

Tony and Oliver's Story

After we met in 2016, skip a few years and in mid-2018 Isabel and I took our 1st step towards parenthood via an IVF clinic & all the various subsequent appointments with midwives, doulas & hospitals. Then, on 19-11-2018, after we had confirmation of a successful fertilisation, we had the embryo transfer. Like a lot of parents nowadays, we had some prenatal testing. At the 12 week scan results, we were told we had a 1 in 4 chance) of T-21. We then had the Harmony Test which confirmed Down Syndrome. Finding that out was, frankly, a huge relief for me, as I was terrified of the other potential 1 in 99 chance of Trisomy-13. As later stage parents we were both of the opinion that it simply would not matter – our little one would be loved & raised no matter what. That day we contacted DS NSW and received the pre-natal pack which helped us de-mystify our coming journey. We also had contact with the hospital genetic counsellor which also helped me to understand it all.



Thankfully I was never really exposed to the various medical "professionals" that encouraged termination like Isabel... but by God it annoyed me!

While Oliver was developing inside mum, we were contacted by a friend of our doula who also had a child with T21 and invited us to a monthly meeting of local DS charity "The Right Start Foundation" where we got to see lots of kids playing and enjoying themselves... it made our coming challenges seem all that brighter.



Isabel went into labour 3 weeks early on 05-07-2019 ... an idle Friday morning. She had been up for a few hours but didn't feel any pressure or need to expedite things... until just after I woke up. Then Oliver decided that was the moment to try & come out into the world. The labour quickly escalated into a cliched rushed Uber ride out to the hospital, a call to the mid-wife & doula & (thankfully we had an amazingly well known mid-wife) immediately went into a birthing room at the hospital. A scant 45-odd minutes later, Oliver was born into Isabel's waiting arms. Our new little boy was definitely in a hurry to meet us all!



The care and support we found from the Down Syndrome community was nothing short of life saving... mentally rescuing us from a sea of unknowns, fears and prejudices.

"You are our light. We will support you & follow you so that you can not only fly high, but soar in all the dreams you have. The world has become a better place since your arrival!" Tony & Isabel's message to Oliver – 2020.

Having Oliver in my life has been nothing short of a dream and a privilege. He brings me levels of love and joy that I cannot describe and had never thought possible. Explaining that he has DS to others is ongoing and something I don't mind doing. Even though we are in a far better place of public knowledge about T21 than even 5 or 10 years ago, there is still a long way to go.



In light of this, after we joined TRSF in 2020 I was able to help them realise their dream project of a full educational video for primary school children about what Down Syndrome is. It is, after all a subject very dear to my heart now.

We are very proud of our film which uses live action & animation to engage & teach, coupled with a set of lesson plans & a comic (for those who may have hearing issues). This beautiful resource is available for free on the RSF website: <https://therightstart.org/history-and-resources/>