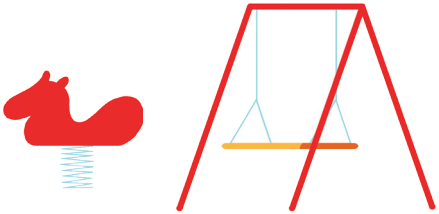
Information about growing up with your brother or sister with Down's syndrome.

Down's Syndrome Scotland

helping people realise their potential



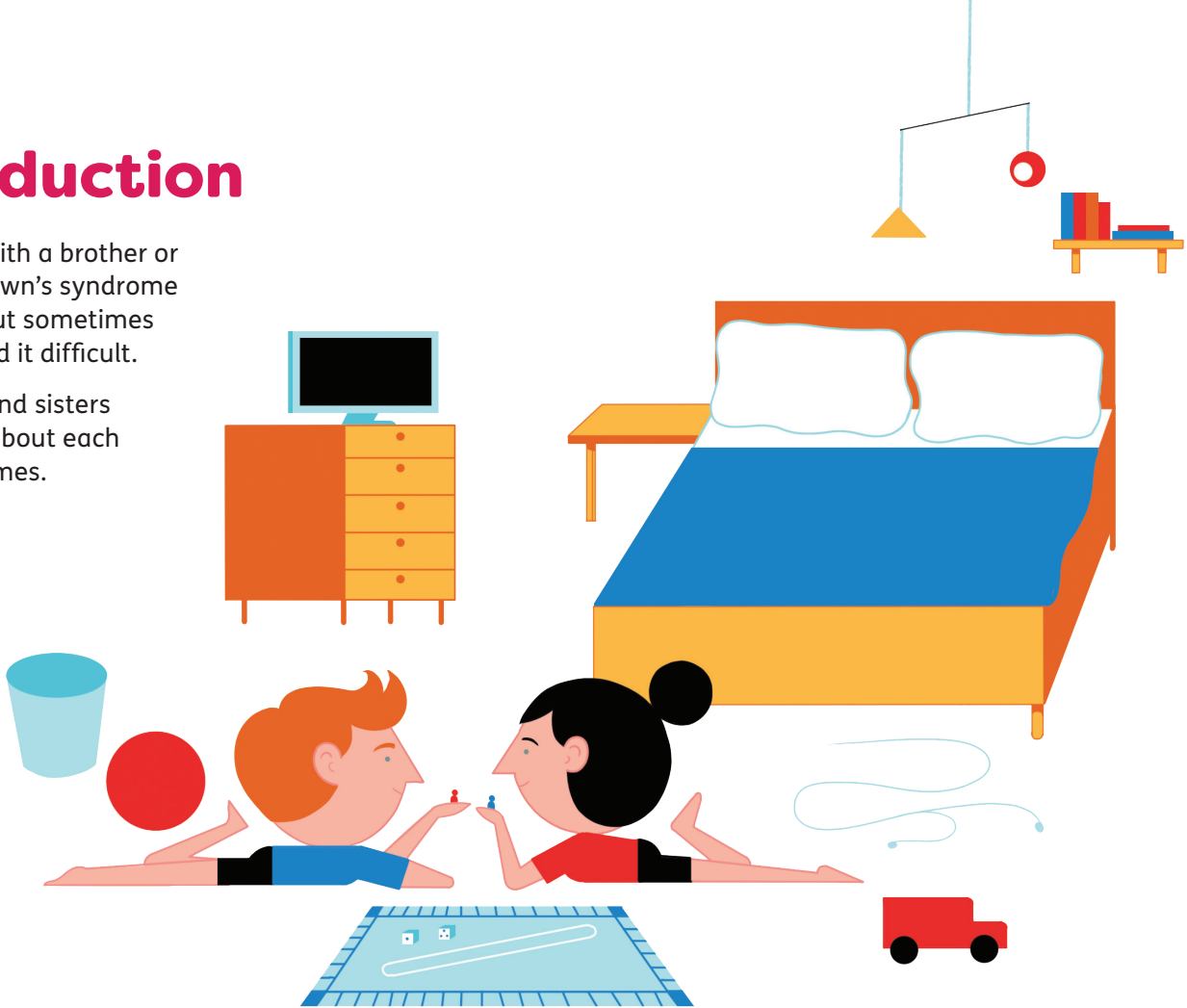
A little book about siblings

For more information or to obtain any of our other publications please visit www.dsscotland.org.uk

Introduction

Growing up with a brother or sister with Down's syndrome can be fun, but sometimes you might find it difficult.

All brothers and sisters feel like this about each other sometimes.



What is a Sibling?

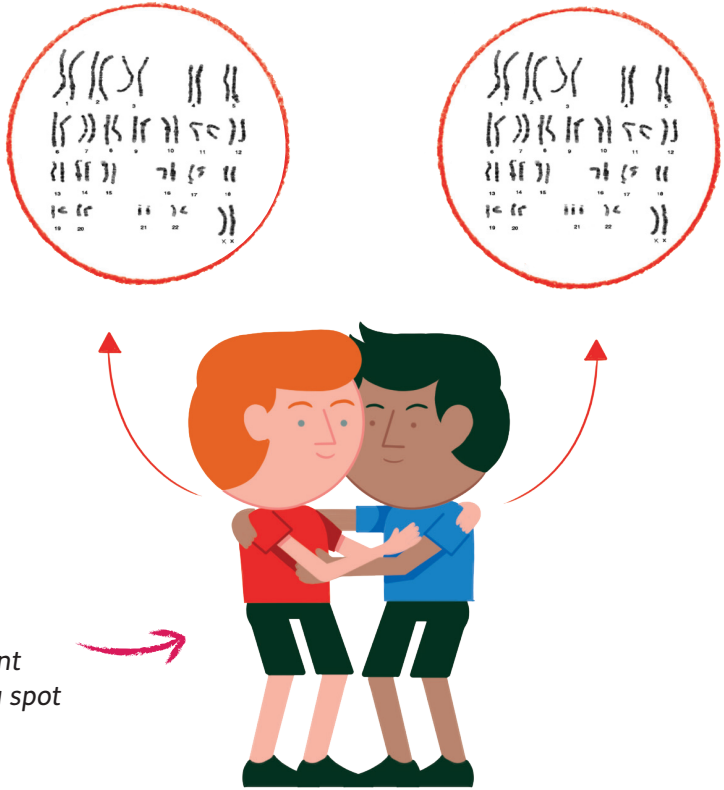
When you hear someone using the word ‘sibling’, they mean a person who is a brother or sister of someone. If you have a brother or sister, then you are a sibling.

> *Sometimes I love my brother, at other times he annoys me, not because he has Down’s syndrome, but because he is my brother.”*

What is Down's syndrome?

Down's syndrome is something that you are born with. You can't catch it or pass it on to anyone else.

Inside our bodies are trillions of cells, and inside each cell are even smaller things called chromosomes. Most people have 46 chromosomes, 23 from Mum and 23 from Dad. Babies with Down's syndrome are born with an extra number 21 chromosomes in each cell. This means that they have 47 chromosomes instead of 46.



Here's a picture of two friends and their different chromosomes – can you spot the extra chromosome?

People with Down's syndrome can look a little like each other, but your brother or sister will look more like you and the rest of your family.

Sometimes people with Down's syndrome might have lots of coughs and colds, or other illnesses. They might have to see the doctor a little more often than other people.

Your brother or sister will probably like the same sort of things that you do, but sometimes they might need extra help from other people to do them.

> *My sister needs more help with things that she finds difficult. It takes her longer, but sometimes we all need help to do things."*

Enjoying your relationships

The relationship you have with your brother or sister is possibly the longest you will have with anyone, so enjoy it.

- Remember that other boys and girls, and even grown ups, sometimes feel the same way as you.
- Don't feel bad if you argue or fall out with your brother or sister.
- Remember all brothers and sister fight, whether they have Down's syndrome or not.

> *My brother is definitely one of the nicest people I have ever met. Most of the time he makes me feel really happy."*

- Accept your brother or sister for who they are. It's good to talk about your feelings to others.
- Try to do lots of fun things together with your brother or sister who has Down's syndrome.
- Talk to your brother or sister about things that you do.

> *It's hard to understand my brother sometimes, but he's very patient when he's trying to tell me things. He can be really funny."*

Emotions are how we feel about something

You may feel lots of different emotions about your brother or sister with Down's syndrome.

You might feel:

Sometimes, you may worry about your brother or sister. It might help to tell someone how you are feeling. Other siblings and your parents may feel the same way too.

Sometimes other children may have said things about your brother or sister that upsets you. They may have said this more than once.

If someone hurts you or upsets you, you should tell your Mum, Dad or another grown up. If it happens in school, you should tell the teacher or another adult.

> *At school a few people in my class ran down the corridor and called my brother names. I was crying but the teacher said to me that 'They were wrong to say things like that'. They said sorry afterwards."*

Dealing with these attitudes

- If other children ask, try and tell them about Down's syndrome. You might want to ask your parents to help you to explain it to them.
- Talk to someone about how you are feeling.
- Count to ten. It can sometimes stop you from feeling angry.

> *Talking to other people about Down's syndrome has helped them to understand"*

Finally...

Always remember to have fun with your brother or sister. The emotions that you feel are the same as those you may have about your other brothers and sisters.

As you get older you may want to find out more about Down's syndrome from either your parents or from Down's Syndrome Scotland.

And there is a special section on the Down's Syndrome Scotland Hub for also have information sheets for older siblings and for parents.

Down's Syndrome Scotland provides support to families, carers and professionals who care for people with Down's syndrome.

If you would like to access further support please call us on 0131 442 8840.

For further information visit: **www.dsscotland.org.uk**

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