



Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
Empower - Inspire - Support

UNDERSTANDING DS & HOW TO BE A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND Grades 3-5



What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that people are born with. It happens when someone has an extra copy of their 21st chromosome.

This means it may take longer to learn and do some things, and sometimes the way they speak may sound different. But kids with Down syndrome have the same feelings, interests, and hopes as everyone else. They want friends, fun, and the chance to learn and grow.

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10 Tips to Be a Supportive Friend

- Be patient - when you ask a question, wait 5–10 seconds for answers.
- Ask questions with choices (like “Do you want to draw or play basketball?”).
- Listen closely and look at your friend when they speak.
- Use encouraging words.
- Include them in games, sports, and conversations.
- Find new ways to communicate when it’s hard for them to use words.
- Don’t do everything for them — cheer them on to try things themselves.
- Treat them like kids your age, not like little kids.
- Stand up if someone is being unkind.
- Remember — friends with Down syndrome have the same feelings you do.