

## TIPS ON WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

Motto: C.U.B. “competent, useful, and busy”

### Key Behavioral Deficits:

- Transition Problems
  - Shut Down/Non-compliance (“No!”)
  - Silly Behaviors: poking, giggling, attention-getting
1. Use transition picture strips.
  2. Take a picture of the child performing the activity properly. Add a line of text to clarify the expectation, “Johnny sits at his desk”, “Debbie writes numbers,” etc.
  3. Frequent tangible and attention rewards for doing it right.
  4. Jobs that build self-esteem and keep the child focused on constructive activities.
  5. Reduce the need for long walks to special activities/consider scheduling to minimize long “wasted” travel times. For example: bathroom break should occur when the child naturally passes the bathroom to avoid an extra transition.
  6. Inclusion needs to focus on informal social interactions times; facilitate friendships during class times, not just at lunch and recess.
  7. Use ERRORLESS approaches. Children with DS are very sensitive to errors and shut down quickly when they do not “know the answers”.
  8. Embed moments of joy into performance sequences.
  9. Understand that performance varies widely. Do not insist on consistent demonstration of skills before moving on. If a child answers correctly move on and re-visit the concept later. Adherence to a set criterion of mastery contributes to stagnation!
  10. Avoid power struggles. Move on and get started on activities rather than creating a “stand-off”. Often the child will follow your lead.
  11. Use animated positive feedback to encourage performance.
  12. Think in terms of “what TO do, not what NOT to do.” Children with DS generally respond largely to positive incentives. They tend not to improve based on punishment.