

Being a Health Ambassador

By Caitlin Woolley

My name is Caitlin Woolley. I work as the Tasmanian Health Ambassador for Down Syndrome Australia. It matters that people with a disability be included in their community, their employment and in health. This is the future I want for Australia.



I am thankful for my job. I want to use my strengths and contribute in the workplace. I've learned new skills and confidence. I have made friends and like helping others with my work. We need more support and training for people with disabilities and more employers offering jobs.

*People with disabilities need equal healthcare.
I teach healthcare workers inclusive communication to better care for people with a disability.*

Sometimes healthcare workers don't take the time to be nice to me or chat – they just talk to my mum and dad.

Kindness and clear communication from healthcare workers is important because I want them to care about me. If healthcare workers are not kind but are serious, rushing or not actually talking to me then I will feel sad.



When I am sad, I don't talk as much and you won't find out how I feel. If I think you like talking to me I will listen better to things you tell me.

It is also important that healthcare workers take time to communicate so I understand. When you explain procedures or tests and why I need them, I feel calm. If you take time to explain any results or treatment, I can look after my own health better. I can understand a lot of what you say, so slow down and talk to me. Find out if I understand what you are telling me and if I am not sure then my parent or support person can help. You can ask me if I have any questions.

I want to be included in my community and not left out just because I have a disability. I have talents, ideas and dreams just like other people. I don't want to feel left out. When I am studying, at my work, volunteering,

at church, doing activities in the community, or even with my friends and family, then I want to be part of that group.

Being part of the group makes me feel happy and that I am important. It helps me have fun, make good friends, use my skills and feel that I belong. I don't want people to make assumptions about what I can and can't do. They should let me try activities and let me have a say. If I am not included then I feel sad, upset and frustrated.

Each person with Down syndrome is an individual and we all need to feel safe, happy and respected. Like most people with Down syndrome, I see lots of medical specialists in my life so it really helps if you can take your time and think about how you communicate with me.