

Down Syndrome Awareness Lesson Plan

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This is a lesson plan I prepared for my Speech and Language Therapy students at AMC College (Thessaloniki) to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day. I am sure it can be used with other students, too. The inspiration came from the Saatchi & Saatchi video circulated all over the Internet last March and April.

Language level: Intermediate – Upper Intermediate

Learner type: Adults

Time: 60 minutes

Activity: Speaking, reading short texts, writing and watching a short video

Topic: Down Syndrome

Language: Down Syndrome related vocabulary, Can/Can't, (not) be able to, should/shouldn't

Skills : talking about myths and facts related to Down Syndrome

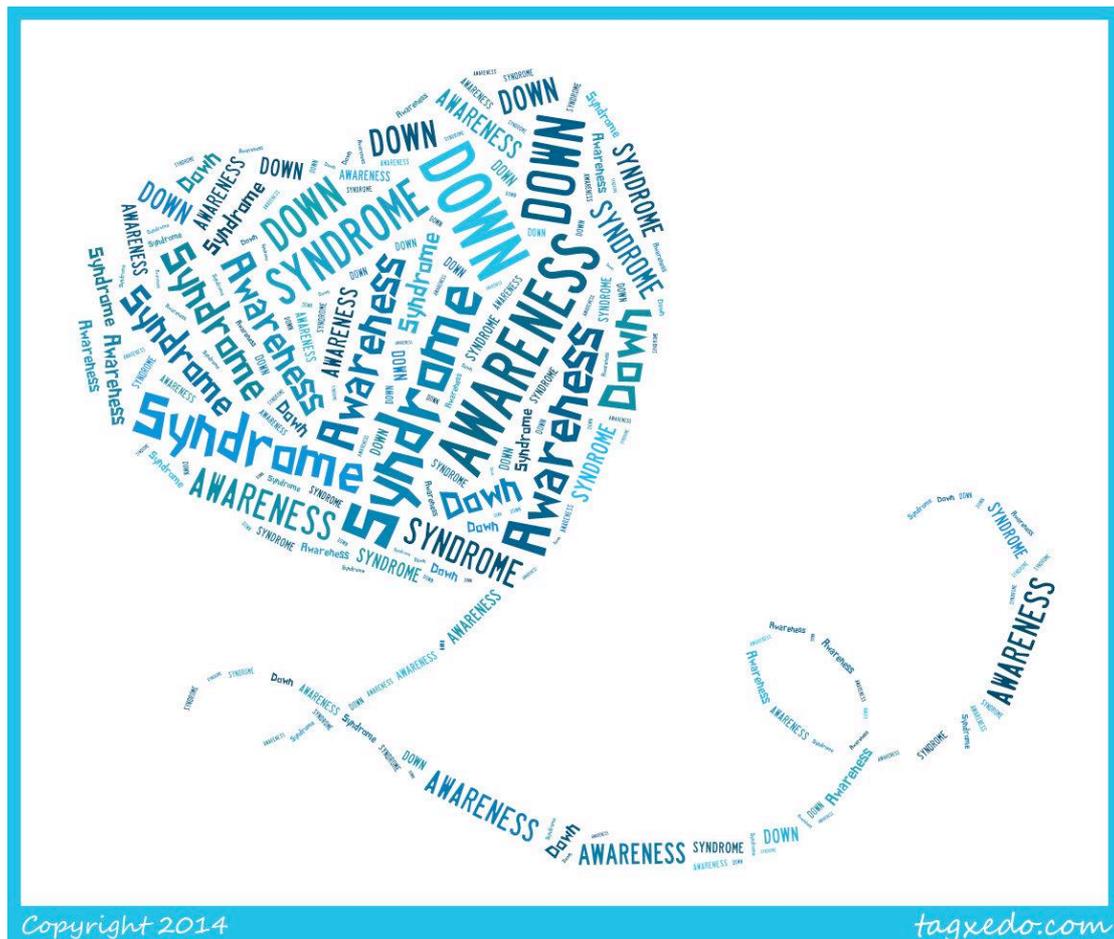
Materials: Wordle, Short video, sets of cards

Preparation : Print the myths & facts cards and cut them out.

Warmer

Show the Ss your Cloud (Wordle) and ask them to make out what the topic of this lesson is about :

Down Syndrome Awareness



Step 1

Ask your students if they know what people with Down Syndrome can or can not do. Write their ideas on the board.

Step 2

Tell them that they are going to watch a short video called '**DEAR FUTURE MOM | March 21**'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ju-q4OnBtNU>

Explain to them that the email a pregnant mother, expecting a child with Down syndrome, sent to CoorDown (Italian Association of People with Down Syndrome) posed the following question : "What kind of life will my child have?"

It triggered a video, created by Saatchi & Saatchi, where 15 individuals with Down Syndrome, from across Europe, sent her a heartwarming message in their native languages. Show the video.

Step 3

Ask them to compare their ideas about these people's abilities with the video's ideas. Were their ideas mentioned in the video? What other ideas were mentioned?

Write them on the board.

Step 4

Ask the Ss if they have ever thought about the way we address people with Down Syndrome. Put them in groups.

What language should we use when referring to Down Syndrome?

What language shouldn't we use because it can be hurtful?

Let them look at the expressions below and list them accordingly.

intellectually and developmentally disabled, a Down syndrome child, Down's child, a child with Down syndrome, he has Down's, suffer from, afflicted by, syndrome, disease, condition, cognitive disability, retarded, retardation, differently-abled, handicapped, 'challenged', idiot, moron, imbecil

Positive Language we should use when referring to Down Syndrome	Derogatory language we should NOT use when referring to Down Syndrome

Go round the class and offer any help/ explanations needed with the vocabulary.

Tell them that, in fact, as renowned educator and inclusion specialist Patti McVay emphasizes, “ the best name to call someone is the name he or she was born with.”

(The information was taken from the Global Down Syndrome Foundation site <http://www.globaldownsyndrome.org/about-down-syndrome/words-can-hurt/>)

Step 5

Write on the board ‘Myths and Facts’.

Pair up Ss with a partner from a different group. Ask them if they think that there are a lot of misconceptions in society about people with Down Syndrome. Why?

Mix up the order of the cards. Organize the Ss in groups and give them the cards about the “Myths and Facts”.

The cards are divided into 2 categories: one set with Myths and another with Facts. Give the cards to the groups and explain that they have to read the cards about the Myths and the ones about the facts regarding Down Syndrome and match them. Every time they find a match, allow some feedback if needed.

Attention : The cards below are in the right order for the teacher's convenience.

MYTH: People with Down syndrome have a short life span.

TRUTH: Life expectancy for individuals with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent years, with the average life expectancy approaching that of peers without Down syndrome.

MYTH: Down syndrome is hereditary and runs in families.

TRUTH: Down syndrome is hereditary in approximately 1% of all instances. In the other 99% of cases Down syndrome is completely random and the only known factor that increases the risk is the age of the mother (over 35).

MYTH: Most children with Down syndrome are born to older parents.

TRUTH: Most children with Down syndrome are born to women younger than 35 years old simply because younger women have more children. However, the incidence of births of children with Down syndrome increases with the age of the mother.

MYTH: People with Down syndrome have severe cognitive delays.

TRUTH: Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. Children with Down syndrome fully participate in public and private educational programs. Educators and researchers are still discovering the full educational potential of people with Down syndrome

MYTH: People with Down syndrome are always happy.

TRUTH: People with Down syndrome have feelings just like everyone else in the population. They experience the full range of emotions. They respond to positive expressions of friendship and they are hurt and upset by

inconsiderate behavior.

MYTH: Adults with Down syndrome are unable to form close interpersonal relationships leading to marriage.

TRUTH: People with Down syndrome have meaningful friendships, date, socialize, form ongoing relationships and marry.

MYTH: Down syndrome can never be cured.

TRUTH: Research on Down syndrome is making great strides in identifying the genes on chromosome 21 that cause the characteristics of Down syndrome. Scientists now feel strongly that it will be possible to improve, correct or prevent many of the problems associated with Down syndrome in the future.

(The information regarding the myths and facts about Down Syndrome was taken from the site :<http://www.ndss.org/Down-Syndrome/Myths-Truths/>)

Step 6

Have a short discussion about the information they have just read.

Which fact/myth really surprised them?

Were they familiar with these facts?

Did the Ss have the same opinion? Why? Why not?

Has society really changed in the way they see people with Down Syndrome? Why? Why not?

Follow up

Ask them to research and then write a short article about people with Down syndrome who broke the stereotypes and they are now having a professional career in any sector which they would have been barred from in the past, like teaching, for example.

Vicky Papageorgiou is an ESL teacher with approximately 20 years of experience specialized in teaching adult learners. She holds an MA in Education (Open Univ. of Cyprus) and an MA in Art (Goldsmiths College). For over 15 years she has been preparing students for English language exams of various exam boards as well as teaching ESP. She is currently an Adjunct Lecturer at AMC College.