

Mental Health at the Holidays for People with Down Syndrome and Their Families

November 30, 2022

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We are  AdvocateAuroraHealth

Adult Down Syndrome Center



Park Ridge, IL

Our mission is to enhance the well-being of people with Down syndrome who are 12 and older by using a team approach to provide comprehensive, holistic, community-based health care services.

Disclaimer

This information is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for a medical, psychiatric, mental health, or behavioral evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment plan by a qualified professional.

Objectives

- Discuss...
 - Strategies for transitioning from school/work to winter break
 - Managing emotions around the holidays and strategies for promoting mental health
 - Coping with grief after the loss of a loved one during the holiday season

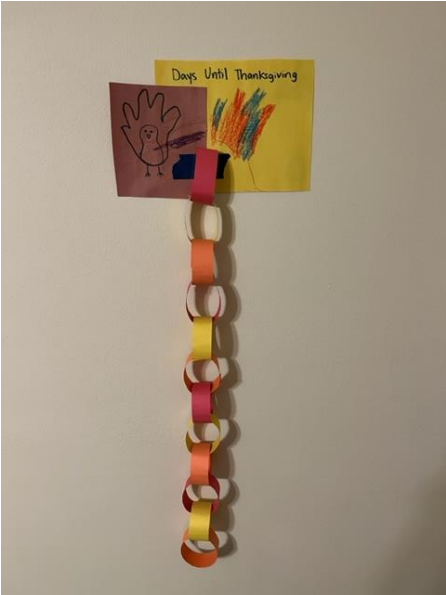
Transitioning from School to Break: Things to consider

- Leaving routine can cause some distress
- Routines may have already been altered at school (holiday plays/sings, parties, movies, etc.)
- The concept of time can be confusing to some individuals with I/DD

Strategies for Easing the Transition: Before the Break

- Prepare! Use intentional planning a few weeks in advance
- Make it visual/concrete
- Give as much prior information as you are able and that you think would be helpful

Strategies for Easing the Transition: Before the Break



DECEMBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
 Hanukkah	 no school	 no school	 no school	 no school	 no school	 Santa

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
 ice skating	 mom	 library	 grandma & grandpa	 dad	 movie	 mom & dad
 mom & dad	 mom	 mom	 dad	 dad	 dad	 mom & dad

Strategies for Easing the Transition: During the Break

- Figure out ways to keep/create some consistency
- You can work with the teachers at school to either send home activities or suggest online programs that help maintain skills/routines.
- Allow for flexibility as you know would benefit your loved one

Managing Emotions of the Holidays- Topics to discuss:

- Emotions of the holidays
- Ways to manage stress (holiday editing)
- Setting and holding boundaries
- Strategies for coping with overwhelming feelings

Managing Emotions of the Holidays- Things to consider:

- Holidays are often stressful for people without intellectual/developmental disabilities
- There are a lot of ways that we get out of our routines during the holidays
- Holidays include a lot of areas that can be challenging for people with Down syndrome

Managing Emotions of the Holidays

- Excitement
- Disappointment
- Overwhelmed
- Grief
- Stress
- Anxiety/uncertainty

Managing Emotions of the Holidays

- Our mental health is influenced by a lot of factors: sleep, diet, movement, activities, doing things we enjoy, having a sense of predictability/control over our lives
- If your child/loved one's mood is off, ask why

Managing Emotions of the Holidays: Strategies

- Uncertainty can lead to anxiety and disappointment
- There can be a lot of uncertainty around holiday gatherings—people, food, timelines, activities, etc. Prepare!
- Prepare for social situations: gifts, meals, gatherings

Managing Emotions of the Holidays: Strategies

- Control what you can control
- Keep as much routine as possible
- Make adjustments for when you get out of your routine
- What is the ideal balance of routine and flexibility for your loved one? How do you help them reach that ideal balance?

Mental Health of the Family

- Holidays often mean lots of time with family
- Our moods, mental health, and behavior impact one another

Mental Health: Holiday Editing

- What are the most important/enjoyable activities of the holiday season?
- Do all of these events bring joy, or do they cause additional stress?
- Are we enjoying the moment ourselves? Or are we pushing the activities to make the holidays more "magical"?

Mental Health: Holiday Editing

- Adjusting our expectations and preparing can help our mental health, as well as the mental health of our loved ones

Mental Health: Boundaries

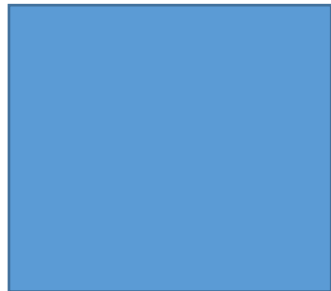
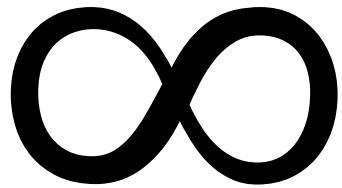
- Set boundaries for your family unit and for individual family members
- Might see people you haven't seen in a long time—it's okay to remind them that we don't want to hug or that we have a set schedule that we follow
- Help prepare your loved one to express their boundaries as they are able
- People are allowed to have their reactions to a boundary. That doesn't mean that you need to change it.

Mental Health: Coping with Overwhelming Feelings/Stress

- Using Mindfulness and Calming strategies are good for all members of the family
- These are strategies you can teach your family and use throughout your days

Mental Health: Coping with Overwhelming Feelings/Stress

- 5 senses grounding
- Figure 8 breathing, 4x4 breathing
- Observing an object or Observing your surroundings
- Listening to music without judgment
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Verbally prompt yourself and others to use strategies



Mental Health: Taking care of yourself

- "Empathy Radar"
- During the holidays, it is important to take care of yourself as well
- Embrace the imperfect
- Take time for rest, relaxation, enjoyment of each other's company

Grief and Loss During the Holidays: Things to Consider

- Grieving is the process of healing after a loss
- The holidays can be a particularly difficult time when grieving or dealing with loss
- Grief is not time-limited
- Some people say that grief never ends, we just get better at living with it

Strategies for coping with grief and loss

- Don't ignore or minimize feelings.
- Validate feelings
- Allow yourself to also experience grief and allow your loved one to see that. You can talk through your own responses

Strategies for coping with Grief and Loss

- Anticipate triggers and your response
- Pre-plan activities/ways to honor deceased loved ones
- Allow for questions, and answer honestly
- Allow for different expressions of grief
- Use your culture/faith...or borrow!

Strategies for coping with grief and loss

- Plan for practical needs during holidays
- Try to keep activities—don't cancel enjoyable events
- Consider donating or volunteering for a particular charity of importance

Strategies for coping with Grief and Loss

- Understanding/appreciating the concept of death is a learning process.
- Having a “script” can help reinforce the information and minimize emotional reactions
 - “Aunt Linda died in September 2022. Her body stopped working. We believe she is in heaven now and not in any pain.”

Strategies for coping with Grief and Loss

- Every person is different, but some good general strategies are listening and reflecting, validating/normalizing feelings, asking and answering questions

Take Care of Yourself

- Schedule time for self-care
- Regularly check in with yourself (what do I need? What about this situation is triggering to me?)

Recap of Topics Discussed

- Prepare in advance—transitions, boundaries, events, responses to emotions/behaviors
- Edit and control the things you can control
- Recognize and appreciate the experience of your loved one
- Utilize calming strategies
- Allow yourself and your loved one to experience grief
- Take good care of yourself and others

Visit our Resource Library

The screenshot shows the website's header with the Advocate Medical Group logo and 'Adult Down Syndrome Center' text. A search bar contains 'I'm looking for...' and a menu icon is on the right. Below the header is a yellow banner for 'COVID-19 Resources' with a sub-header 'Review articles, resource lists, and videos related to COVID-19 and Down syndrome.' The main content area is titled 'Adult Down Syndrome Center | Resource Library' and features three large image-based categories: 'For People with Down Syndrome' (with a photo of a young girl), 'For Families & Caregivers' (with a photo of a woman and a man), and 'For Health Care Professionals' (with a photo of a woman talking to two men). At the bottom, there are five icons with corresponding text: 'Events, Classes & Programs' (with a bell icon and 'See the Schedule' link), 'Video Gallery' (with a play button icon and 'View All' link), 'Related Organizations' (with a sunburst icon and 'See Listing of Links' link), 'Projects' (with a book icon and 'See Our Latest Projects' link), and 'News' (with a document icon and 'View News Articles' link).

<https://adsresources.advocatehealth.com>

Visit our Resource Library

[Promoting Mental Health in Adolescents & Adults with Down Syndrome Webinar Recording \(9/28/2021\) | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](#)

[Helping Children and Adults with Down Syndrome to Cope with Grief Webinar Recording \(7/28/2021\) | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](#)

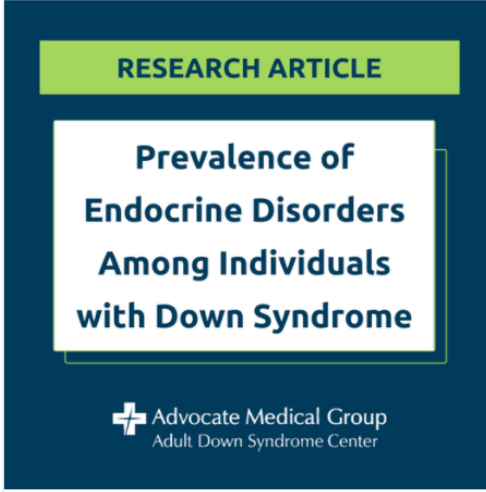
[Mental Wellness in Adults with Down Syndrome: A Guide to Emotional and Behavioral Strengths and Challenges \(2nd Edition\) | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](#)

The screenshot shows the website for the Advocate Medical Group Adult Down Syndrome Center. The header includes the logo, the text "Advocate Medical Group Adult Down Syndrome Center", a search bar with the placeholder "I'm looking for...", and a "MENU" button. Below the header is a yellow banner for "COVID-19 Resources" with the subtext "Review articles, resource lists, and videos related to COVID-19 and Down syndrome." The main content area is titled "Adult Down Syndrome Center | Resource Library" and features three large image-based cards: "For People with Down Syndrome" (showing a young woman in a purple shirt), "For Families & Caregivers" (showing a woman and a man), and "For Health Care Professionals" (showing a woman talking to two men). At the bottom, there are five navigation buttons: "Events, Classes & Programs" (with a bell icon and "See the Schedule" link), "Video Gallery" (with a play button icon and "View All" link), "Related Organizations" (with a sunburst icon and "See Listing of Links" link), "Projects" (with a book icon and "See Our Latest Projects" link), and "News" (with a document icon and "View News Articles" link).

Follow us on Facebook

Adult Down Syndrome Center
January 31 at 7:00 AM · 🌐

We are excited to share the recent publication of our study on the prevalence of endocrine disorders in individuals with Down syndrome. The Adult Down Syndrome Center collaborated with the Advocate Aurora Research Institute and University of Chicago. Individuals with Down syndrome were more likely to have thyroid disorders, type 1 diabetes, and gout and less likely to have type 2 diabetes than their age- and sex-matched counterparts. The findings highlight the need for health... [See more](#)



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Prevalence of Endocrine Disorders Among Individuals with Down Syndrome

Advocate Medical Group
Adult Down Syndrome Center

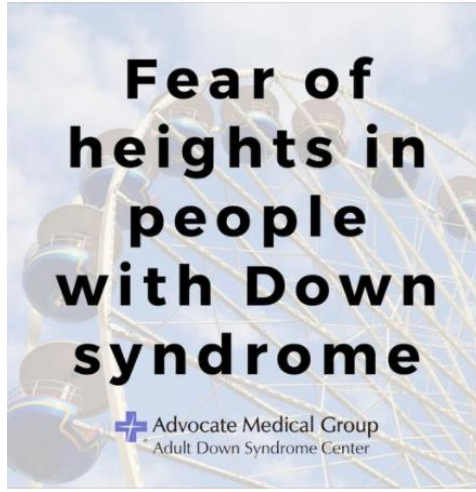
👍 60 45 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Adult Down Syndrome Center
January 25 at 7:00 AM · 🌐

Fear of heights is a common fear identified by individuals with Down syndrome and their families who come to our clinic. The providers at the Adult Down Syndrome Center have observed that many people with Down syndrome seem to have a difference in depth perception which may contribute to this fear. In the article linked below, Dr. Brian Chicoine shares more on this topic, including ways to support a person with Down syndrome who may have a fear of heights.

<https://adsresou...> [See more](#)



Fear of heights in people with Down syndrome

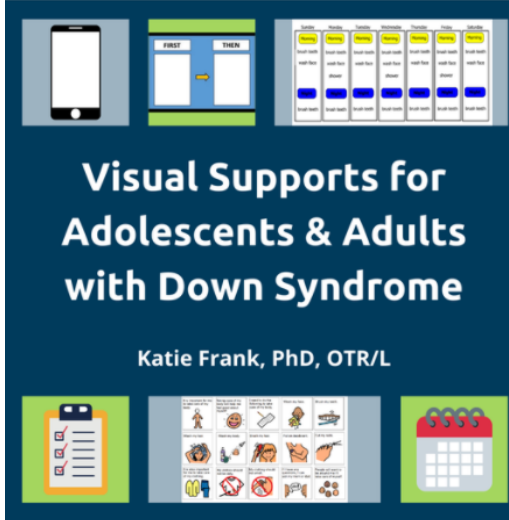
Advocate Medical Group
Adult Down Syndrome Center

👍❤️ 95 27 Comments 46 Shares

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Adult Down Syndrome Center
January 20 at 7:00 AM · 🌐

Visuals can assist people with and without Down syndrome in many ways. We do not think that they are something that we "outgrow." In fact, many of us use visual supports (such as apps on our phones, to-do lists, calendars, etc.) on a daily basis! They can be used to set and manage expectations, establish routines, communicate, learn new skills, and more. Our occupational therapist Dr. Katie Frank shares information about the use of visual supports in the article from our Reso... [See more](#)



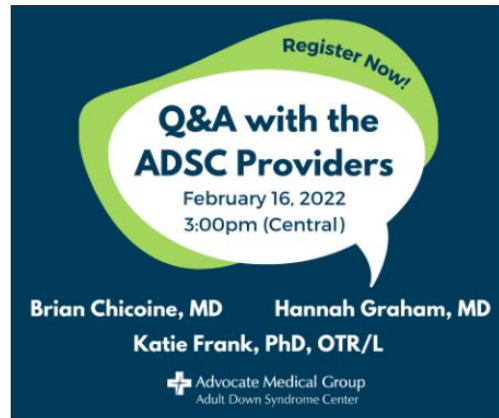
Visual Supports for Adolescents & Adults with Down Syndrome

Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L

👍❤️ 98 9 Comments 52 Shares

<https://www.facebook.com/adultdownsyndromecenter>

Join our email list



Do you have questions about health and wellness of adolescents and adults with Down syndrome? Our next webinar is for you! Join Brian Chicoine, MD, Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L, and Hannah Graham, MD for a Q&A on Wednesday, February 16, at 3:00pm (Central). Questions may be submitted before the webinar and/or during the webinar. Please click the button below to register and submit a question.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Resources



Even if the weather outside is frightful, there are many activities we can do at home to fight boredom, stay active, be social, and have fun. We recently updated our "Activities You Can Do at Home" resource. There are ideas for arts and crafts, cooking, education and learning, fitness and physical activity, games, and more.

[Explore activities](#)

<http://eepurl.com/c7uV1v>

Questions?

Resource Library:
adscresources.advocatehealth.com

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facebook.com/adultdownsyndromececenter

Email Newsletter:
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