study corral
  – Headphones (sound reducing or playing music)
  – Gloves, clothing without labels, fidgets
  – Bland foods for flavor or soft or pureed foods for texture or spicy foods and chewy or crunchy foods
  – Air purifiers, limiting perfume/lotion scents and air fresheners or aromatherapy
Sensory activities

• Used to address input to the muscles and joints
• How?
  – Everyday activities. See handout in resources for caregivers.
  – Joint compression. See handout in resources for caregivers.
  – Affordable sensory equipment. See handout in resources for caregivers.
• Why?
  – It can help reset a person’s body and it works most of the time.
Joint compression is a form of proprioceptive input. It occurs when there is compression placed on a joint. It is important for developing body awareness and body stability and strength. It also promotes self-regulation and can be very calming, resting the brain and nervous system. This is a technique that seems to be effective for many individuals.

It can be used to help with transitions as well as to help calm the body. Therefore, prior to an event that can be stressful for your loved one with Down syndrome, it is recommended to have them sit in a chair or on the floor. If they want or need to, they can take a break.

In order to activate these receptors and improve a person’s proprioceptive input activities, it can be encouraged throughout the day to get natural input into the proprioceptive system. Activities can be done in preparation for a transition or when you start to see other people working with the person. For instance, they need to complete a series of self-care tasks in the morning or before bedtime. Provide proprioceptive input to the body and prepare to complete the required tasks. This also goes for transitions before leaving the house and your loved one with DS doesn’t want to go. Try some of the following activities as they may not be effective once a person is tired.

- Animal walking (like bear or crab, even crawling like a cat or dog, or hopping like a bunny)
- Jumping up and down, maybe even on a trampoline
- Dancing
- Jumping Jacks
- Push-ups on the floor or against the wall
- Bouncing on a therapy ball
- Sitting on a stool/disk
- Riding a bike/scooter
- Sports like swimming, yoga, Pilates and martial arts
- Completing an obstacle course
- Carrying a heavy backpack
- Moving furniture
- Pushing a cart/stroller/wagon
- Rolling up in a blanket like a burrito
- Bear hugs or being squeezed between pillows or cushions
- Using play-doh or clay
- Log rolling
- Vibrating
- Weighted blankets
- Sitting in a beanbag
- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Strength training or light weights
- Throwing a weight
- Joint compression
- Complete joint care
- Massage
- Yard work like raking
- Housework like washing and dried clothes
- Eating chewy or crips
- Sucking through a straw

Affordable Sensory Equipment Recommendations

Weighted products:
Key points to remember: Please consult with an occupational therapist to help you determine the best size and weight. It is typically recommended to have a blanket be 7-10% of a person’s body weight. It is NOT recommended to add weight blankets.

Weighted blankets and lap pads: Prices vary, but range from $30- $100+ depending on size and weight.

Custom weighted blankets and lap pads:
- [http://www.mosaiqweightedblankets.com/](http://www.mosaiqweightedblankets.com/) (they offer DIY kits)
- Amazon, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Etsy even carry weighted products

Weighted springers: Prices range from $25 - $50
- Amazon has a few versions. They vary in weight.

Alternative ideas to expensive weighted objects:
- Door stoppers and neck wraps and warmers (priced $10 and up)
- Available at drug stores and websites like Amazon, Bed Bath and Beyond and Amazon carry a brand called Bed Buddy
- Talk with your dentist as you may be able to get an old lead vest used for x-rays.

Vibrating products:
- Hand held massager: Amazon as well as drug stores, Target, Walmart, etc. (priced under $10)
- Vibrating cushion: Amazon carries a brand by Dr. Scholl’s (priced under $30)
- Vibrating neck massager (priced $20-50)

Advocate Aurora Health
Some Sleep Tight Weighted Blankets provide gentle proprioceptive pressure which promote the experience of a restful night sleep.

- Gentle pressure: weighted blankets provide a self-soothing experience as swaddling
- 100% Cotton 0.5 oz square pellets
- Polyester inserts: 0.25 oz per square pellets
- Suitable for all ages
- 5 lb. blanket fits users 32" x 36" 52" x 36"
- 8 lb. blanket fits users 52" x 42"
- 12 lb. blanket fits users 72" x 36" 54" x 54"
- 16 lb. blanket fits users 80" x 54"
- 20 lb. blanket fits users 96" x 54" 80" x 60"
- 25 lb. blanket fits users 110" x 60" + measure
- Made in the USA and imported materials

Sleep Tight Weighted Blanket Society
Example from the Clinic

• Presented with non-compliant behavior at home but not at day program
• Identified mental health diagnosis and treated with medication
• Utilized visual supports to establish structure and routine at home
Example from the Clinic

• Presented with a change in sleep habits
• Addressed physical and mental health causes but no medications or treatments indicated
• Utilized visual supports and sensory strategies
Example from the Clinic

• Presented with mental health concerns
• Identified physical cause and prescribed treatment
• Utilized visual supports to improve compliance
Questions?
Contact us

adsresources.advocatehealth.com/contact