LESSON
Being “Grown-Up”: Understanding Down Syndrome and Redefining Adulthood

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students will explore the challenges that adults with Down syndrome face as they struggle to establish independent lives and relationships as “grown-ups.” Through the documentary film The Grown-Ups by Maite Alberdi, students will understand what Down syndrome is and confront their own biases about the capabilities of adults who live with the condition.

Anita, Rita, Ricardo and Andrés have been attending a school for people with Down syndrome for 40 years. Now over 45 years old, they are starting to tire of this familiar environment: some of them feel that working in the school bakery is no longer a challenge. They also yearn for freedom on a more personal level. Anita and Andrés are in love but still live with their families. They dream of getting married and raising a family. However, the society in which they live is not equipped to grant them the independence they desire. Despite the training they receive for becoming “responsible adults,” and much to their frustration, all four of them remain dependent on others to make decisions for them regarding work and relationships.

Director Maite Alberdi draws us into the world of these four young adults through her intimate observation, free from commentary. The Grown-Ups is a moving—and at times confrontational—portrait made with great compassion and a sharp eye for composition.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Discuss the rights, freedoms and responsibilities associated with being an adult and develop a definition of adulthood that reflects the diverse experiences of “grown-ups”
- Define Down syndrome, understand what the condition encompasses and challenge their own biases about the rights and capabilities of adults who live with it
- Evaluate the resources available to youth and adults with Down syndrome in their local community and create a plan of action to raise awareness and improve access and opportunities

GRADE LEVELS:
8-12+

SUBJECT AREAS
Current Events Language Arts
Health Social Studies

MATERIALS
• Film clips from The Grown-Ups, and equipment on which to view them
• Computers with Internet access
• White butcher paper and chart paper, markers and sticky notes
• Handouts
  o Teacher Handout A: My Two Cents Discussion Exercise
  o Teacher Handout B: Understanding Down Syndrome
  o Student Handout: Conscious Adults

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED
One 50-minute class period plus homework

FILM CLIPS
Film clips provided in this lesson are from The Grown-Ups.

Clip 1: Meeting Anita (04:46 minutes)
This clip starts at 00:00 min. with Anita saying, “Hello,” and boarding the bus to her school. It ends at 04:46 min. with the voiceover of teacher Paty saying, “The important thing is that you guys are responsible for your own lives,” while Anita and Andrés walk down the hallway holding hands.

Clip 2: “A Conscious Adult” (09:10 minutes)
This clip starts at 38:43 min. with Anita’s mother asking her, “When we talk about the future, what do I always tell you?” and ends at 47:53 min. with Andrés at his goodbye party saying to Anita, “Both in my dream, and in reality, I wanted to be with you.”

Material Preparation:
In addition to printing the handouts and setting up the multi-media equipment, you may want to prepare the following resources in advance of the lesson:

My Two Cents Discussion Exercise: Make the “pennies” for the My Two Cents Discussion Exercise detailed in Teacher Handout A. Use this strategy throughout the lesson to guide discussions and ensure that all students contribute to the classroom discussion in an active and inclusive way.

Activity 1:
Prepare one long sheet of butcher paper for the graffiti wall and three smaller sheets for the legal rights, freedoms and responsibilities responses.

Activity 3:
Write each of the following statements on chart paper and post them in the four corners of the room:
A. Anita and Andrés should make their own decisions
B. Anita and Andrés should make their own decisions with advice from family and counselors
C. Family and counselors should make decisions with Anita’s and Andrés’ input
D. Family and counselors should make all the decisions for Anita and Andrés

Vocabulary:
The following definitions are from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary online: www.merriam-webster.com

- Chromosome: the part of a cell that contains the genes which control how an animal or plant grows and what it becomes
- Cognitive: of, relating to or involving conscious mental activities (such as thinking, understanding, learning and remembering)
- Documentary: a presentation (as a film or novel) expressing or dealing with factual events

Tracking Vocabulary: Students will encounter new words and terms throughout this lesson. Have them track new vocabulary in their classroom journals, graphic organizers or in their class notebooks and incorporate these terms into the culminating activity.

Notes about viewing and discussing sensitive material:
This lesson and the accompanying videos address sensitive social issues and teachers should screen the videos and review all of the related materials prior to the lesson. When facilitating a discussion about Down syndrome and other developmental conditions, please be sensitive to the fact that views on the appropriate use of terms and labels may vary depending on the group, individual and/or context. It may be helpful to connect with a school social worker for resources specific to your school community’s needs and guidelines.

Remind the class that this is a supportive environment and review your classroom’s tools for creating a safe space, including class agreements. These might include guidelines like “no name-calling,” “no interrupting,” “listen without judgment,” “use respectful language,” “share to your level of comfort” and “you have the right to pass.” And remind students that when they talk about groups of people, they should be careful to use the word “some,” not “all.”

Consult the Teaching Tolerance resource Let’s Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics With Students for additional ideas and strategies for tackling challenging topics in the classroom: http://www.tolerance.org/lets-talk

ACTIVITY

1. What does it mean to be “grown-up”?
In this activity, students will explore what adulthood means and the legal rights, freedoms and responsibilities we associate with being “grown-up.”

Do Now: Create a “graffiti wall” by posting a large sheet of white butcher paper on the wall and distributing markers. Have students write their responses to the following question:

- *What words do we associate with adulthood?*
Have the class stand in a semi-circle around the graffiti wall and silently review the responses collected using *Teacher Handout A: My Two Cents Discussion Exercise*. Discuss as a group, using the following prompts:

- What surprises you most when you look at the responses?
- What are the most/least common responses?
- What patterns do we see?
- What would we change or add to this list?

Have students pair up and ask pairs to brainstorm responses to the following question:

- *What are some legal rights, freedoms and responsibilities that we expect adults to have?* Note: Pairs should list at least two responses in each of the three categories. For example:
  - Legal Rights: vote, open a personal checking account, buy alcohol, rent a car, enlist in the army, get married without parents’ permission
  - Freedoms: decide how you spend your time, choose where you want to live, make decisions about your future, decide when to go to bed, go to rated R movies
  - Responsibilities: pay rent, take care of children/family, make a budget, cook and clean for yourself, pay taxes

Have the pairs combine to make larger groups of four to six students and share their responses with each other.

Post three large pieces of butcher paper on the wall, each titled as follows: Legal Rights; Freedoms; Responsibilities. Have the larger groups select two or three responses for each category and invite representatives to write their groups’ ideas on the appropriate papers.

Discuss and have a volunteer record responses:

- What are the most/least common responses?
- What patterns do we see?
- What would we change or add to this list?
- How do we decide whether a person is a grown-up? (Age, behavior, responsibilities? For example: Some teens work to help support their families and are responsible for paying bills and taxes. Does that mean they are adults?)
- Based on our feedback, how would you define a “grown-up”?

Keep the graffiti wall and responses posted for reference during the lesson.

### 2. Understanding Down syndrome

This activity begins by establishing/reinforcing tools for respectful listening and sharing in preparation for the discussions about Down syndrome. Through this activity, students will come to understand what Down syndrome is and discuss how being an adult with Down syndrome influences the rights, freedoms and responsibilities available to Anita in the film *The Grown-Ups*.

Explain: *Today we will learn about the lives of two adults living with Down syndrome, Anita and Andrés, as seen in the documentary film The Grown-Ups. This film looks at the everyday experiences of women and men in Chile who live with the condition and shows us their hopes, dreams and relationships and how they cope with the challenges that come with having Down syndrome.*
Facilitator note: This is a good time to review your classroom agreements and tools for supportive listening and sharing. The Fist-to-Five technique described in *Let’s Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics With Students* is a good tool for checking in with students about how they are feeling. ([Let’s Talk](http://www.tolerance.org/lets-talk), page 8: [http://www.tolerance.org/lets-talk](http://www.tolerance.org/lets-talk))

Discuss: Who has a friend, family member or neighbor who has Down syndrome?
If no hands go up, ask if anyone is familiar with the condition known as Down syndrome. Have a volunteer share what they know and/or follow with the summary in *Teacher Handout B: Understanding Down Syndrome (Page 1)*.

Explain: We will watch a clip from *The Grown-Ups* that shows, Anita, a student at a catering school in Chile, as she talks about her daily life and her dreams for the future.

Play Clip 1. Ask students to take notes while watching the clip with a focus on the following question:

• What are the adult rights, freedoms and responsibilities that Anita talks about in the clip?

Have students pair up and share their notes from the film, then reconvene for a class discussion using the My Two Cents Discussion Exercise:

• How does Anita feel about her life? What makes her most happy? What makes her most frustrated?
• Why does the support group call itself Conscious Adults? What does that mean?
• Anita wants to make her own decisions about her future. According to Anita, how do her parents feel about the choices she wants to make? What is her school counselor’s opinion?
• What does Anita want? According to Anita, what is standing in her way?
• How do the rights, freedoms and responsibilities that Anita talks about compare with our graffiti wall? What are the similarities and differences?

3. Four corners
Through this activity, students will take a position on Anita and Andrés’ situation and then work with their classmates to challenge their own perceptions and biases as they gain more information. Students will also analyze the motivations and choices of the subjects in *The Grown-Ups* and understand how societal perceptions of adults with Down syndrome have influenced their lives.

Review: Anita is frustrated because she wants to make decisions for herself. She wants to take on new challenges, get married and have the rights and freedoms that other adults enjoy. Her family and school counselors have different opinions about the responsibilities adults with Down syndrome can take on. Based on what you have seen and heard so far, what is your opinion on Anita and Andrés’s right to make decisions about their life?

If you haven’t done so yet, write each of the following statements on chart paper and post them in the four corners of the room:

A. Anita and Andrés should make their own decisions
B. Anita and Andrés should make their own decisions with advice from family and counselors
C. Family and counselors should make decisions with Anita’s and Andrés’ input
D. Family and counselors should make all the decisions for Anita and Andrés
Have volunteers read out each statement and ask each student to stand in the corner of the room that corresponds to their opinion. Students in each corner should briefly discuss their reasoning, then present their arguments to the class using evidence from the film and lesson. (Facilitator Note: This is a dynamic activity, so encourage students to move through each step at a quick pace. Prompt students who have not yet shared their “two cents” to take the lead as group spokespeople.)

After each group has given its arguments, offer students the opportunity to shift to a different corner and share why they changed their opinions.

Introduce each of the three summaries about education and employment, living independently and building relationships from Teacher Handout B: Understanding Down Syndrome (Page 2). After reading each summary, offer students the opportunity to move to a different corner and quickly share how the new information changed their perspectives. When all the facts have been read and the students have selected their corners, have them write their names under their respective opinions.

Reconvene the class and distribute Student Handout A: Conscious Adults (Page 1). Assign each student one of the following subjects from the film to focus on. Students can be assigned subjects based on the “corners” they chose (for example: students who chose corner “A” will focus on subject “A”). If there are too many or too few students in a particular group, adjust the subject assignments as needed. Subjects can also be assigned by having the class count off from A to D.

- A. Andrés’ family
- B. Anita’s mother
- C. Catering school staff
- D. Andrés and Anita

Explain then play Clip 2:
In this clip, Anita and her boyfriend, Andrés, are sharing their life goals with their families and the staff at their school. Use Student Handout A: Conscious Adult to record notes and quotes about your subject(s) while watching the film

After screening the clip, organize the class into small groups with at least one student representing each subject. Members of each group should share their notes from the film, then work together to respond to the questions in Student Handout A: Conscious Adults (Page 2). Each student should complete their own worksheet to use for assessment or reference later. Have the groups share their responses with the class using the My Two Cents Discussion Exercise.

Following the discussion, ask the class to review their responses to the four corners activity one last time. Invite students who have changed their opinions to move their names to the chart paper in the appropriate corner and share why they changed their minds. Ask students who did not change their mind to share how the film clip and discussion reinforced their opinions. (Facilitator note: Remind students that this is the last opportunity to share their “two cents.”)

4. Reflection
Discuss: Based on what we have learned, what changes should we make to our definition of “grown-ups” (from Activity 1), so it reflects the diverse experiences and abilities of adults, including people living with Down syndrome?
HOMEWORK
Select one activity from the following options:

Essay: Balancing Rights and Abilities
As we saw in *The Grown-Ups*, every adult with Down syndrome is unique, and it can be challenging to confront the biases and social and physical limitations that come with the condition. It can also be difficult for families and caregivers to understand which freedoms and responsibilities are appropriate for an adult with Down syndrome and give the right kind of support.

With this in mind, have students write essays in response to the film using the following questions as prompts:

• How did you feel about the way Andrés and Anita’s story ended?
• In your opinion, what would have been the best possible outcome for everyone involved?
• What role, if any, should Anita and Andrés play in the decision-making process about their future? Why?
• How could the couple, their families and the school counselors have worked together to make the best outcome possible?

Research Project: Understanding and Supporting the Down Syndrome Community
The rights and opportunities for people with Down syndrome vary in different countries and even in different states. Have students work in small groups to research policies and resources for people in the United States with Down syndrome with a focus on their local area. Students should:

• Research local and national organizations that provide information about Down syndrome
• Identify and reach out to programs for youth and adults with Down syndrome in their own community
• Connect and collaborate with members of their school or local area who are living with Down syndrome to learn how to be more effective allies for the community
• Understand which resources and programs are unavailable, what support is needed and how they can help

Have students use their research to develop an education and awareness strategy to challenge the myths and stigmas surrounding Down syndrome and signal-boost the voices of people living with the condition. Their projects can include poster campaigns, multi-media presentations and information webpages on the school website. Students can also coordinate the presentation of their projects to coincide with World Down Syndrome Day on March 21. Direct students to the organizations listed in the Resources section below to start their research process.

EXTENSIONS/ADAPTATIONS
Myth Busting: Sharing Facts about Down Syndrome

Until the 1960s, there was little known about Down syndrome and babies born with the condition were believed to be doomed to short and tragic lives. Our understanding of Down syndrome has expanded substantially in the past five decades and new treatments and improved programs have resulted in people with the condition living full and long lives. Despite these advancements, half-truths and myths about Down syndrome persist.

Have students work together to sort fact from fiction and learn more about the diverse community of people who live with Down syndrome. Each group should assemble its research into a 15-minute educational activity that can be used to inform peers and/or younger students about Down syndrome. Activities should be dynamic, interactive and easy to replicate and can incorporate handouts, art materials, multi-media resources and other materials.

When the projects are ready, groups can arrange to present their activities to other classrooms. Students can also coordinate the presentation of their projects to coincide with World Down Syndrome Day events on March 21.

Monica & David
The film Monica & David tells the story of an American couple with Down syndrome and their quest to get married and build a life together. Have students watch both The Grown-Ups and Monica & David and compare/contrast the couples’ experiences, challenges, opportunities and outcomes.

After screening the films, have students research the history of marriage for adults with Down syndrome and the experiences of other married couples living with the condition. Have them use their research to write essays on the topic using the following questions as writing prompts:

• Why did adults with Down syndrome only begin getting married in the 1990s?
• How have opportunities changed for adults with the condition in the past two decades?
• What are the challenges adults with Down syndrome face if they want to marry today?
• What lessons can we learn from couples with Down syndrome in long-term marriages?

Resources:
• Monica & David: http://www.monicaanddavid.com/
• Self Advocates Becoming Empowered: http://www.sabeusa.org

Explore Neurodiversity
Have students expand their understanding of neurodiversity through the film Neurotypical. In this lesson, students explore how people who are “differently wired”—or not “neurotypical”—negotiate, view and interact with the world. http://www.pbs.org/pov/neurotypical/lesson-plan/

RESOURCES
The Film
POV: The Grown-Ups
http://www.pbs.org/pov/thegrownups/
The film’s official POV site includes a discussion guide with additional activity ideas and resources, steps to borrow the DVD from the POV Lending Library and other resources.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films
http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php
This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

The Arc
http://www.thearc.org
The Arc is a community based organization of and for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Best Buddies International
http://www.bestbuddies.org
This is the website for a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

GeneEd
This resource helps students and teachers in grades 9–12 learn genetics. It is developed and maintained by the National Library of Medicine, the National Human Genome Research Institute and the National Institutes of Health.

Global Down Syndrome Foundation
www.globaldownsyndrome.org
This nonprofit organization works to improve the lives of people with Down syndrome through research, medical care, education and advocacy.

National Down Syndrome Congress
www.ndsccenter.org
This organization promotes the interests of people with Down syndrome and their families through advocacy, public awareness and information.

National Down Syndrome Society
www.ndss.org
This is a human rights organization and resource for individuals with Down syndrome.

National Institutes of Health: The Down Syndrome Consortium
https://downsyndrome.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Organized by the National Institutes of Health, the Down Syndrome Consortium encourages the exchange of information about Down syndrome research, support and care among a variety of organizations and groups.

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered
http://www.sabeusa.org
This nonprofit advocacy organization works to address civil rights, voting accessibility, transportation, employment, legislation affecting people with disabilities and affordable and accessible housing.

STANDARDS
Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume and clear pronunciation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and task.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence and add interest.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Content Knowledge: a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)
• Language Arts Standard 4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
• Language Arts Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
• Language Arts Standard 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
• Behavioral Studies, Standard 3. Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance and physical development affect human behavior.
• Behavioral Studies, Standard 4. Understands conflict, cooperation and interdependence among individuals, groups and institutions.
• Thinking and Reasoning Standard 1. Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument.
• Thinking and Reasoning, Standard 3. Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Allison Milewski has developed media education resources for a range of award-winning filmmakers and national media organizations, including PBS LearningMedia, Independent Television Service, Latino Public Broadcasting, HBO Documentaries and Tribeca Film Institute. She is also the founder of the international media education program, PhotoForward.org.
Overview
This exercise helps to make sure that all students contribute to the classroom discussion in an active and inclusive way.

Step 1: Preparation
Cut out small squares of paper (two by two inches). Using two different colors for the pieces of paper works well for tracking student participation (sticky notes can also be used). To add some flair, print an image of a penny on each square!

Step 2: Hand Out Paper
Give each student two pieces of paper. Have them write their names on each sheet. Explain that every time a student participates in the discussion, they hand in one of their sheets.

Step 3: Discussion
Every time a student participates in the discussion, have them hand in a sheet of paper with their name on it. If a student has no sheets left, they have to wait until all the other students have handed in their sheets. Once all the sheets have been handed in, you can distribute new sheets.

Step 4: Evaluation
Review the papers to make sure that all students have contributed to the discussion. You may want to assign a point system to the sheets to help grade class participation.
What Is Down Syndrome?

Down syndrome is a condition that results from a person having an extra chromosome (known as chromosome 21). All people with Down syndrome experience some cognitive delays—which means they develop the ability to collect and understand knowledge through their thoughts, experiences and senses later than average. They may also have mild to moderate cognitive development problems as adults and often have distinct facial features and health difficulties. Even though people with Down syndrome might act in similar ways and look similar to each other, each person has different abilities.

In the United States about 6,000 babies are born each year with Down syndrome and the condition occurs in people from all walks of life, cultures and racial backgrounds. The causes of Down syndrome are still not fully understood.

Until the 1960s, there was so little understanding of Down syndrome and how to treat and care for babies born with the condition that the majority of children were put into institutions and were not expected to live beyond their teenage years. Recent advances in medical treatment and increased public education about the condition have had a huge impact on the lives of people born with Down syndrome, increasing their life expectancy to 60 years and beyond. As adults with Down syndrome gradually integrate into broader society, it is important to increase education and awareness about the condition and the community of people who live with it.

- For more information about Down syndrome, download the National Down Syndrome Society’s “Down Syndrome Fact Sheet”: http://www.ndss.org/PageFiles/1474/NDSS%20Fact%20Sheet%202015.pdf

Adapted from the following resources:


Four Corners Activity: Introduce each of the following summaries to the class. After reading each one, offer students the opportunity to move to a different corner and quickly share how the new information changed their perspective on Anita’s and Andrés' capabilities and rights.

1. Education and Employment:
The capabilities and talents of adults with Down syndrome vary from person to person. Individuals with Down syndrome attend school and many graduate from high school and go on to participate in postsecondary and college programs.

Adults with Down syndrome work in a range of businesses, including catering, retail, hospitals, corporations, hotels, the computer industry and municipal services, depending on their abilities, talents and interests. They are also increasingly involved in high-profile professions, such as human rights advocacy, sports, the music industry, acting and modeling.

2. Living Independently:
Every adult with Down syndrome is different. Many adults with Down syndrome require some day-to-day support and live with family members or in specialized housing tailored to their needs. In the United States, an increasing number of adults with Down syndrome are living independently with limited assistance, and a small percentage are living completely independently.

3. Building Relationships:
Adults with Down syndrome are not children. They have needs and feelings similar to those of their “typical” adult peers and they enjoy activities and companionship with other adults, including romantic relationships. In the United States and many countries around the world, adults with Down syndrome are able to marry legally. Maryanne and Tommy Pilling from Great Britain were one of the first couples with Down syndrome to get married, and in 2015 they celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. They continue to live independently with the support of parents and family members who live near them.

Sources:


