

# Emily and Nathan's Story

As I am typing, Nathan will be turning 21 in 3 and half weeks. Looking back when Nathan was born in a big new hospital in North Asia I was frantically searching for "What is Down Syndrome" in the hospital small library with no Broadbent internet like nowadays nor anyone would visit me with a Down Syndrome Association new baby pack!

With little faith, eighteen months later we cash out our decision to have our 3rd child to share the load from Nathan's elder sister in the future, who was 2.5 years old. Life with three kids kept us very busy with no time to be sorrow but truly a life with a child with Down Syndrome is full of blessing and joy than being the other way round! The Australian international school mainstream kindergarten teacher who has a degree in special education loved cuddle Nathan because Nathan has got this angel face and he smells great to come to school every morning (Nathan has his first shower every morning).

Being an expatriate family with small children lived in a few different countries, we went on doing life just like everyone else and Nathan is always part of the family, part of the school communities. But be warned you would have a taste of a celebrity life because your child is so adorable at school among the mainstream kids that when you are walking in the nearby school shopping mall with your child you will often receive all these warm gestures and calling "Hey Nathan smiling and waving" you felt like you are a super star's parent is kind of sweet!

No matter who you're with your never-ending love and passion in raising your very own child/children, you'll put out your ears and eyes to look for resources to provide your child's needs in terms of any therapies or after school activities might needed whether you're living within Australia or overseas. **When you seek, you'll be surprised there are help just what you needed. As we grow older slowly, we understand our community and the world around us better; people with disability just not the hang out places we used to go and know when we were younger but doesn't mean that they are not exist.** I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you; you might find a very small pocket of friends used to hang out or new friends that they don't understand family with disability will slowly fade out from your circle of friendships. (Often it's due to they don't know what to do or say to comfort or support you) Do not be discouraged and waste your time as there are many beautiful people a wait for you to meet and be encouraged. They are the people and friends you should be with who would accept and admire who you and your beautiful family are!



Love never fails.

Your child with Down Syndrome will live and shadow under your love and care that's the fundamental and foundation of all that he/she will be experiencing; from infancy to first day to school, at least two or more graduations.

First day to work (some even bring home with wages, have a superannuation account and few of them I know even granted mortgages and bought themselves an unit in their late 20s) all these joyous moments are out of this world and not even we so call "normal child/children" can give. Even though, if my child with Down syndrome not choose to go to work; So what, as long as he/she is loved and they are happy!

My hero, Nathan, who was born premature, when he was little who would have thought; he just like many of us who has his own favourites, passions and cheeky moments. He enjoys anything that tastes good e.g. Irish stew, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish including his Aussie meat pies of course. Nathan can use his chopsticks better than half of the population in Australia! His primary teacher used to tell me Nathan has got art talent but I was focusing him on developing life skills in his early years not until in the recent year he was given his own art exhibition with five other potential artists! There are many things Nathan cannot do but he enjoys going to work to contribute what he can; volunteering for One-Meal to provide meals for the homeless and vulnerable people.

Working in a pet rescue centre care for cattery, worked for a land care and bush regeneration organisation and even working for a bakery with four branches in helping part of the baking process making high quality banana breads. Meanwhile, Nathan maintains his once-a-week day program that he doesn't go to work but either into drama, pottery or involved in different kind of sports paired with once-a-month Friday night young adults hang out live life in the fullness. All these things are mind blowing and they are never in my wildest dreams that Nathan would be doing what he's doing now!

When Nathan was born with Down Syndrome it echoes around our families and circle of close friends; one of the most encouraging messages at that time was from my husband's best man's mother in Brisbane, Sandra who has five grown up children they are all in different professions sent us a card and said "God has chosen a great home for Nathan and it's a blessing for all!"

**If you are the parents with a child born with Down Syndrome; wipe your tears, be encouraged and come out from this mist as your children and/or a child with special needs depending on your strong marriage.**

Like some of you might have read this sharing "a planned vacation to Netherland but landed in Rome," it can be as enjoyable as original planned and it's up to you. There are many everyday chores and errands are handy to have that extra help at home as many of us are migrants nor our immediate help are often either inter-states or overseas. **So as a family, from the little sibling to the older one at home ought to work as a strong team. With nowadays wider education; disability is not a shame and we can turn this into a blessing. The future is bright and it's in our hands!**

