

What Parents Wish They'd Known

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*This booklet is a collection of thoughts from parents of
children with Down syndrome, who responded to this question:*

What do you know now that you wish you'd known from the start?



I wish I'd known that it wasn't the end of the world.

--Joseph, dad to Janna (3 years)



I wish I'd known Down syndrome does NOT make being my son's mommy,
or loving him, difficult or different.

--Kathy, mom to PJ (8 ½ months)



I wished I'd known just how much like a "typical" newborn my baby would look like when she arrived. I was a bit scared and feared the unknown, but was pleasantly surprised: Ten fingers, ten toes, two eyes, two ears, a mouth and a nose . . .

PERFECTION.

--Robyn, mom to Amarli (7 months)



I wish I'd known to listen more and assume less.

--Chris, mom to Stevie (3 years)



I wish I'd known that I could be the best advocate for my child.

I didn't even know what the word meant, but I know now that I have no problems standing up for Hope, and this has made me better at standing up for all my children.

--Debra, mom to Hope (4 years)

I wish I'd known how much having a child with a disability in my life
would change the person that I am.

--Robert, dad to Hope (4 years)



I wish I'd known that I would say and feel so often, "You're so smart!" or "You are the
cutest kid in the whole world!" I wish I'd known I would use words like "sparkling,"
"vivacious," and "infectious laughter" when describing my child. I underestimated her.

--Nancy, mom to Gabriella (3 years)



I wish I'd known how very joyful and in love I would be every second of every day.
When my son was born, I worried, *can I do this?* I cherished that worry because it meant
his was a life worth worrying about. I'm glad I know now that I don't have to worry.

--Kitty, mom to Nathanael (2 years)



I wish I'd known that my daughter would be so able. To clean her own room. To charm grown men. To plant the garden with me. To play dress-up with other little girls. To read and write. To be a friend that cares and shares. She is so able.

--Jeni, mom to Joy Daisy (6 years)



I wish I'd known that my baby wasn't going to die. We were left with so many unanswered questions and I thought for sure that it meant she would die within hours.

--Renee, mom to Kennedy (4 years)



I wish I'd known what a wonderful teacher my older son would be. He is Owen's inspiration for everything—walking, talking, playing, climbing, eating, etc. Jason treats Owen like a kid, which is exactly what Owen is.

--Tricia, mom to Owen (2 years)

I wish I'd known that my son would develop a personality like any other child.
I spent so much time wishing his babyhood away wanting to know what he was going
to be like. I wish I had relaxed and enjoyed the sweet baby I had.

--Ann, mom to John (5 years)



I wish I'd known that this unexpected journey that began 4 years ago would not be one of
sadness, but of unspeakable joy, filled with more love and pride than I ever thought
possible.

Shirley, grandmother to Aleena (4 years)



I wish I'd known . . .
Not everything I read would happen to my child.
I would love her more than anything else on Earth.
Her hugs and kisses are real, from her heart.
She is just like any other kid.
She would make me a better person.
Her laughs are the best music.

--Jennifer, mom to Brook (2 years)



I wish I'd known how incredibly in love I would be with my daughter, how much fun
this whole process would be, and how amazing our friends really are.

--Francine, mom to Sofia (3 years)



I wish I'd known that my son would attend his local school, and would have lots of
friends who just accept him and like him for who he is. I wish I'd known how
happy and normal our family would be.

--Naomi, mom to Callum (5 years)



I wish I'd known . . .

That it was OK to feel broken-hearted when we first heard the news

That having a child with Down syndrome is NOT a life sentence

That my son would have his own agenda for doing things

And that it's a privilege to be his mom.

--Sara, mom to Nathaniel (9 years)



I wish I'd known that, although they say our kids "stay little longer," they still grow up too fast.

--Meredith, mom to Brianna (2 years), Emma (5 years, adopted), and Micah (1 year, adopted)—yes, all three with Down syndrome!



I wish I'd known that my daughter would bring me only happiness, not pain.

-- Destiny, mom to Lily (9 months)



I wish I had known that my son would have received two awards at the end of second grade: one for achievement in the Accelerated Reader program, and the other for being a

"Number 1 Best Friend."

--Vicki, mom to Aaron (8 years)



I wish I'd known that children with Down syndrome just as loveable, kissable, snotty, tantrum-throwing, bubble-blowing, huggable, and milestone-making as their siblings.

Ava, mom to Daniel (3 ½ years)



I wish I'd known that I didn't have to be afraid, that it would all be just as it should be.

--Rhonda, mom to Alex (8 years)



I wish I'd known how deeply in love I would be with my son, and how I wouldn't know what to do without him and his diagnosis of Down syndrome.

--Vonda, mom to Noah (9 years)



I wish I'd known how much joy and happiness Olivia would bring,
not only to me and my wife, but to everyone around her.

--Mike, dad to Olivia



I wish I'd known that she would survive two heart surgeries and continue to thrive
despite leaks within her heart. Her tiny heart was once a great big hole,
but it's full of a great big love that we get to experience each day.

--AJ, mom to Janna (3 years)



I wish I'd known he would be so full of life! He is intelligent, creative, a sports nut—
just like his siblings. He's a social butterfly, a love bug, an amazing little boy.
I wish I would've known he would be more like us than different.

--Jennifer, mom to Brady (3 years)



I wish I'd known . . .
That his sisters would love him so much
That he would have an awesome throwing arm
That he would have lots of friends
That he would read and love books
That he would do all the wonderful things little boys do.

--Anjie, mom to Adam (5 years)

I wish I'd known I would look at Avery and NOT see Down syndrome.

I see her as this amazing, smart little cookie—strong-willed, self-reliant, and cute as a button. She walks around like a little queen in a parade, waving, hugging, and talking to everyone.

--Kathleen, mother to Avery (3 years)



I wish I'd known having identical twin boys both with Down syndrome would bless our family more than we could have ever thought. They work together, play together, and show us how to take life one day at a time, and enjoy every moment.

--Stacy, mom to Caleb and Isaac (2 years)



I wish I had known that she would get through her heart surgery, that she would crawl and walk and play just like any other kid, that she would be able to communicate so well, and that life would be so normal.

--Karyn, mom to Talitha (2 years)



I wish I'd known that it isn't that hard, and that my daughter isn't different from any other little girl her age. All my dreams for her can come true!

--Kelly, mom of Alexis (2 ½ years)



I wish I'd known how normal and silly moms of kids with Down syndrome really are! I thought they were all supermoms that were like angels in the flesh—now I know the truth!

--Cas, mom to Jirah (2 years)



I wish I'd known life wouldn't be defined by the myths and misconceptions I had about Down syndrome, but instead, it would be as "normal" as normal gets, and my son would fill my life with love and joy beyond comprehension or measure.

--Sandy, mom to Lucas (19 months)

I'm actually glad I didn't know much about Down syndrome when my son was born. I think if I had, it might have ruined those moments and that connection I had with my son the moment I saw him. I would have thought of the negative, not of the fact that I had a little boy who I loved and was perfect.

--Judah, dad to Jaemen (3 years)



I wish I'd known the pure joy, happiness, pride, love, and dedication that my baby would show us all. I wish someone would have told me that this baby was going to change my outlook on life, make me a better mother to his siblings, a better wife to his daddy and a better person to this world.

--Carmen, mom to Jaemen (3 years)



I wish I'd known that it was ok to grieve and scream, cry, vent and be angry. I wish that a facility or network had been in place to reach out to me, instead of the other way around.

I wish that every parent coming home today could see my girl and how she smiles and loves.

--Amy, mom to Larkin (2 ½ years)



I wish I'd known not to believe everything the doctors said my child would not achieve, such as breastfeeding. I wish I'd known the immense gratitude my son would bring to my life just by reaching up and touching my face. I wish I'd known that I would never feel shame for having a child with Down syndrome.

--Andrea, Mom to Alex (10 months)



I wish I'd known the new lesson on love that AJ would teach me would fill my heart in a way I wouldn't have thought possible. I wish I had known of all the positive changes I would see in my other children.

--Ibby, mother to AJ (2 years)



I wish I'd known I was strong. My husband and I always thought we were the people who couldn't handle raising a child with Down Syndrome. Actually, there's really nothing to "handle."

--Stephanie, mom to Megan (4 years)

I wish I'd known the stands would erupt with cheers when she got a hit in baseball,
and that her classmates would circle around her with love and protection if anyone was
mean to her. I wish I'd known that "being slow" would mean savoring every step, every
puddle, every blossom.

--Michelle, mom to Ciarra (9 years)



I wish I'd known that children with Down syndrome are NOT happy all the time.

Darah throws temper tantrums and needs time-outs just like every
other three-year-old.

I wish I'd known that when Darah was first born, she was MY baby. When she was in the
NICU, I felt like the hospital owned her and was afraid to speak up with
my concerns and questions.

--McKenna, mom to Darah (3 years)



I wish that I had known that my broken heart would one day heal,
and the love that I felt for my son was the cure.

--Kristy, Mommy to Zachary John (3 years)



I wished I'd known we were going to be okay, that this one little chromosome was just a tiny piece of our lives. I wish I'd known that the dreams I had of the little girl with long dark hair were still going to come true! That while she may beg for a green Mohawk at times, she's still that little girl in my dreams.

--Leah, mom to Angela (12 years)



I wish I'd known that this would be such a marvelous journey,
and that everything would turn out . . . JUST FINE.

--Jackie, mom to Emily (28 years)



Quotes gathered from members of three online forums for parents of children with Down syndrome: Downsyn (www.downsyn.com), Uno Mas! (unomas.proboards10.com), and T21 Online Community (www.network54.com). Quotes compiled by Kathryn Soper. For more insights about parenting a child with Down syndrome, visit the blog sampler at www.giftsds.segullah.org. Thanks to all the parents who shared their experiences in this booklet, and to the owners and administrators of the online forums which bring parents of children with Down syndrome together.