



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

# UNDERSTANDING DS & HOW TO BE A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND Grades 6-8



## What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition caused by an extra copy of the 21st chromosome, known as Trisomy 21.

People with Down syndrome may learn and communicate differently, or at a slower pace, but they share the same emotions, interests, and dreams as their peers. They want to be included, respected, and valued for who they are.

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## 10 Tips to Be a Supportive Friend

- Practice patience — give time for answers.
- Focus on the message, not how speech sounds.
- Offer choices instead of yes/no questions.
- Encourage independence, don't over-help.
- Use respectful, person-first language.
- Include friends with disabilities in group work and listen to their ideas.
- Don't assume what they can or cannot do.
- Model kindness and acceptance.
- Speak up if you hear teasing or disrespect.
- Remember: inclusion means every voice matters.