



Mental Health Mondays

Down Syndrome
Issue 37
April 24, 2023



Down Syndrome Today

Pulled from KFF Health News | By Tony Leys
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Sammee, a now 27 year old with down syndrome (DS) had several medical professionals blame her unusual sadness and lethargy on normal symptoms of DS. Her mother, Marilyn, luckily did not agree and found a clinic located in Kansas City, Kansas, 80 miles from the family cattle farm in central Missouri. Come to find out, the change in Sammee's behavior was due to a traumatic brain injury from a fall in the shower. With help from doctors at the adult specialty clinic, Sammee is now beginning to recover.

More than 1 in 700 babies are born with down syndrome today, a growth of **more than 4 times** the number born in 1950, and **30% more** than the number born between 1979 and 2003.


In the past, people with DS had a short lifespan, but due to advances in the medical field, many live well into adulthood. However, adults with DS often have their health concerns ignored.

The University of Kansas Health System has a special medical clinic devoted to working with this population (the same clinic Sammee's mother found).



 Marilyn Lesmeister sits with her daughter Samantha "Sammee" Lesmeister after Sammee's horse riding lesson in Cole Camp, Missouri.



 Nurse practitioner Moya Peterson speaks to patient Christopher Yeo, of Hartford, Kansas.

How can you help adults with down syndrome?

- **Communicate as much as possible with the person by:**
 - **Taking your time**
 - **Explaining things**
 - **Letting them process**
 - **Letting them answer**
- Find an Adult Down Syndrome Center near you by going here: <https://www.advocatehealth.com/health-services/adult-down-syndrome-center/>

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