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ISSUE #11

# 3.21

Canada's  
Down Syndrome  
Magazine

**Staying  
Safe on  
Social  
Media**

***Supported  
Decision-Making  
in Canada***

**LEARNING  
STRATEGIES for  
INCREASING  
INDEPENDENCE**

# *The* **Independence** *Issue*

***Plus: What Independence Means to Canadian Adults***



Independence means different things for different people at different stages of life. Any personal accomplishment is a step towards independence, and should be encouraged and celebrated.

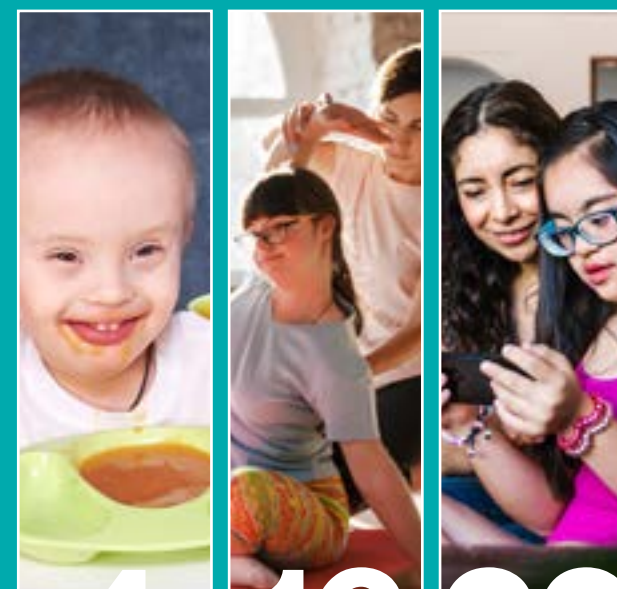
Being independent and having autonomy over one's own life – whatever it may look like for any given individual – is an essential component of personal fulfillment. And it's never too late to learn a new skill and make progress towards your goals.

In this issue of 3.21, we consider various ways to foster independence in people with Down syndrome of all ages and abilities. Whether you are working on early self-care skills, preparing for employment, or making important life decisions, the insights shared here by self-advocates, parents, and professionals will help guide you towards maximum independence.

We would love to hear from you! Drop us a line at [321DSMagazine@gmail.com](mailto:321DSMagazine@gmail.com) and tell us about your proudest independent accomplishments.

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# LEARNING STRATEGIES

for Increasing Independence

*By Arianna Coles, M.OT*



Self-care refers to one's ability to take care of themselves, and includes skills such as grooming/hygiene, toileting, dressing, and feeding. These are our activities of daily living, which are the skills we often associate with independence and encourage our children to practice as they grow towards living independently.

In order to work towards success with these skills, we first need to ensure that the child has the basic foundations. The Skill Development Pyramid can be a helpful way to conceptualize this (see graphic on adjacent page). At the base are the sensory systems. The way that we process sensory information is central

to our ability to self-regulate, learn, and perform in the other areas. Once the sensory systems are in place, we can work on developing gross motor skills (or the skills that are required to do things like keeping our balance, walking, and running), followed by fine motor skills (required for tasks requiring dexterity, including dressing, feeding, and grooming). Self-care skills can begin to develop following a solid foundation in these three areas.

Some of the strategies we find most effective in teaching self-care skills to children with Down syndrome include modeling, using visuals, backwards chaining, and practicing through play.



### ■ Modeling:

One of the best ways to help your child learn a new skill is to show them! This is a no-pressure way to get your child interested and can serve as a huge motivator for them to want to try it themselves.

### ■ Visuals:

Children with Down syndrome are very strong visual learners. Providing a visual sequence that clearly breaks down all the steps of a skill helps the individual learn the skill step-by-step. Visuals can also help to increase their independence with these skills.

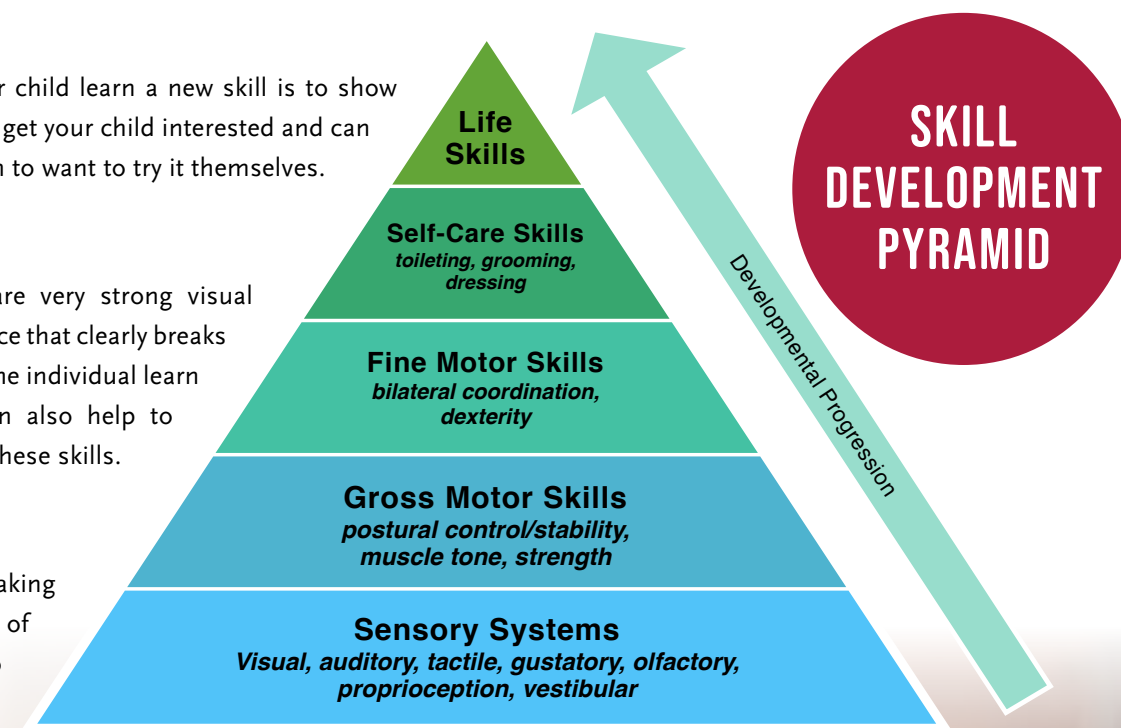
### ■ Backwards Chaining:

Backwards chaining refers to taking your child through all the steps of a skill, and supporting them to complete the last step on their own. This allows your child to feel an immediate sense of success, which can help motivate them to continue to work on the skill. Once they have mastered the last step, teach them the second to last step, working backwards through each until they can complete the skill independently.

### ■ Practicing Through Play:

Practicing self-care skills through play can be another fun way to motivate your child to get engaged with learning a new skill. Incorporate their interests and have fun with it!

To help give you a better idea of what these strategies might look like in practice, let's break them down in the context of grooming/hygiene, toileting, dressing, and feeding:





GROOMING/HYGIENE (eg. brushing teeth)

■ Modeling:

Start by demonstrating how you complete a skill, like brushing your teeth. Use specific language to narrate the process (ie. “First I’m going to put water on my toothbrush, then I’m going to brush my top teeth. I’m going to scrub the back, then the middle, then the front. Then I’m going to spit in the sink.”). This can really help your child get a sense of what is involved. Gradually scale back your modeling as your child starts to get the hang of the process themselves.

■ Visuals:













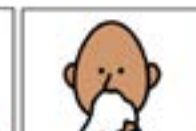

Provide a visual that breaks down the skill step-by-step. Taking the example of brushing your teeth, the visual could look something like the following, with as much or as little detail as your child needs to support them through the skill:

■ Backwards Chaining:

Allow your child to complete the last step of the skill (eg. for brushing teeth, putting the lid on the toothpaste) until they have mastered it, then move on to the second to last step (wiping mouth) until they have worked backwards through all the steps.

■ Practicing Through Play:

Starting to practice by brushing the teeth of favourite toys or stuffed animals can be a fun way to motivate your child to participate.

 toothpaste	 wet brush	 brush 30 sec	 spit	 brush 30 sec	 spit	 brush inside top 30 sec
 spit	 brush inside bottom 30 sec	 spit	 rinse brush	 rinse mouth	 wipe mouth	 lid on toothpaste





# TOILETING

## TOILETING

### ■ Modeling:

Start by demonstrating what it looks like to use the toilet. Leaving the door open to the washroom can be a good way to get your child used to the routine for toileting, and to start to make the connection that we use the toilet when we need to go pee or poo. Modeling not only toileting, but the steps following, including hand washing, can be a helpful way to introduce your child to the skill.

### ■ Visuals:

Using visuals to clearly lay out the sequence for toileting can also be helpful. As with the teeth brushing routine, the visual can be as detailed or simple as your child needs. The general steps would include: pull down pants, sit on toilet, pee or poo, toilet paper, wipe front to back, pull up pants, flush, wash hands.

Think about all the requirements of the toileting routine, as there may be individual skills within the routine

that need to be taught. For example, rolling, grasping, tearing the appropriate amount of toilet paper, and folding it may need to be taught as separate skills. The same may be the case for handwashing.

### ■ Backwards Chaining:

Encourage your child to complete the last step of the toileting routine first (eg. pulling up pants), until they have mastered it, and gradually work your way backwards step-by-step.

### ■ Practicing Through Play:

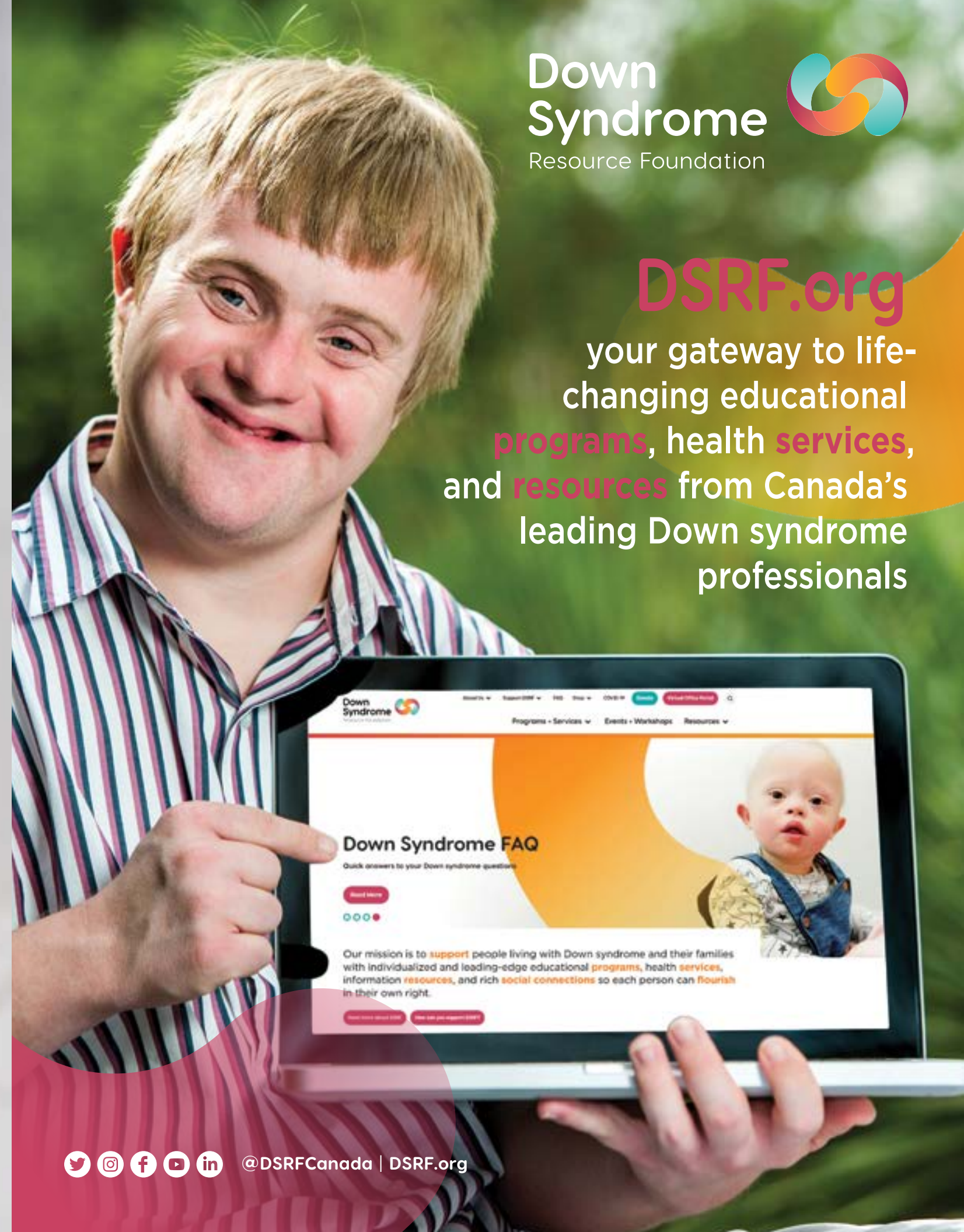
Reading books or watching fun videos/songs about toileting can be another fun way to introduce your child to the idea of toileting. Pretend play with dolls or toys can also be a great introduction. Practicing wiping with dolls first can also help to provide your child with an idea of how, where on the body, and how much they need to wipe.

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## DRESSING (eg. putting on shirt)

### ■ Modeling:

Start by demonstrating the particular dressing skill you are working on with your child. For example, if you are working on putting on a shirt, model and narrate all the steps for them.

### ■ Visuals:

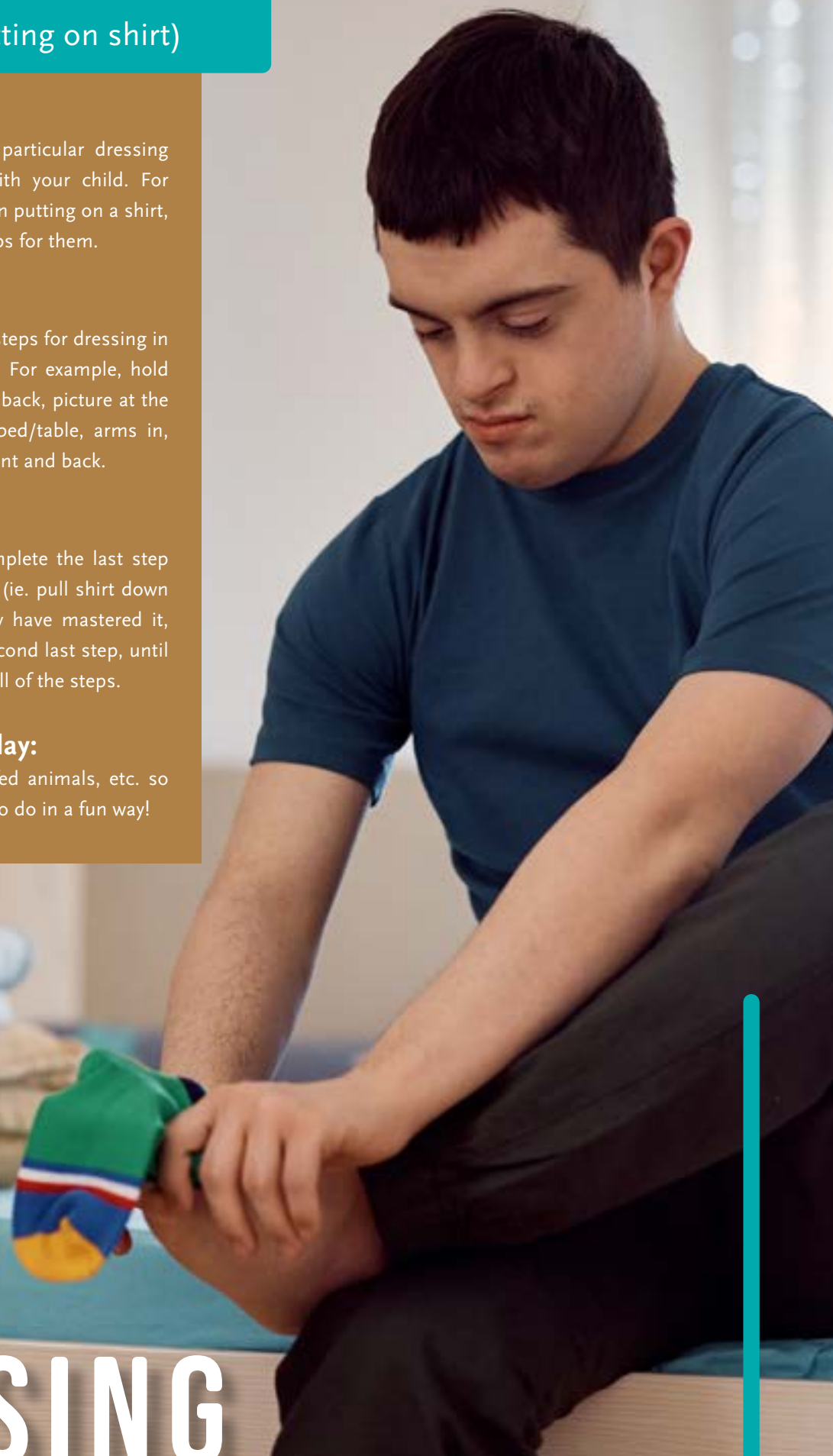
Use visuals to lay out all the steps for dressing in as much detail as necessary. For example, hold shirt from the top, tag at the back, picture at the front, place front down on bed/table, arms in, head in, pull shirt down at front and back.

### ■ Backwards Chaining:

Encourage your child to complete the last step of the shirt donning process (ie. pull shirt down at front and back) until they have mastered it, followed by moving to the second last step, until they work their way through all of the steps.

### ■ Practicing Through Play:

Practice dressing dolls, stuffed animals, etc. so they can see what they need to do in a fun way!



# DRESSING



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teachers, medical experts,  
therapists, and those  
with Down syndrome.



## FEEDING (eg. self-feeding)

### \* Note:

*The following is only an example and may not apply to your child's current level of ability. What you work on with your child in relation to feeding will depend on their skill level as well as their level of safety. Please check in with your occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, or feeding specialist to establish a plan that is safe and appropriate for your child's skill level.*

### ■ Modeling:

Sit facing your child during feeding practice. Model holding the handle of the spoon, scooping, bringing the spoon to your mouth, closing your lips around the spoon, and swallowing. Model returning the spoon to the plate, either to get another bite, or to put it down. This will help your child understand that this is where the spoon goes.

Keep in mind that your child is still learning how to grasp. You can encourage them to grasp items more effectively by modeling and presenting the item in a way that is easy for them to grasp (ie. no hand position adjustment required). Ensure they grasp in a place that allows enough length to insert effectively into the mouth (see image at left).

### ■ Visuals:

Use visuals as needed to support the self-feeding process. Depending on what your child is working on and what their needs are, a variety of visuals could be helpful. For example, if your child is working on pacing or eating slowly, you could use a visual that shows something like: 'little bite, spoon down, chew, swallow, wipe mouth, repeat.'



### ■ Backwards Chaining:

Start with the last step and work your way backwards. For example, if working on self-feeding with a spoon, your child would focus on assisting you to move the spoon into their mouth (from right in front of their mouth), until they become comfortable with doing so independently. Then gradually work backwards through the steps, bringing the spoon further away from the mouth, grasping the spoon effectively, scooping, etc.

### ■ Practicing Through Play:

Practice feeding dolls or toys in conjunction with feeding practice. Having a doll tea party or lunch can be a fun way to put some of those skills to practice!

Occupational therapists can also provide adaptive equipment, ideas for skill adaptation, or compensatory strategies to support your child to achieve success with their self-care skills. Begin working on your child's self-care skills from an early age, even if you are just modeling the steps for them, reading books about it, or doing pretend play activities to begin with. Get them involved! This can help them become comfortable with what these skills look like so that when they are ready to work on them, they have a sense of the expectations and steps that are required.

Each child has their own developmental trajectory. Meet your child where they are at. Provide that 'just-right' level of support for them to achieve success, utilizing the strategies laid out here, and any additional approaches you may find helpful. They will be doing it on their own before you know it!





# SUPPORTED DECISION- MAKING IN CANADA: **THE BASICS**

*By Kristen Halpen*

*This piece serves to educate people about the basics of this rights-based, complex topic, while providing links to resources for more detailed information and guidance. The information in this article is not legal advice.*

**A**lmost everyone relies on the advice of others when faced with large, important decisions about things like schooling, careers, significant purchases, financial investments, and important medical decisions. Generally, we have a circle of trusted friends, family, and experts in various fields who we call upon, both formally and informally, for advice to make these informed decisions. Then there are the daily decisions we make, from withdrawing some spending money from the bank, to ordering takeout, to deciding on a Netflix movie. All of these decisions – small and large – are a part of who we are as people. Having power over decisions in our lives give us dignity, and the opportunity to learn and grow.



For someone with an intellectual disability like Down syndrome, questions about the level of decisions and the rights one has to make decisions independently - or with advice - have been both a legal and societal question for many years. It has been the subject of public legal hearings, and often becomes a problematic issue within families when there is lack of agreement. Sometimes, people with an intellectual disability such as Down syndrome are denied the right to make even small decisions about their lives, often because others regard their ability to decide as not valid. People have things that matter to them but may need help to interpret choices as they assert their will.

# GLOSSARY

Taken from Windsor-Essex Family Network’s brochure “A Guide to Supported Decision-Making: The Basic Legal Concepts, updated 2016”

## AUTONOMY

A person who can freely make decisions has autonomy.

## GUARDIANSHIP

A substitute decision-making model. A guardian makes decisions for an ‘incapable’ person.

## INCAPABLE

When a person has been deemed by the law to lack the ability to make sound decisions for themselves.

## SUBSTITUTE DECISION-MAKING

When a person makes decisions for another person.

## SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

When a person helps another person to communicate their own decisions.

In April, 2022 the Canadian Down Syndrome Society presented a webinar entitled Supported Decision-Making: The Right to Decide: How can we make progress for people with developmental disabilities?

The session overviewed the ‘equal right to decide,’ barriers that people with developmental disabilities face in exercising this right, and how supports for decision-making can help address these challenges. Together, Michael Bach, Managing Director for the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS), and Brendon Pooran, Managing Partner of PooranLaw of Ontario, explored practical steps for supporting people to exercise the right to decide, approaches to community-based decision-making supports, and the evolving law and policy reform agenda in Canada. A link to the webinar recording is available [here](#).

## What’s Happening in Canada?

Canada has recognized that people with disabilities have the right to dignity and autonomy, through agreeing in 2010 with the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Some laws in Canada around supported decision-making support and promote these rights, however most Canadian law still focuses upon substitute decision-making. Many feel that this does not include people with disabilities in a dignified way, and that the law must change.

When Canada agreed to the terms of the CRPD convention in 2010, one term was not agreed to. That term was Article 12, which states that “persons with disabilities should control their own affairs and any measures that take away a person’s decision-making abilities must be closely monitored and reviewed.” When Canada signed the CRPD, our government stated that substitute decision-making would still be allowed, and that monitoring did not need to be improved.

At the April webinar, Michael Bach stated that, “the interpretation of Article 12 in international law is that people universally have capacity. Having a disability is not a reason to deny people the right to decide. The main problem is that it is assumed that expressing **legal capacity** is all about having the **mental capacity** to understand the nature of the decision and consequences. But we can draw on support of others to bring that understanding.” He added that everyone is, “deserving of respect to have power over our own lives and equality in the eyes of others. What makes us a person and drives our decision-making is that we have things that matter to us, that we want. We support each other to help achieve those things that matter. We draw on others to help us see the pathway to achieve them. This is what supported

# Legal capacity

*is defined as the capacity to have rights and exercise those rights freely. People with an intellectual disability are systematically and consistently denied legal capacity, by guardianship and substitute decision-making laws and systems. This deprivation of legal capacity prevents people with an intellectual disability from fully exercising self-determination and full citizenship.*

- Inclusion Canada’s website

Under the leadership of Michael Bach, IRIS has created several resources and tools to help people understand legal capacity and the equal right to decide. Legal capacity resources and community-led initiatives for support can be found here: <https://inclusioncanada.ca/campaign/legal-capacity/>





decision-making is about for people with developmental disabilities, who may not be able to meet the usual mental capacity ‘test’ on their own.”

How do we Interpret what Matters to Someone?

Many groups and individuals in Canada are asking the law to recognize supporting others in decision-making. Bach explains that “the law recognizes what we refer to as two broad pathways for decision-making capability. First, **independent decision-making**, the presumption that I should be able to make decisions by myself. I may need support, but the presumption is that I can do that with the support of others, and that I am not required to get support. The second pathway we want the law to more fully recognize is **inter-dependent decision-making**. This is when I may not have the skills to make decisions by myself, but I do have things I care about, and someone can interpret and translate these to others, as the basis for a shared decision-making process. My supporter can interpret my expressions, can translate that to others, and help to identify what steps need to be taken in order to fulfill my goals. We are calling for the law to recognize this interdependent unit - me expressing my will and trusted others who interpret my

will and preferences and help translate them into decisions needed to give them effect in the circumstances.”

Pooran and Bach are hopeful that as more provinces move forward to recognizing a more supported decision-making approach from a legal perspective, they will become a benchmark for the other provinces and territories.



NEXT STEPS & CANADIAN RESOURCES:

The work continues in Canada to ensure that people with intellectual disabilities are recognized as full and equal citizens. This includes making decisions about their own lives and having those decisions respected and acted upon.

For anyone wishing to set up a formal decision-making agreement for themselves or a loved one, it is advised that you seek the advice of a lawyer, or similarly qualified and experienced professional. On page 21 is a list of Canadian resources for more information, some including contact information for legal representation and advice about next steps.

Considering the Options: Supported Decision-Making vs. Substitute Decision-Making

Very simply put, supported decision-making allows someone with an intellectual disability to be included in decisions that affect them. This includes important decision about healthcare, property, and legal issues. It recognizes the autonomy, identity, and abilities of every person.

Substitute decision-making strips the rights of persons with disabilities by putting another person in charge of their decisions. A common example of substitute decision-making is court-approved guardianship; when applied for and set, the person with a disability is legally not able to make any decision about their lives and business affairs.

In Guardianship as a Last Resort (Pooran, Dickson and Rahman), Pooran states: “As estate planning lawyers, we are often faced with providing advice on matters involving a person’s right to make their own decisions. In particular, parents of an adult child with an intellectual or developmental disability may seek direction on applying for guardianship in order to open a bank account or an estate trustee may

question what happens in situations when the beneficiary of an estate may be considered incapable of managing their property. Too often, some practitioners are quick to suggest that guardianship be pursued, without considering alternative options which are less restrictive in nature and promote a person’s autonomy in the decision-making process.”

There are a range of supported decision-making tools to support people with intellectual disabilities to consider, such as:

- Communication assistance, using plain language, and allowing extra time for conversations
- Interpretive support
- Administrative support
- Formalizing a circle of support and appointing volunteer representatives (chosen by the person with the disability) to accompany the individual
- Arranging person-centered planning assistance by hiring an independent professional advocate

CANADIAN RESOURCES:

Note that some of these resources are province-specific and are not national in nature.

- **IRIS Institute** - Advancing the Right to Legal Capacity
- **Inclusion Saskatchewan** - Supported Decision Making Resources
  - includes a self-advocate workbook and a booklet for supporters: ‘My Health, My Life,’ as well as emotional support resources
- **Inclusion Canada** - Let’s Talk About Legal Capacity
- **Planning Network** - Understanding Legal Capacity and Supported Decision Making
- **Province of Alberta** - Supported Decision Making, Alberta
- **Surrey Place** - Decision Making in Health Care of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Promoting Capabilities
- **Kathryn Balter, LLP** - What a Substitute Decision Maker Can and Cannot Do
- **Browning, Bigby and Douglas (Australia)** - A Process of Decision Making Support, Exploring Supported Decision Making in Canada

SUGGESTED INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Disability Rights Texas** – Video: Supported Decision Making and Other Guardian Alternatives
- **Disability Hub Montana** - Supported Decision Making Resources and Tools
- **The Arc Michigan** - Supported Decision-Making Position Statement / Person-Centered Planning and Self-Determination Guidelines Sample
- **Down Syndrome Australia** - Supported Decision Making Resources



# Staying Safe on Social Media

By Travis Neufeld, Inclusion Saskatchewan



Social media seems to be more complicated than ever. In the early days, it was fun to share photos, keep tabs on all of your friends, and reconnect with people you hadn't seen in decades (or longer). It was also a great way to be creative and express yourself, post things that you found meaningful or cool or hilarious, and discover new things to explore. But now, things are different.

While social media is still all of these things (and much more), it also has a darker side. Hackers, scammers, and phishers are doing whatever they can to get your personal information. Trolls are using the protection of anonymity to target and harass, and newsfeed algorithms are pushing each of us further into our own echo chambers.

It's a complicated world to navigate and if not used mindfully, social media can be a danger to our mental health, financial security, and overall wellbeing. This is why a team of Inclusion Saskatchewan self-advocates came together to create Staying Safe On Social Media.

"We need to connect with each other just like anyone else. Our communities online can be just as important as the people we see in real life, sometimes even more important. I have gotten great support from people I met on the internet and it has really kept me going during the pandemic. And it's important that people hear from members of the disabled community," says one of the book's self-advocate creators, Dan Dolan.

This unique document is part of an entire suite of Supported Decision Making (SDM) resources that have been developed by the staff and self-advocates (which you can find on Inclusion Saskatchewan's website [here](#)). Taking lessons from their own positive and negative online experiences, the SDM team authored a resource that will aid self-advocates and the people supporting them in making critical social media decisions.

The plain language document guides the reader through the steps of carefully examining and thinking through decisions about what to share, what not to share, and what is considered confidential information. It also covers topics like privacy settings, protecting one's identity and banking information, and the limitations of what one can control online. Additionally, it features a fillable form that asks the reader to reflect on what types of social media activities are



working for them and which are not. Overall, it's a short but comprehensive resource that's been thoughtfully designed.

Released in December 2021, the document is already making waves and earning a lot of positive feedback from self-advocates as well as their supporters. The book is also finding audiences beyond the disability world. People of all ages and of all different backgrounds are sharing the resource and using it to reshape their own approach to social media content.

The SDM team hopes that their document will help all self-advocates avoid the pitfalls of social media and understand what they can and can't control. They feel that by protecting yourself and being aware that negativity is just a reality of social media, people will be able to have fun and enjoy the connections they make online. "We can participate in social media if we have the right support to get things set up, and people to turn to if we run into challenges," says Dan.





# Independence Q&A

with Canadian Self-Advocates

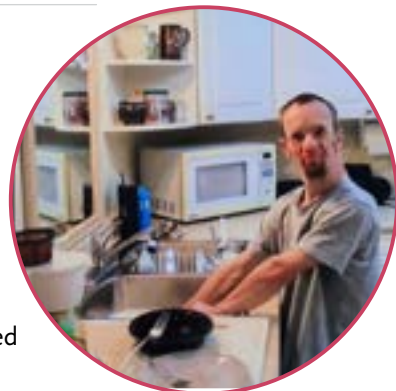
## Marshall, BC

Independence means doing things by myself at home. I cook grilled cheese by myself. I can unlock my bike and get it out of the garage. Then I cross the street and head to the seawall all on my own. I can also go to the gym and work out. I always drink water. Larry Thompson from the BC Lions taught me how to work out. My mom and dad showed me how to use bike locks.



## Trevor, BC

Independence means doing things on my own. I have my own basement suite. I cook and do my own dishes. I cook scrambled eggs, microwave pizza, and grilled cheese. My Dad showed me how to cook and do dishes.



## Josh, ON

Independence means pride. I am proud of what I do by myself as I am becoming a man. I do chores around the house every day and I have a cell phone to check my text messages and emails. This helps me while I am looking for a job, and helps me keep in touch with family, friends and future work contacts.

I started learning chores around the house when I was young. I would help mom with laundry, and clean my room. My parents taught me. This is preparing me to live on my own.

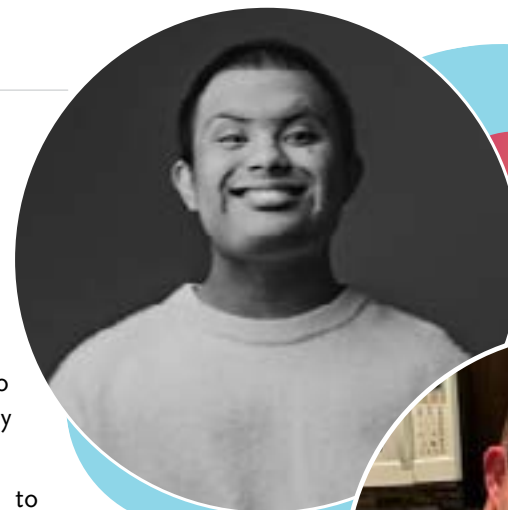
I was given a phone by my parents and taught how to use it. My sister and family help me learn to set up my email and how to use my phone properly. I feel like I fit in with everyone else.



## Ryan, ON

Independence means doing things by myself. I like to cook and go out with my friends. I also like to stay at home by myself.

I also recently learned to trim my own beard. My dad taught me how to trim my beard. My family helps me learn to do things on my own.



## Chris, AB

Independence means freedom to be me. I can plan my own activities and take care of myself. I do my workouts on my own at the gym. It helps me feel strong so I can stay healthy. I learned it from my own workouts, from fitness magazines and from my trainer when I was at Mount Royal University.



## Naomi, ON

Being independent means living on my own with friends. To cook, get groceries, clean the house, wash clothes, be organized, be responsible, and make sure you are safe.

I've been learning independently on the computer, doing Zoom classes like Zumba, Dance Rock, and Rhythmic Gymnastics. I have also learned to take transit by myself. Mom and Dad teach me, and then with lots of practice I can do it independently.



## Janet, PEI

To me independence means I can do things on my own but still ask for help when I need it.

A skill that helps me everyday is to do food prep and batch cooking one day a week. I make up several salads either to take for lunch at work or at home for dinners. I also make things like pasta sauce and freeze some other meals. I have learned this skill from my mom over the years, and my brother.

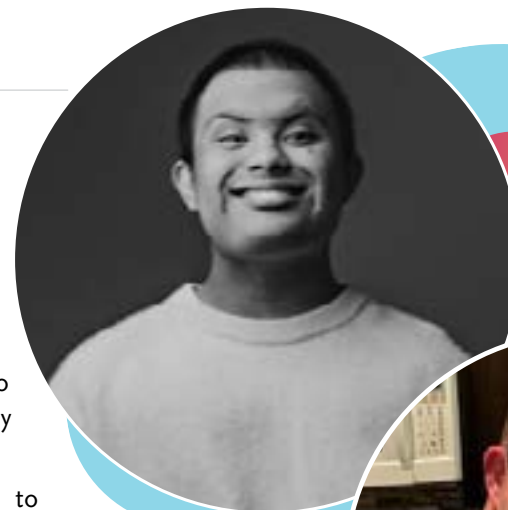


## Chris, BC

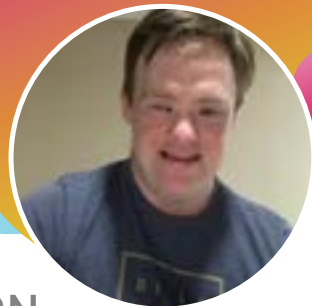
To me, independence means going places by myself or taking a friend out to dinner and a movie. Also, shopping at the mall and picking up the things I need.

I get myself ready in the morning. I cook my breakfast, make a pot of coffee, and do household chores.

I am able to pay for my own things when I'm out – things like lunch, coffee, groceries, and movies. I learnt this skill from being out in the community with Mom and Dad and using my own form of payment.







## Matt, ON

Independence means building up your self-confidence. It helps to know that you can make hard decisions when you need to.

To be independent, it is good to keep track of what activities you are doing by using a list or a calendar. Your phone can help you remember what you need for the day. I learned that skill from my family, friend and co-worker. I thought it will help me as well with starting to be independent.

There are always new skills to work on but that is normal.

## Andrew, BC

If I was earning my own money and doing my own finances then I could have my own house and a car and, I will tell you, independence is going to be fun. I already buy groceries and cook my own meals independently.

I am proud of my newscast. It takes courage and motivation. I need to read the teleprompter. My mom and teachers helped me learn to read. Susan, my SLP, helped me with speaking. Glen from DSRF helped me by making it fun and giving positive feedback to give me more confidence. I like the views and comments. They make me feel successful and special.



## Paul, AB

While I was working at the CDSS office, I took the bus and train to get to work everyday. I was 25-years-old when I got my job at CDSS and very shortly after that I moved out into my own place with a roommate.

Doing my own laundry, house cleaning, meal planning, cooking, getting up on time, getting dressed and ready for work are all things I worked on to grow my independence before I made the decision to move out into my own place.

I have become more independent over the years and that has granted me many opportunities like living in my own condo with a roommate, being able to go on big trips by myself, and having a job.

To me, independence means taking full responsibility in my life. Being independent means I have to balance my priorities. I have to know what things need to get done and when they need to be done by, like taking out the garbage and recycling, doing my laundry, or getting my work done on time.

My computer skills have helped me maintain connection with my peers, old friends, and family and have also helped me with my job at CDSS. All the skills I mentioned above help me to live more independently everyday.

I learned to use computers at Mount Royal University. I learned to cook from my parents and then after I moved out I have continued to learn more from my roommates.

My parents have helped me learn many of the skills I mentioned, like how to take proper care of myself, doing my own laundry, cleaning my room and my bathroom, getting up on time, getting dressed and ready for work. My dad helped me get my bus passes and I did a program through Calgary Transit that offered transit training so that I could get to and from work independently.



Canadian  
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# CDSS Walk for Awareness

**This year we will achieve even more great things together for Canadians with Down syndrome of all ages, and for the people who love and support them.**

**Join us June 11-19!**



**Donate to a Team or Individual Today!**

**CDSS.ca**



## Down Syndrome Resource Foundation Rebrands and Launches New Website

DSRF has unveiled a new look to better showcase our services to the Down syndrome community of BC and beyond. Our new logo represents DSRF's exceptional connection with the people we support.

85% of families say DSRF provides support they can't receive anywhere else. "DSRF gives our family a supportive community, essential resources, and a sense of belonging in a world where it doesn't always seem like we fit," shares one parent.

This is a common sentiment among those connected to the organization, and the new branding reflects it. The graphic elements symbolize support, network, wholeness, and equality.

**"Our new logo represents connection and a balance between warmth, professionalism, and a sense of home."**

- Glen Hoos, Director of Communications



Since 1995, DSRF has provided support for people with Down syndrome at every stage of life throughout the Lower Mainland. We have helped thousands of people with Down syndrome, their families, and caregivers step into the future with the confidence and skills needed to achieve their unique success. As a service provider, DSRF offers a level of Down syndrome expertise and understanding unmatched in Canada—a one-stop shop for Down syndrome, as another parent put it.

For DSRF families, the new website that launched in May is a gateway to life-changing educational programs and health services. Families from across the country and worldwide, meanwhile, will benefit from our growing collection of resources created by some of Canada's top Down syndrome specialists, including webinars, workshops, and events for families and educators. Resources include The LowDOWN: A Down Syndrome Podcast, over 60 Learn at Home lessons, a comprehensive video library, a quick reference Down syndrome FAQ, a wide-ranging information section providing in-depth knowledge on a variety of health and education topics related to Down syndrome, and – of course – 3.21: Canada's Down Syndrome Magazine (co-published with CDSS).

As part of the rebranding, DSRF also clarified our organizational mission and vision. Our mission is to provide comprehensive support, rich social connections, and the best resources available globally so our immediate and extended Down syndrome community thrives.

As for our vision, DSRF continues to work towards a Canada that values and empowers people with Down syndrome, fostering economic, social, and individual inclusion throughout their lives. Our reimagined website and look are a big step towards that future.

## Kinder Kick-Off: DSRF's New Kindergarten Readiness Program

Starting school is a monumental milestone for any child. For children with Down syndrome and their families, the transition can be equal parts exciting and trepidatious. Now, thanks to the support of SVP Vancouver, DSRF is helping families take this big step with confidence.

DSRF's new Kinder Kick-Off program helps children with Down syndrome age 3-5 years and their parents/caregivers prepare for the transition into kindergarten. This program is a collaborative effort between the DSRF program team which includes teachers, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, behavioral consultants, and mental wellness experts.

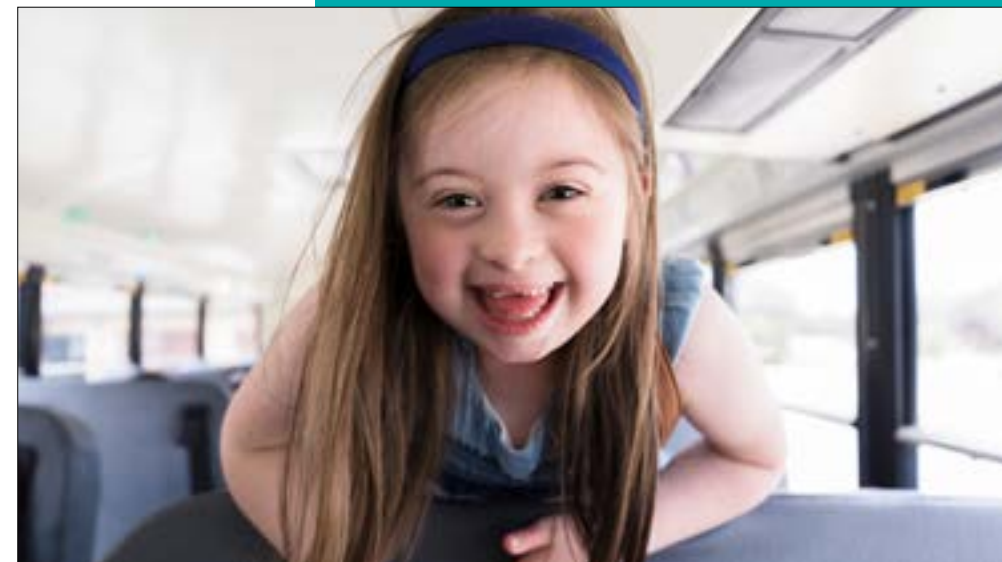
Kinder Kick-Off will help parents prepare their child to enter kindergarten by introducing common goals and expectations for kindergarteners, identifying the child's goals in different areas of development to ensure they start at the right level, and providing ideas for modifying/adapting classroom activities to support participation.

Parents will be equipped to successfully advocate for their child by beginning to prepare for the IEP meeting, developing an understanding of the child's specific support needs, and initiating an effective home-school communication plan.

This program will also help children develop skills that support school success, including:

- Personal Skills: supporting expressive communication, toilet training in school, self-regulation, play skills, ability to navigate classroom environment, following instructions (visual/verbal)
- Social Skills: communication, behaviour skills, transitions
- Intellectual Skills: early literacy skills, pre-printing, concepts (colours/shapes/numbers)

To learn more, visit [DSRF.org/Kinder](https://DSRF.org/Kinder).



## FRIENDS OF DSRF

The Province of British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development MCFD has approved a three-year funding envelope totaling \$215,000 to support the development of DSRF's new behaviour services provided by Sara Peralta, BCaBA, as an extension of our mental wellness service. We thank the Ministry for its support and look forward to partnering together with them in the coming years.

The Vancouver Canucks Alumni Association and Foundation has donated \$2,500 towards DSRF's programs and services for children with Down syndrome. We are so grateful for the Canucks' ongoing involvement with DSRF. We are all Canucks!

Gateway Casinos & Entertainment has generously donated \$2,500 in support of DSRF's programs and services through its corporate giving and community engagement program GatewayGIVES.

## UPCOMING AT DSRF

Run Up for Down Syndrome – June 5, 2022

Up the Down Market Vancouver – September 22, 2022

Up the Down Market Calgary – October 13, 2022

Up the Down Market Toronto – October 27, 2022

Action 21 Montreal – November 17, 2022

## FIND US / TAG US

@DSRFCanada on all our platforms



[DSRF.org](https://DSRF.org)

**Down Syndrome**  
Resource Foundation





# CDSS SPOTLIGHT

## Mindsets Study

Are you an adult with Down syndrome? There is still opportunity to get involved in this incredible research study about exercise and cognition for people with Down syndrome: <https://cdss.ca/mindsets/>



## Annual General Meeting - Have Your Voice Heard

Attention members! The Canadian Down Syndrome Society's AGM takes place on Wednesday, June 8, 2022. Stay tuned to social media @CdnDownSyndrome for details.

Canadian Down Syndrome Society monthly donors believe in a community that welcomes and values the participation and contribution of all its citizens, including those with Down syndrome. CDSS membership entitles you to represent your individual voice by casting your vote at our AGM. **Become a member here today**, and thank you for investing in creating a better future for those with Down syndrome in Canada.

## Getting Greener!

CDSS has been encouraging our community and donors to go green by switching to digital communications and tax receipts.

Every penny saved on printing and mailing helps to stretch donor dollars even further.

**Are you on our mail list?** We ask all supporters to join the green movement today – simply email [StayInTouch@CDSS.ca](mailto:StayInTouch@CDSS.ca) to update your contact information.



**Calling all Canadians to Walk for Awareness this June 11 - 19. Join us from Coast-to-Coast Supporting the Down Syndrome Community**

YOU can achieve great things for Canadians with Down syndrome of all ages, and for the people who love and support them. Each team and individual who registers is helping to bring trusted resources such as CDSS's FREE *New Parent Package 21 Welcomes*, and FREE programs like Bridging the Digital Divide to the Canadian Down syndrome community.

**Donate and enter to win a Fitbit! [Details here.](#)**

## Bridge The Digital Divide Program Update



CDSS has secured extra tablets and has re-opened the Digital Divide application process! Do you know someone who may benefit from using a tablet to support learning, organization, and life skills? Click [here](#) for info and the 15-minute application. **Deadline June 15!**



## We Showed what Love Means... on World Down Syndrome Day 2022

As we led up to March 21, CDSS shared people's lives and love stories through heartfelt interviews, and through the photographic lens of Hilary Gauld. An influencer within the Down syndrome community, CDSS was fortunate to collaborate with Hilary to showcase what Love Means..., a new awareness campaign dispelling misconceptions about people with Down syndrome. On March 21 [People Magazine](#) featured the campaign widely, which was certainly something to celebrate on the big day itself.

To those featured, thank you for sharing your love. You helped to educate and to change points of view in Canada and well beyond.



## Live From New York!

...special thanks to Canadians who sent videos to CDSS describing what #InclusionMeans to them, and to those who tuned into Down Syndrome International's United Nations New York event to watch [this video montage](#) on the big screen.

## FIND US / TAG US

@CdnDownSyndrome on all our platforms



CDSS.ca

## Fundraise My Way

A new way to give.

Fundraise My Way allows individuals and groups to easily set up an event to support CDSS. The software is simple to use, and all donations are made online, so your supporters receive a tax receipt instantly.

We have had individuals, groups and companies host fitness and sporting events, bake sales, art exhibits, birthday parties and school learning experiences... all connected to meaningful fundraising. It's been a great spring of fun DIY events and retail sales supporting CDSS, and to date you've raised over \$50,000 Canada!

**Check out the events others have hosted here and discover how you can showcase your talents!**

## RESOURCE NEWS

CDSS continues to focus on mental health and well-being. Our new health and wellness resource hub provides links for four key topics. Take some time today to [view and share the important mental health resources featured.](#)



Canadian Down Syndrome Society

Société canadienne de la trisomie 21



