

A Message from Dylan's Parents

Congratulations on the birth of your special little baby.

As parents of a toddler with Down syndrome, we can relate to your mixed emotions of fear, uncertainty and happiness. On March 30, 1997 we were given a very special gift from above...a beautiful baby boy, who we named Dylan Tyler. This 6.3 lb little infant has changed our lives forever. As young parents, we never expected to have a child with special needs. We were extremely surprised and shocked with the news that our child had Trisomy 21. We learned that Dylan also had a heart defect and would require open-heart surgery at 6 months of age to repair his VSD. It was a long and stressful week filled with many tearful moments of sadness for the healthy baby we mourned. Little to our surprise only a few weeks later did we discover that our baby was perfect the way God had created him. Regardless of the number of chromosomes in Dylan's tiny body or the heart defect, he was our child and was no different than any other precious little infant who needed to be loved, cherished and protected.

Every family deals with the news of having a child with Down syndrome differently. Initially, we were devastated and asked the question, "Why us?" After educating ourselves on what Down syndrome was and how we could best assist Dylan in achieving the highest goals possible, we began to realize that things would be okay and we would survive. Life is what you make of it. And from that day forward we made an oath to Dylan to give him every opportunity to thrive...dedicating ourselves to his well being. This would mean additional doctor appointments; therapy classes for fine and gross motor skills, and speech therapy. Most of all, raising a child with any special need requires patience and love. Our children will thrive and prove to society that they can be contributing members. The only requirement is that we take the extra time to teach our children, step by step. Our children will show us that they too can learn and excel like their peers, if only we give them a chance and believe in them.

All parents of a child with Down syndrome should be envied, not pitied. We are the ones who can truly understand the meaning of success and

fulfillment...appreciating every developmental milestone our children reach, regardless of how minor it may appear to others. We judge no one and look upon life through different eyes, appreciating the simple things...the smiles, the hugs, the look of happiness; these are what truly matter in the whole of things.

Today Dylan is a happy, healthy and curious little boy. He is walking, running, signing and beginning to talk. A determined, empathetic and intelligent three year old who never ceases to amaze us with his knowledge. All of our fears are long since past and now we focus on positive goals for the future.

Do not get discouraged, you will soon see the rainbow at the end of the cloud...shining brighter than you could have ever imagined possible. We love our son Dylan dearly, and could not imagine life without him. He is the heart of our family...inspiring us to make the most of everything we do. From one parent to another, we wish you all the best life has to offer with your new precious baby.

Lisa and Joel Rehill, Ridgetown, Ontario