

**MARCH  
APRIL  
2009**

Parents and caregivers please  
feel free to share this newsletter  
with your workers.

# **Family and Children's Services**

## **Children's Developmental Services**

All our newsletters are available for viewing on our website in full colour!  
Visit [www.facsrr.ca](http://www.facsrr.ca) and click on developmental newsletter

### **Speech and Language Development Concerns**

*What to do when you have concerns about your child's speech  
and language development.*

#### **CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT? FIVE STEPS TO TAKE:**

1. Ignore advice to wait and stories about the cousin who did not speak until age three. It's never too early to address language delays.
2. Contact your local Developmental Services agency for an evaluation.
3. Have your child's hearing tested.
4. Evaluate your child's oral motor functions.
5. Read either *The Late Talker* or *Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems* for reviews or to purchase these helpful books.

#### **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES TO WATCH FOR**

Consider an evaluation if your child's language development falls outside this timetable:

- Birth to 5 months: Turns head toward sound, makes noise when spoken to.
- 6–11 months: Babbles ("ba-ba-ba"), tries to repeat your sounds.
- 12-17 months: Answers simple questions nonverbally, follows simple directions with gestures, points, says two to three words to label an object.
- 18-23 months: Follows simple commands without gestures, says 10 or more words and begins to combine them ("more milk").
- 2-3 years: Speaks about 40 words at 24 months; understands some spatial concepts (on, in), descriptive words (big, happy), pronouns (you, me); begins to use plurals, regular past tense verbs, and two- to three-word phrases.
- 3-4 years: Uses most speech sounds, though some (l, r, th) may be distorted; groups objects such as food and clothes; expresses feelings and ideas; recognizes language absurdities (Is that an elephant on your head?)
- 4-5 years: Speech is largely understandable; describes how to do things; answers "why" questions; lists items in a category, such as animals.
- 5 years: Engages in conversation, uses complex sentences, carries out a series of three directions, uses imagination to create stories.



# *Understanding behaviour in Down's Syndrome Children*

## **Social Strengths**

Most researchers and observers agree that social understanding is usually a real strength for children and teenagers with Down syndrome. From the first months of life, they are smiling and enjoying interaction with everyone around them and they tend to be good at understanding emotional cues and social behaviours. This does not mean that they are well behaved at all times – like all other children and adolescents, they will often want more independence and control than is safe or appropriate for their age – but longer term, most teenagers and adults are socially competent and friendly individuals.

## **Behaviours are Learned**

Almost all of our behaviour is learned – much of it from imitating others in our social worlds from infancy to adult life. Social behaviours are mostly learned from imitating the behaviour of those around us, and other more educational, vocational or practical skills are usually taught. Rewards play a significant role in shaping our behaviour – think of the reaction of infants when we clap and praise them and how this almost always leads them to repeat the action. We are usually very responsive to pleasing others and being praised, and equally sensitive to being criticized or making someone cross, especially a loved one.

Psychologists have made systematic studies of behaviour over many years and shown that behaviours that are rewarded tend to increase and appear more often, while behaviours that are not rewarded tend to disappear. The technical term for a reward that increases a behaviour is a reinforcer (this may seem unnecessary jargon but some of the most common reinforcers are not always obvious rewards e.g. just getting attention is often reinforcing for a child even though the attention may involve being told off).

## **Behaviours Can be Unlearned**

It follows that if behaviours become more persistent when rewarded that they should disappear if not rewarded. In the jargon – if we want to extinguish (change) a behaviour, we must stop rewarding it. Once this is understood, it becomes clear that the adults around a child (and possibly the other children) need to change their behaviour if they want the child's behaviour to change. It is no use 'blaming' the child and expecting the child to change because we ask them to – especially when the child has limited language comprehension. We need to think about how we are reacting each time the child behaves in a difficult or inappropriate way and to realize that our reaction is usually rewarding – then decide how to stop rewarding the behaviour.

## **Behaviours Need to be Replaced**

Often 'difficult' behaviours occur because a child does not have the positive or appropriate behaviours for the situation. For example, a child may throw toys or may disrupt other children in preschool or school because he or she does not yet know how to play constructively with the toy, or how to join in with the lesson. It is often, therefore, more important to decide what positive behaviours to teach a child rather than spend time deciding how to get rid of a behaviour you do not want.

## **Build on the Social Strengths**

Often children with Down syndrome are using their good social understanding to be 'naughty' or 'in control'. It is because they know how to get the adult to react they way they want that they are often so successful at the 'naughty' stuff! What we need to do is to help them to use their strengths to be fully socially included and successful, and this starts with not 'babying' or 'making excuses' for their inappropriate behaviours – a word with granny, aunty or even dad, may be needed here. It certainly helps to be sure all teachers, school staff and other children also do not 'baby' a child but expect age-appropriate behaviour.

## **It's Worth the Effort**

Behaviour change programs really do work if you plan well and you are consistent. Difficult behaviour creates much stress for everyone and we are certainly not acting in a child's best interests when we allow difficult behaviour to continue. Being able to behave in a socially acceptable manner allows a child or teenager or adult join fully in the social life of the family, school and community – to have friends and to be happy.

SUE BUCKLEY HOW DO WE CHANGE 'DIFFICULT' BEHAVIOUR AND ENCOURAGE 'GOOD' BEHAVIOUR? BUCKLEY SJ. UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR. *DOWN SYNDROME NEWS AND UPDATE*. 2004;3(4);117-117.



# Sensory Solutions

Fun for the under 3 year olds

Submitted by Brenda Witherspoon-Bedard

Even though your child isn't tall enough to go on the "big kid" rides, there is still a lot of fun to be had when you're under 3—feet or years. Here are some fun playtime ideas just right for our favorite young people.



Birth to 12 Months:

**Wind at Your Back.** Place your baby on a soft blanket on her tummy. Wave a light scarf in the air above her and say, "Feel the wind!" Let the scarf gently fall on her back and then slowly pull it off her. Wait to see how she responds. If she likes this activity, try it again, but this time lie her on her back. The feel of the scarf builds your baby's tactile and body awareness.

12 to 24 Months:

**Loud/Quiet Fill-n-Dump.** Take two plastic buckets. Encourage your child (and provide help as needed) to fill one of the buckets with plastic balls (or other noisy objects) and the other with washcloths, scarves, or foam balls. As you fill, talk about how each one is loud or quiet. Now dump them! Which one is loud? Which one is quiet? How does your child tell you which he prefers? Follow his lead and fill and dump that bucket again.

24 to 36 Months:

**Frogs on a Lily Pad.** Cut out big green circles from paper and scatter them across the floor. Suggest that your child hop from lily pad to lily pad (and perhaps demonstrate how to do it). Talk about what she is doing as she hops along. Games like this build motor skills while encouraging imagination, creative thinking and language and listening skills.



## Tissue Paper Dyed Easter Eggs

Materials:

- Hard boiled eggs
- squares of tissue paper in many different BRIGHT colors (1 1/2 inch squares are about right)
- must be fresh tissue paper... not the old, ratty, recycled 200 times tissue paper

Spritzer of water or bowl of water

Directions:

- spritz or dip egg in water (get it all wet)
- pick up squares of tissue paper one at a time and lay around the egg. Feel free to use different colors and to overlap them.
- Spritz with water again if the tissue paper didn't get completely wet.
- Set aside in a bowl or margarine container to dry.
- When the egg dries, the tissue paper will fall off, but the pretty colors will stay behind. It gives something of a stained glass look to the eggs.



## "If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again"

If I had my child to raise all over again,  
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.  
I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.  
I would do less correcting and more connecting.  
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.  
I would care to know less and know to care more.  
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.  
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.  
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.  
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.  
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.  
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.  
I'd model less about the love of power,  
And more about the power of love

---Diane Loomans



***Are you aware that Family and Children's services offer a variety of voluntary services within the Rainy River District? These services include:***

**Children's Mental Health Services** – Assisting children, adolescence and their families who may be experiencing emotional, social, and/or psychological problems in their school, family, and/or community life. Services are provided free of charge, for a wide range of difficulties from mild adjustment reactions to severe psychiatric problems in children ranging in age from birth up to 18 years.

**Infant & Child Development** – Servicing children 0 – 6 years of age who are at risk for a delay, or children with a diagnosed physical, developmental or sensory disability. Some of the services provided include early intervention programs, developmental screening and assessments, assistance with transition to school for special needs children, and parenting programs on a group or individual basis.

**Community Integration** – servicing children with a developmental disability 6 years – 18 years. The primary focus of this program is to facilitate integration into the community. Some of the services provided include developmental assessments, advocacy in relation to other agencies, linkages to health, financial, and educational resources in the community.

**Family Relief** – a program that provides families a respite period from the responsibility of the daily care of an individual with a developmental disability. The three options to services include In-home respite – provided in the family home, Out-of-home respite – provided in the approved worker's home, and community participation – The individual is accompanied by their Family Relief Worker into the community to participate in community events or activities.

**For more information about the above voluntary services please contact** Family and Children's Services  
For Fort Frances call (807) 274-7787 or 1-800-465-7764 (Toll Free), for Atikokan call (807) 597-2700, and for Rainy River call (807) 483-1357.

**To make a referral for service**, please call Integrated Services Northwest, The Integrated Services for Northern Children Program for Single Point of access. For Fort Frances, Rainy River and area call 274-7787, for Atikokan area call 807-597-4528

**Do you have something to Share?**  
**Please phone Debra Bruyere**  
**at 274-7787 ext. 229**  
**or email [dbruyere@facsr.ca](mailto:dbruyere@facsr.ca)**