



Mental Wellness for People with Down Syndrome and Their Families

Who is This Service Appropriate For?

This service is intended for people of all ages with Down syndrome who are experiencing mental health concerns. Children, adolescents, and adults with DS are more prone to developing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorder than the typically-developing population. Possible symptoms of mental health issues in individuals with Down syndrome include:

- Loss of energy or interest in previously motivating activities
- Excessive or increased irritability
- Frequent low mood
- School refusal behaviour
- Complaining of headaches or stomach aches without medical cause
- Refusal to speak in certain settings or around certain people
- Crying or clinging behaviour when separating from a parent
- Excessive or increased rigidity or over-adherence to routines

It is also intended for family members who are experiencing mental health issues related to their experience parenting a child with Down syndrome including grief, anxiety, or depression. Parents who have difficulty with parent-child interaction patterns, and who would like strategies to improve their relationship with their child or increase confidence in their ability to effectively parent their child, could also benefit from this service.

Description of Service:

- Therapy block will begin with an assessment of current mental health issues (input from all involved family members) – 2 to 3 sessions
- Therapy for the person with Down syndrome may include the following:
 - Emotions education
 - Activity scheduling and self-care
 - Unhelpful vs. helpful thoughts and behaviours
 - Relaxation techniques / mindfulness



**Down Syndrome
Research Foundation**

Together. Hand in Hand.

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- Self-esteem training
- Training in solving problems independently
- Therapy for parents may include the following:
 - Activity scheduling and self-care
 - Unhelpful vs. helpful thoughts and behaviours
 - Relaxation techniques / mindfulness
 - Training in positive behaviour support strategies for use with the child with Down syndrome
 - Strategies for improving the overall quality of the parent-child relationship
 - Strategies to improve the couple relationship
- Please note that the service is flexibly designed and will be tailored to the needs of each individual person

Relevant Background and Expertise:

Susan Fawcett, M.Sc. RSLP has worked at DSRF since 2003 and is the Director of Therapy, Behaviour and Family Support; she was previously the Head Speech Language Pathologist. Susan is nearing completion of a PhD in Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education at UBC. Susan completed a practicum with Dr. Katherine Martinez of Vancouver CBT Centre and BehaviouralParenting.com, with training in provision of cognitive-behaviour therapy strategies with children and adolescents with dual diagnoses of intellectual disability and mental health issues. Susan has experience working with teenagers with Down syndrome who have an additional diagnosis such as depression and anxiety.

Fee:

\$120 per weekly, 1-hour session. This program will align with the therapy and teaching blocks at DSRF; (i.e. \$1440 for a 12- week block). Please contact us about the DSRF Children and Youth bursary option two weeks prior to start of registration if cost is a barrier to accessing this service.

Registration:

A no charge initial consultation interview is required; please contact nimet@dsrf.org to arrange.

BLOCK 1	January 2 - March 15	11 weeks	Registration starts November 5, 2018
BLOCK 2	April 1 - June 21	12 weeks	Registration starts February 19, 2019
BLOCK 3	July 2 - August 23	8 weeks	Registration starts May 27, 2019
BLOCK 4	September 9 - December 13	14 weeks	Registration starts August 5, 2019
Christmas Break December 17, 2018 - January 1, 2019 Spring Break March 18 - March 22, 2019			

