

# The Groove in People with Down Syndrome

## Adult Down Syndrome Center

August 25, 2021 | Brian Chicoine, MD and Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L



1

## Adult Down Syndrome Center

Park Ridge, IL



Our mission is to enhance the well-being of people with Down syndrome who are 12 and older by using a team approach to provide comprehensive, holistic, community-based health care services.



2

## 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.

## Objectives

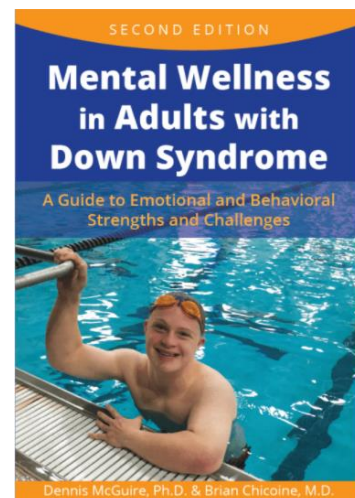
- Define the groove
- Outline advantages and disadvantages of the groove
- Describe problematic grooves, including the diagnosis and treatment of OCD
- Share strategies to address problematic grooves and establish new grooves

# What is the groove?

5

## Definition

- “Set pattern or routine in one’s actions or thoughts” ([McGuire & Chicoine, 2021, pg. 146](#))
- Preference for sameness, repetition, or routine



6

## Advantages

- Gives order and structure in daily life
- Can increase independence
- Can enhance performance and function
- Can help people manage stress

## Examples of grooves

- Using a precise and unchanging routine to complete tasks
- Meticulous care of room and personal items
  - “Everything has its place”
- Closing doors and blinds, turning lights off
- Repeating familiar phrases
- Listening to the same music, watching the same TV shows or movies

## Possible disadvantages

- Inflexibility
- Difficulty with transitions
- Difficulty with unpredictable changes
- Difficulty generalizing skills and knowledge

## When there is a change

- Groove becomes less functional
- Grooves becomes more (or less) rigid
- Potential causes
  - Stress
  - Pain or physical ailment
  - Mental illness
  - Dementia
  - Communication
  - Sensory
  - Environment

# Managing the groove

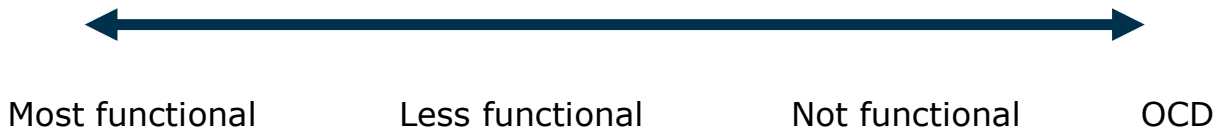
11

## When should the groove be challenged?

- When it impacts safety
- When it impacts function
- When it impacts the family
- Periodically to promote flexibility
- In certain environments

12

# The continuum



Strategies to address problematic grooves and/or establish new grooves

## Educate others

- Not about changing the person, but changing the environment
- Educate those who interact with the person with DS

## Encourage flexibility

- Pick a behavior that is possible to change
- Pick a time to encourage flexibility
- Provide alternative behaviors that are more appropriate
- To teach a new behavior, break the task down into manageable steps
- Use visual supports
- Make sure all participants are open to change and not stressed during new teaching
- Build the term "flexible" into exchanges and point out when others are being "flexible"



# Set expectations

- Give choices
- Set guidelines with the individual
- Use visuals
- Set time limits

17

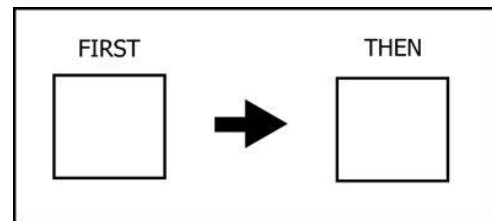
# Practice social skills

- Compromise
- Handling being told no
- Flexible thinking
- Asking for help
- Managing emotions
- Socially appropriate behavior/manners

18

# Implementation

- Prepare the body
- Pair the problematic groove with another desired activity
- Pair changes together



# Common groove scenarios



## Lengthy routines

- Morning routine/Bedtime routine
  - Give choices
  - Set guidelines
  - Set time limits
  - Use visual supports
- Overall slowness
  - Sensory input
  - Use of visual supports

## Difficulty generalizing skills across different environments

- Location 1 vs Location 2
  - Encourage flexibility
  - Set guidelines
  - Use visual supports
  - Pair changes together

## Difficulty completing job tasks

- Needing to complete tasks in a certain order
  - Educate others about the groove
  - Build in flexibility
  - Set guidelines
  - Practice social skills
- Being interrupted
  - Educate others about the groove
  - Use visuals
  - Practice social skills

## Sitting in the same spot

- Educate others about the groove
- Build in flexibility
- Use visuals/social stories
- Pair the problematic groove with another desired activity
- Practice social skills

## Wearing the same outfit

- Encourage/build in flexibility
- Give choices
- Set guidelines
- Use visuals

## Getting unstuck

- Set guidelines
- Use visuals
- Work with the individual to set time limits
- Sensory/calming strategies
- Pair the problematic groove with another desired activity

## Establishing a new groove

- Set guidelines
- Use visuals
- Pair with another change or preferred activity
- Build in flexibility

## In summary...

- Educate others about the groove
- Encourage/build in flexibility
- Set expectations
- Practice social skills
- Implementation/Execution

# Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

29

## Presenting concerns

- Repetitive behaviors
- Persistent thoughts
- Impairs function
- Limits opportunities
- Individual often is not upset by the behaviors/thoughts, but family may be
- Individual may get upset if the behaviors/thoughts are blocked or prevented.

30

## Causes

- Any of the previously mentioned causes for changes in the groove
- Imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain

## Treatment

- Non-medicinal strategies
- Medicinal strategies
  - Start low, go slow
  - May need more than one medication
  - Medications



## Medications

- Antidepressants
  - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
  - Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Benzodiazepines
- Mood stabilizers
  - Anti-epileptic medications (seizure medications)
  - Anti-psychotic medications

## Take away points

- The groove is a preference for sameness or routine.
- There is a continuum from when a groove is the most functional to when it becomes OCD.
- When functional, it can help increase independence with a variety of tasks.
- When less functional, it can lead to lack of flexibility and difficulty with transitions or unexpected changes.
- There are a variety of non-medicinal strategies that can be used to help a less functional groove get unstuck or establish a new, more functional groove.
- If OCD is diagnosed, it is possible the non-medicinal strategies will be most effective if also paired with medication.

## Resources

- [Article on the Groove](#)
- [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Sensory Resources](#)
- [Social Skills Resources](#)

Resources Library:  
[adscresources.advocatehealth.com](https://adscresources.advocatehealth.com)

Facebook:  
[facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter](https://facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter)

Email Newsletter:  
[eepurl.com/c7uV1v](https://eepurl.com/c7uV1v)