“Which Way Did She Go?”
Wandering in Children with Down Syndrome

by Denise Bockwoldt

I didn’t know I was supposed to worry about this any more than usual. I had read all the books on Down syndrome for new parents, my pediatrician never said anything about it, nor did the staff at the Down Syndrome Clinic. Yet, in my daughter’s five years of life, I have found nothing more stressful for me or more dangerous for her.

I’m talking about wandering away. Escaping. Slipping away undetected usually in the direction of something dangerous: a busy street, a large dog, or a parking lot. She has wandered at home, at school, at the store, at church, and at friends’ homes. It doesn’t matter where we are. I’ve become attuned to my daughter’s movement at every moment of the day. My “Mommy Radar” is on whenever she is awake, even when she is tucked away in a preschool program or classroom. When we go new places I quickly assess the potential for danger for her if she wanders away trying to outwit her before she does me. I am never far from the phone for fear someone will need to call me to tell me she’s escaped again.

For a child who is labeled with mental retardation, she is very, very smart. When she began wandering at home she was four years old. We took steps to prevent her from leaving without our knowledge. We installed deadbolts on the doors leading outside just out of her reach, so she decided to go into

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As the weather begins to warm and the days grow longer, children want to be outside to play and explore. As most parents of children with Down syndrome know, this sometimes leads to “wandering.” Wandering is something that parents rarely talk about, though they accept it as an everyday concern. Some parents believe they must be the “only one who has a child who wanders,” but they are not.

Since Andy, my son with Down syndrome, was born I’ve heard countless stories of escapades involving children with Down syndrome of all ages and their wanderlust. One of my favorite stories is from Roberta Martin in her book, *R as in Chrristophr*:

“This week we had just finished nailing down the lower half of all the downstairs windows and installing spring hooks at the tops of the front and back doors. Chris had escaped too often, in spite of my following him around during his waking hours and finishing the dishes, laundry, etc., etc., after he was in bed and sound asleep. Bob insisted Chris escaped by osmosis, and there were times when I almost believed it. We enjoyed his curiosity and his exploring nature, but it did have its drawbacks...

“With the safety measures we had taken in the downstairs, with no escape possible from the upstairs, and with Chris’ younger brother, Doug, at home for the day, a willing “babysitter,” it seemed an ideal time to relax my usual vigil and give the laundry and kitchen priority. Leaving Doug and Chris to their own devices, I set about my housework and put my mind on other things.

“The extended silence in the living room gradually penetrated my absorption. “Where is Chris?” brought a reassuring response from Doug: “He went upstairs to get his crayons and paper; we’re going to make pictures and practice printing our names.” Everything was under control.

“The laundered clothes were in the process of being transferred from the washer to the dryer when the phone rang. I picked it up noting uneasily that Chris had not yet come back downstairs. It was our neighbor from across the street.

“Mrs. Martin, did you know that Chris is on your porch roof walking around the edge and looking down at the street? He has a towel around his shoulders and he....”

Don’t worry, Chris came back in without incident. This chapter is titled, “Superman/Shazam.” When I follow Andy to see where his wanderlust is leading him, I often think of this story and Chris’ imagination. I wonder if “Superman” (a.k.a., Chris) was plotting the shortest distance to McDonald’s? I know Andy is.

Joan E. Guthrie Medlen, R.D.

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the garage and push the button to open the garage door instead. We raised the button up out of her reach, so she stacked milk crates up and climbed to the top to reach it. Finally, we disconnected the opener and purchased one that uses two buttons, pushed at the same time, to open and installed a deadbolt at the top of the door to the garage.

She has outsmarted the people in our church nursery on more than one occasion. The evidence of her success at escape lies in the changes in the nursery over the last two years. The nursery used to be staffed by teenagers, now they have an adult present at all times. Parents used to come and go freely, now they have a sign-in/sign-out sheet to keep track of the children. They used to leave the nursery doors open, now they have baby gates up. And now, they need to close the doors as well since my daughter spent the entire hour trying to climb over the gates.

The sense of panic and fear that shoots through my body when I realize she is missing is terrible. It’s a feeling that doesn’t leave for hours after we are reunited. An uneasiness that lingers and never really goes away.

Although most of my daughter’s escapades have been uneventful, some have been truly frightening. Recently on a family shopping trip at the mall, she slipped away unnoticed and was found by a passerby on the lower level. A month prior, she wandered away from our church during Vacation Bible School. An alert police officer saw her sauntering down a busy street a block away.

Although these incidents have been alarming for me, I am thankful she confines her meanderings to daylight. My friend, who also has a child with Down syndrome, was awakened in the wee hours of the morning by a neighbor returning her daughter. She had gone outside and down the street while the rest of her family slept.

I’ve tried to put my finger on the cause of Mackenzie’s wandering and wracked my brain as to how I might “cure” her of it. When I try to understand it, I realize it isn’t true “wandering.” She isn’t walking about aimlessly roaming, but seems to have a purpose at the time. She seems to know that it is wrong to leave without telling someone or taking someone with her. She seems to furtively sneak away when she sees opportunity. She seems more impulsive than premeditated in her attempts. She doesn’t stop to think about the possibility of danger when she leaves. She simply decides to “go,” and then, she’s gone.

This behavior seems to be common for young children with Down syndrome. In medical literature, this behavior is called, “elopement.” I searched for articles that might have ideas for me and found nothing. Amazingly, an Internet search of the Down syndrome newsgroup uncovered hundreds of posts from parents having the same problem. Fortunately, most of the stories had happy endings, but a few did not.

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It is surprising to me that there is so little information available for such a common, yet serious, problem for parents of children with Down syndrome. I wonder how many parents worry they will be labeled as a bad parent by an unknowing police officer, neighbor, or child protection worker. I know I did at first. I am thankful I was able to find stories and suggestions from other parents who have been through this phase with their child. It has helped me to deal with my daughter’s wandering in a more positive, proactive way than I could without that reassurance. The ideas and solutions from friends of children with Down syndrome, Internet searches, and other sources are available on page 6.

Although I’m still searching for solutions, I don’t want to squelch my daughter’s innate curiosity or extinguish her independence. Yet clearly, wandering away is dangerous and must be dealt with effectively. According to other parents, it appears that children with Down syndrome begin to “outgrow” this behavior as they mature. Most felt their children stopped wandering between the ages of 10 and 13 years old. That’s a few years away for us. In the meantime, my “Mommy Radar” will be on 24 hours a day.

Denise Bockwoldt is the mother of three children, one of whom has Down syndrome. She and her family reside in Frankfort, Illinois.

Strategies for Coping With Wandering

by Cindy Bohon Casten

What do you do when your child is an escape artist? The easiest thing to do is to install locks on all the doors going outside and keep them locked. This only works if everyone remembers to lock them or until your child figures out how to unlock them. That’s what we have done. We live in a locked home all the time. I hate this feeling and cherish the rare moments when I am home while Matthew is gone so I can open the doors and feel the breeze from outside.

Locking the doors doesn’t work very well away from home, though. Once he is at school, keeping him from wandering is out of my hands. When he was at the height of his wandering, I warned the staff at school. Their response worried me: “We’ll keep a good eye on him. Don’t worry.” It wasn’t long before I received a phone call at work from my son’s teacher. She said, “I know you warned us, but I didn’t think it would happen here at school.” It took them eight minutes to find him once they noticed he was missing.

During his four-year-old evaluation the physical therapist measured how far he could run and at what speed. He ran 85 feet in 15 seconds. The road in front of the school was about 200 feet away. This meant he could easily be out to the road in less than a minute.
Strategies for Coping With Wandering

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Our concern for his safety led to a collaborative brainstorming session to develop a safety plan. The result is: “Code Matthew.” The procedure is simple in design, but very helpful to everyone’s peace of mind.

**Code Matthew**

**Step 1:** Staff member who notices he is missing contacts the office.

**Step 2:** The office announces “Code Matthew” over the intercom system.

**Step 3:** Classroom teachers search their classroom. Other staff check outside, the bathrooms, storage rooms, and any other places where a teacher is not present.

**Step 4:** After one minute, call 9-1-1.

Once the policy was developed, the staff was trained in how to execute Code Matthew. The principal also notified the local police to inform them of Matthew’s wandering. Code Mathew has never been used, but I feel better with it in place.

Matthew will be in first grade this fall. He spent two years in kindergarten with a para-professional who is nearby all day. Among other things, she works with him on learning the importance of stopping when people ask him to. One game they play is similar to Freez. She signs and says, “Go!” and they both run as fast as they can until she signs and says, “Stop!” He gets an opportunity to give the commands too. He gets frustrated when she doesn’t listen to him and is learning the importance of listening to others this way.

The daycare Matthew attends has its own procedure in place, similar to Code Matthew. A fence surrounds the playground with a lock on the gate. After he tried to climb the fence they taught him to stay a foot away from it. He tried to leave through the gate, so a safety lock was put into place. Recently, a well-meaning parent started to teach Matthew how to unlock the gate. She didn’t know it was there for his safety.

We also take precautions when we are traveling. Matthew’s first wandering episode occurred at a hotel that had a latch type lock. He was just over two years old and decided to venture down the hall and into the bar to dance. Now we take inexpensive door alarms along to alert us if Matthew decides to go exploring at night. Some parents use motion detectors. When the alarm is forgotten, I let the front desk know that my son may wander. At one Hampton Inn, the staff called the Sheriff Department to ask for extra patrols that night. They worried that their own security system would not be enough.

Although it is hard, and sometimes embarrassing to admit that your child may escape from you, it is important to be courageous and take action to educate others about your child’s wandering. I have found discussing the situation with his teachers, his doctor, and family members to be very helpful. Most helpful has been talking things over with other parents of children with Down syndrome. I found many parents who are dealing with the same issue with their children. We have shared ideas, stories, things that don’t work, and things that do. Other parents tell me this wandering stage usually passes over time, but no one can tell me when that will happen. In the mean time, I am not sure if Matthew is learning his boundaries or if we are watching more diligently. Whatever it is, it seems to be working.

*Cindy Bohon Casten is the mother of four children, one of whom has Down syndrome. She and her family reside in Virginia.*
If You Can’t Stop Them, You Can Try to Slow Them Down…

If your child wanders, you may be wondering what you can do to discourage her. Parents have come up with myriad solutions from locks to alarms to personal identification systems. We have compiled them to share with you. Choose the solutions that are appropriate for your family. Please put your child’s safety first.

Establish priorities for creating a safe environment.

- Begin with the most frequent areas there are problems such as doors that lead to open areas of your yard.
- Try to think like your child rather than her parent.
- Establish clear boundaries.
- Install a fence around your yard.
- In areas without a fence, make a clear line for your child to mark her boundaries. This can be a line of bricks, a painted line, or the end of the grass. It should be consistent and easy to see.

Use monitors and alarms.

Using monitors and alarms are a very good idea. Test them to be certain they are loud enough to alert a sleeping person and can be heard throughout the house.

- Put a baby monitor in your child’s room at night to alert you of nighttime wandering.
- Install an intercom system in your house that can monitor specific rooms.
- Install a commercial monitoring system, such as Care Trak for your home and yard.
- Install an alarm system that can notify you when an outside door is opened.
- Install inexpensive door alarms or motion detectors.

Use locks where appropriate.

Use baby gates when appropriate. Be careful to watch for your child’s ability to climb over.

It is important to lock doors that lead outside. Pay attention to the type of lock. Choose one that your child cannot unlock, or place it out of her reach. Some parents whose children wander at night lock their child’s bedroom door. If you use a button-knob lock you must be careful that you aren’t locked in the room with your child. Make certain you have immediate access to this room in case of fire. Types of locks to consider for either purpose include:

- Deadbolt locks,
- Flip locks,
- Hook-and-eye latches,
- Locks with keyholes (place key above door frame), and
- Window locks (available at most hardware stores).

When you’re away from home.

It is frightening to be away from home and know that your child may wander. Here are some ideas to help discourage wandering and alert those around you.

- Portable door alarms. Again, check to make sure they are loud enough to wake you.
- Introduce your child to the hotel front desk staff. Inform them that your child may wander.
- If you are staying with friends, work with them to make certain doors are locked or blocked.
- When at a playground or other public place, discuss the boundaries with your child. Tell her where you will be sitting so she can quickly find you.

Schools, day care, home care, and other care settings.

- What is their lost child policy (see page 5)?
- Are there unlocked entrances and exits from the premises?
- Do they have a buddy system for children?
...Ideas For Parents of Children Who Wander

- What is the child-to-staff ration?
- Establish a behavior management program similar to home (such as reward adherence to new rules—page 9).
- Consider an extra adult for safety purposes.

Consider child identification and safety programs.

These are especially important if your child is unable or unlikely to tell someone—including a police officer—her name and address. Some options include:
- Sew or iron-on labels in clothing.
- Sew or iron-on labels to the tongue of shoes.
- Have her carry an identification card (see page 9).
- Keep updated information and a current photograph of your child.
- Carry an identification card for your child in your purse to show security personnel at malls and amusement parks.
- Purchase an identification bracelet or necklace (see page 9).

Register with your local police and fire departments.

Many police and fire departments have programs to register children and adults with disabilities in their neighborhoods.
- Ask your fire department about a “tot finder” decal for the window if you lock your child’s door at night.
- Introduce your child to police and fire personnel.
- Offer training regarding communication with your child to local departments.

Teach others about your child.

The more open you are about your child’s meandering, the more astute your community will be if they see her alone.
- When traveling, introduce yourself and your child to the hotel staff.
- Introduce yourself and your child to the neighbors. Share what you would like them to do if they see her out alone.
- Introduce your child to managers and staff at stores and restaurants you visit regularly. Share with them what they should do if they see your child wandering alone.

Teach your child the “house rules” and personal safety skills.

Once you feel you have adequately covered the areas of immediate danger, take time to teach your child what you expect from her.
- Create clear, household rules. Keep them simple at first. Post them near doors leading outside and refer to them often. Some examples are on page 8.
- Model the behavior you want your child to use. If a household rule is to inform someone when you go outside, have everyone follow that rule. Make a point to be obvious to your child with Down syndrome when you do.
- Role Play your expectations with your child. Help her practice following the rules by switching roles.
- Teach your child her name and address or how to show others her identification if she is lost.
- Read books about personal safety (see page 10).
- Write a social story about the household rules. Use photos of your child following the rules to illustrate the story.
- Create an incentive program rewarding expected behavior. This is especially important as you teach new rules such as telling someone when she goes outside (see page 9).
- Go on regular explorations with your child with her in the lead.

Continued on page 8
When teaching new rules to your child, frame them in a way that tells her how you want her to behave. Read them together often and talk about what they mean. Adding pictures to the rules and reminders helps children who are learning to read remember what they are expected to do. These rules, reminders, and reward chart are examples for you to modify or cut out and use.

Post the pictures below near doorways to remind your child of the rules.

Our Household Rules

1. I will tell Mom or Dad when I go outside.

2. I will stay in our yard.

3. I will ask Mom or Dad when I want to leave the yard.

Remember...

Tell Mom or Dad when I go outside.

Remember...

Ask Mom or Dad when I want to leave the yard.

Ideas For Parents of Children Who Wander
Ideas For Parents of Children Who Wander

_____’s Good Job Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today I.....</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Told Mom or Dad when I went outside.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked Mom or Dad when I wanted to leave the yard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources

Child I.D. Bracelets or Necklaces

_Beverly Hills Collar Company._
34611 Camino Capistrano, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624
Phone: (949) 240-3825 Fax: (949) 496-0941
www.kids-id.com E-mail:kidsid@home.com
Prices range from $10.99 to 14.95.

The Beverly Hills Collar Company has a variety (around 50) of designs that can be etched onto your child’s I.D. bracelet, necklace, or dog tag style necklace. All products are made from hypoallergenic stainless steel.

Child Identification Booklets

_First Impressions_
304 Birch Drive, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
Phone: 610-828-6980 Please ask for Debra.
$2.99 plus s/h.

Each Child Identification Booklet is 6”x12” and comes in a clear plastic sleeve. Includes information such as name, nicknames, address, medical information, blood type, fingerprint information, and a storage container for a hair sample for DNA testing.

Nylon Identification Bracelet

_Safety Sport I.D., Inc._
4546 Rutherford Drive, Marietta, GA 30062
Phone: 770/650-0091 Fax: 770/664-8863
Email: info@safetysportid.com
www.safetysportid.com $6.99 plus s/h.

Made in the USA, the lightweight I.D. Bands feature one-piece nylon construction in a variety of colors with sturdy clips. The insert for vital information is coated with a special 3M waterproof, sweatproof material.

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**Care Trak Monitoring System**

Care Trak, Inc.
1031 Autumn Ridge Road, Carbondale, IL 62901-9745
Phone: 1-800-842-4537 or 618-549-6330
Fax: 618-457-3340
Email: caretrak@caretrak.com www.caretrak.com Prices vary with system.

All Care Trak systems monitor a person who wears a 1 ounce water-resistant wrist or ankle transmitter attached by a tamper-resistant band. There are systems that monitor doorways or create monitored perimeter around your property. This is an expensive solution for individual parents.

**Books**


This unusual, interactive book is one of a series of problem solving books. In this story, a little girl and her father get separated at the zoo. The reader gets to choose from a list of ideas to help the little girl find her father. The book’s publisher states that the story is designed to model a process for thinking before acting, offer different ways to solve a problem, and show children how one person’s behavior affects other people.


This book is about a puppy who, distracted by a leaf, suddenly finds himself lost. At first he cries, but then realizes what he should do: find a police officer. This book is one of Scholastic’s “Hello Reader! - Level 1” (ages 3-6) books, so it is perfect for beginning readers. It is short, simple, and the message is clear.


Another book for young children, this story is about lost alphabet blocks and where they were found: “E’ found a home with some Eggs. ‘F’ took a swim with the fish”. We used this story to reinforce our “no wandering away” rule: “Mackenzie stayed home with her Mom.”


This is another “Arthur” adventure based on the PBS television show, where Arthur and his friend Buster find themselves lost after getting off at the wrong bus stop. They successfully problem-solve to get themselves home, to the relief of their frantic parents. This story is more appropriate for older children, and at 32 pages, requires a good attention span.


*Healthy Me* includes a section for teaching personal safety skills such as knowing address and phone number, using a public telephone, and traffic safety. Many of the activities need little or no adaptation. Each section includes songs and hands-on activities to enhance teaching.
Delicate Threads

Reviewed by Valle Dwight


When I think back to my days in elementary school, I don’t remember the many assemblies I sat through, the field trips we went on, or the names of all my teachers.

My most vivid memories are of the friends I had – the games we played, our long talks in the tree fort, our mutual discovery of the world around us.

Friendships play an enormous role in a child’s developing personality, and their importance cannot be overestimated. Good friendships provide a boost to a child’s self-esteem and build a strong sense of security. For children with disabilities, the importance of friendships is not diminished. In fact, for children with disabilities, friendships have the added benefit of providing the opportunity for practicing cognitive, communication, and social skills.

In her thought-provoking book, Debbie Staub explores seven friendships between children with and without disabilities and examines how the friendship affects each child.

In looking at these relationships, which she follows over several years, Staub describes the ebb and flow of friendships, how each stage of the friendship affects the children, and how the children grew and changed within the relationship.

Staub found that for the children with disabilities, their friendship with a classmate helped them model appropriate social skills, reach for skills that they might otherwise not have developed, and provided them with companionship.

Staub also found that the friendships were surprisingly reciprocal. For children without a disability, the relationship was equally complex and meaningful. In some of the friendships, Staub found that having a friend with a disability helped the other child’s self-esteem, boosted their confidence, and allowed them to be a leader. Getting to know a child with a disability also helped the nondisabled child see beyond disabilities in other people and become more empathetic in general.

Staub found that although the nondisabled child often took on some degree of a care-giving role in their relationship to a classmate with a disability, if that aspect of the friendship becomes the focus, the relationship faltered.

Not all of these inspiring stories have a happy ending, with friends growing apart and moving on to new friendships. But as Staub points out, all friendships are vulnerable to

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Delicate Threads

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these fluxuations, and the benefits that the children got from the relationship outweigh the pain of the parting.

Aside from many insightful stories on the relationships between children, Delicate Threads includes concrete tips and ideas for parents and teachers on how to encourage friendships between kids with and without disabilities.

One particularly helpful table, “Characteristics of Classrooms That Nurture Children’s Friendships,” is a detailed guide that outlines the best practices for encouraging friendships in school. The guide includes tips on curriculum, teaching style, and even physical layout of the classroom.

Straub’s compelling stories of friendship adds an important argument to the ongoing discussion of the benefits of inclusion. The book also makes a strong case for parents and schools to encourage and support these relationships.

Valle Dwight is a freelance writer and mother of two children, one of whom has Down syndrome. She and her family reside in Massachusetts.

Book Review

Expecting Adam

Reviewed by Maureen Godwin


I don’t go looking for books with titles like this one. It would never occur to me to pick this one off the shelf. But when a friend shoved it into my hand and said “you have got to read this”, I did. This nonfiction takes the reader on a journey which seems truly fictional. More than a mother’s story of her parenting a child with Down Syndrome, it reveals the frailties of the mind and strength of the human spirit.

What makes this book next to impossible to put down is the bold presentation of things usually unspoken and rarely shared among friends. It is not the author’s intent to convince the reader of a particular point of view. It is a tale written by a sociologist about her unplanned pregnancy. This is not an easy burden for many reasons. Next the unthinkable happens, the fetus has a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome. Just as she does in her work, the author records facts in a journal of her son, Adam’s life. From conception to childhood, Martha Beck recorded each stage of the journey as it unfolded over the years. She presents her perceptions and those of her family, friends, medical professionals and scholastic colleagues concerning

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Expecting Adam

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children, disabilities and societal values of the 1980s in an engaging, tongue-in-cheek manner. If this doesn’t grab your attention, the introduction of supernatural beings will. These apparitions play a role only the reader can define. This story has all the ingredients of a blockbuster movie: romance, mystery, disaster, suspense and an element of the paranormal.

Beck keeps the reader’s interest by slipping from past to present, illustrating her son as a child who has small miracles clustering around him. He draws out the best in each person who allows him the opportunity. “Adam has angels like a dog has fleas. He came here with them, and the more time you spend around him, the more likely you are to get them yourself.” This statement by a family friend seems to sum up the message of the book.

Beck writes “the harder something is to believe, the truer it is likely to be.” I don’t know if that is another way of saying truth is stranger than fiction, but I do know that she does not ask us to believe in some divine explanation of what happened. She only reports that intangible visitors helped her family through times of danger and despair. You be the judge of what or who they were.

It is easy to be skeptical. What saves this book is that the author, too, is a skeptic. It is laced with sarcasm, skepticism and those unnerving soul searching questions about the meaning of life. Just as the subject of Adam’s diagnosis becomes too dark, the reader is rescued by anecdotes familiar to every parent. She confirms what many parents of children with disabilities recognize as the positive influence of living with “someone who genuinely couldn’t care less about Getting Ahead, someone who is absolutely committed to finding joy in the present moment.” Her writing rings true when describing the isolated bewildering feelings couples experience when entering into the role of parenting a child with a disability.

Throughout the book Beck reminds us how much our society values people who force themselves to ignore the true beauty of life to achieve so many kinds of improbable objectives defined as success. I invite readers to take a chance with this book. There are times when stretching one’s boundaries of belief are worth the attempt. Readers willing to do this with Expecting Adam will find it worth the effort.

Maureen Godwin is the mother of 2 children one of whom has Down syndrome. She is an early intervention family resource coordinator. She and her family reside in Bellingham, Washington.
Healthy Me: Fun Ways to Develop Good Health and Safety Habits

Reviewed by Jamie Todd


I don’t know about you, but our days are busy: school, work, after-school sports, and homework. It doesn’t get any quieter during the summer with camps, classes, and keeping up with friends. With all this activity, it’s hard to find time to think up creative ways to teach my son with Down syndrome (or his brother) basic health and safety concepts. In her book, Healthy Me: Fun Ways to Develop Good Health and Safety Habits, Michelle O’Brien-Palmer has taken away a great deal of the work.

Palmer organized the activities into five main sections: “Clean Machine” (germs), “Healthy Chompers” (brushing teeth), “Nutritious and Delicious” (foods and nutrition), “Exercising My Muscles” (exercising), and “Safe and Sound” (keeping safe). In each section she incorporates words, pictures, songs, and games to bring interest and fun to the topic.

My son loves music. As I looked through the book I found many songs that I thought he would enjoy. I particularly like the song about exercise. The lyrics emphasize that we have control over making our muscles work for us. When one of the boys gets frustrated with an exercise, I sing the song from the sidelines.

I Exercise Each Day
(sung to Yankee Doodle)

I eat right and I am strong!
I exercise each day.
I train my muscles so that they
Work for me when I play!
Exercising—that’s for me
Muscles come in handy.
I’ll build my muscles big and strong
So they will work just dandy!

Sometimes kids learn through songs far better than they do if we constantly remind them, too. For instance, I noticed both the boys singing the “Look Both Ways” song in the parking lot while they paused to look both ways for cars. They were having fun and being more cautious than usual at the same time.

Look Both Ways
(Sung to “Are You Sleeping”)

Look both ways! Look both ways!
Before you walk, before you walk!
Cars might not see you.
Cars might not see you.
So play it safe, play it safe.

O’Brien-Palmer incorporates science techniques in an everyday way: growing bacteria cultures in dishes of tomato soup and detect-
Healthy Me: Fun Ways to Develop Good Health and Safety

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ing germs after hand-washing with “glow-germs.” These activities would be great in an elementary school health curriculum as well as at home. The activities are not without practical application. In the safety section she suggests using field trips to practice making important phone calls. She separates the trip to learn to use a phone booth to call 9-1-1 from the trip to learn to call home so the different purposes of the phone calls are not confused. That’s an important point I hadn’t considered before. The author also includes a list of additional books to read with your child for each section to reinforce the ideas you are teaching.

Though many of the ideas are appropriate for most children with Down syndrome, some will not be as effective or appropriate without adaptation. Regardless, this is a fun book with important concepts kids with and without Down syndrome need to learn to be healthy throughout their lives.

Jamie Todd is the mother of two boys, one of whom has Down syndrome. She is an active member in the Tidewater Down Syndrome Association. She and her family reside in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

ABC for You and Me


ABC for You and Me is a simple, smaller sized, book that features photographs of children with Down syndrome, sometimes with a friend or sibling, playing with an object for each letter of the alphabet. The beautifully simple photography allows the reader to focus on the subject without getting lost in busy surroundings. The photographs subtly remind us that kids with Down syndrome are more typical than not.

The size of the book is smaller, which makes it easy for small hands to manipulate. However, this book would not survive most young children learning their alphabet. The pages are thin and can easily be torn. It is best used in supervised activity or held up to a circle of children unless you are willing to take your chances with it getting torn. Overall, ABC for You and Me will be an enjoyable book for your children to read and talk about together.