



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

UNDERSTANDING DS & HOW TO BE A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND Grades 9-12



What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs when someone is born with an extra copy of the 21st chromosome (Trisomy 21).

This difference may affect muscle tone, learning pace, or communication, but it does not define a person's abilities or potential. People with Down syndrome pursue education, jobs, relationships, and meaningful lives. What they want most is respect, opportunity, and inclusion.

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10 Tips to Be a Supportive Friend

- Respect differences — everyone learns and communicates in unique ways.
- Listen actively and give space for responses.
- Don't speak over someone; allow their voice to be heard.
- Use inclusive, positive language.
- Encourage independence and self-advocacy.
- Work as equals in projects, sports, or activities.
- Challenge stereotypes when you hear them.
- Invite classmates with Down syndrome into social events and groups.
- Stand up against bullying, exclusion, or disrespect.
- Remember: allyship is about action — inclusion takes effort from everyone.