



Mental Wellness for People with Down Syndrome and Their Families

The Mental Wellness 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
- Complaining of headaches or stomach aches without medical cause
- School refusal behaviour
- 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.

Therapy 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
- Self-esteem training
- Training in solving problems independently

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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.

Mental Wellness is offered in weekly individual sessions, at a price of \$120 per session.

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.

Registration

Register online at [DSRF.org/register](https://www.dsrf.org/register).

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

