

The journey of life

How people
change from
babies to
older people



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Other booklets in this series

About my Friend: for friends of people with Down's Syndrome and dementia ISBN XXXXX

About Dementia: for people with learning disabilities ISBN XXXXX

About the British Institute of Learning Disabilities

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities is committed to improving the quality of life for people with a learning disability by involving them and their families in all aspects of our work, working with government and public bodies to achieve full citizenship, undertaking beneficial research and development projects and helping service providers to develop and share good practice.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is designed to help people with learning disabilities understand the normal life cycle. Often people with learning disabilities need support to understand concepts of age or stages of life.

The Journey of Life helps people to understand that life is like a journey which can be described in terms of the amount of care that people need at different life stages. The main message of the booklet is that when we are born we need total care by other people. As we grow up we gradually become more independent, so that when we are adults we reach the peak of our independence. When we grow older we need more care. Eventually everyone dies.

This booklet can be used with individuals or with small groups. The booklet is written for staff and/or carers to use with people with

learning disabilities. We do not recommend that it is given to the person without first having been taken through it quite carefully. Talking about these sensitive issues, particularly death, can be quite emotional for people. It may trigger memories of people who have died and the person may need support to deal with this. It may also raise issues of their own mortality for the first time.

The booklet has large print text and corresponding pictures of a man with Down's syndrome as he changes from being a baby to becoming old. This was a deliberate decision to enable people with learning disabilities to see how a person develops and changes over time. Depending on the levels of ability of the people you are supporting, the words can either be read with them or used as an aid to help you talk about the pictures.



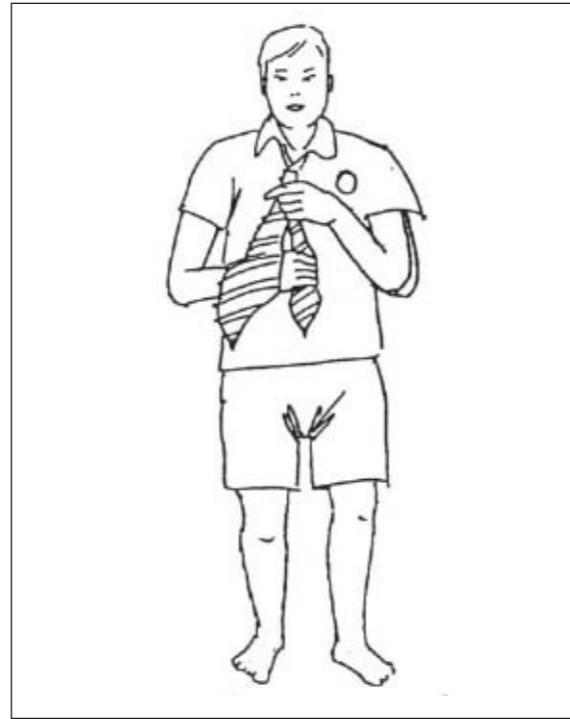
The Journey of Life

Everybody starts life as a baby. When babies are born they need everything done for them.

At first they can only cry. Later they learn to smile and make noises.

Babies need someone to feed them and wash them. They need someone to change and dress them. They need to be carried or pushed in a buggy or pram.

They need toys to play with. Babies need to be loved.



Babies grow to become children. They learn to walk and talk and begin to do things for themselves.

Children can wash themselves and brush their teeth. They can go to the toilet. They can get dressed. They can feed themselves and get their own drinks and snacks.

Children go to school and learn new things.

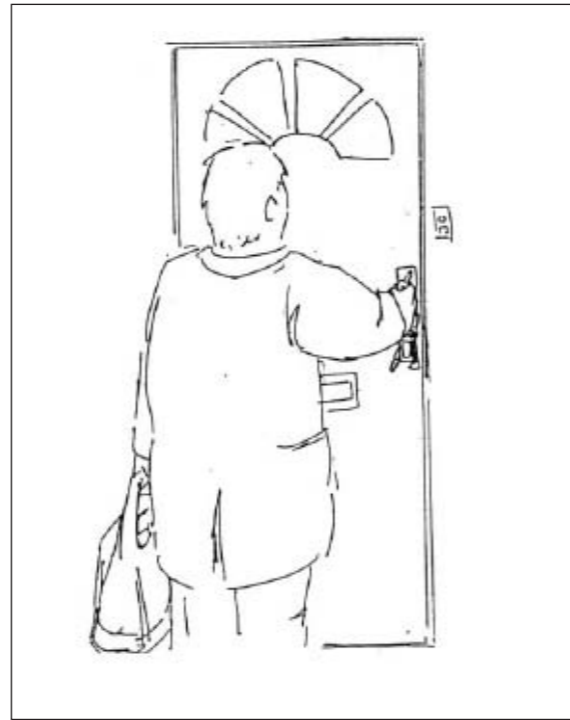
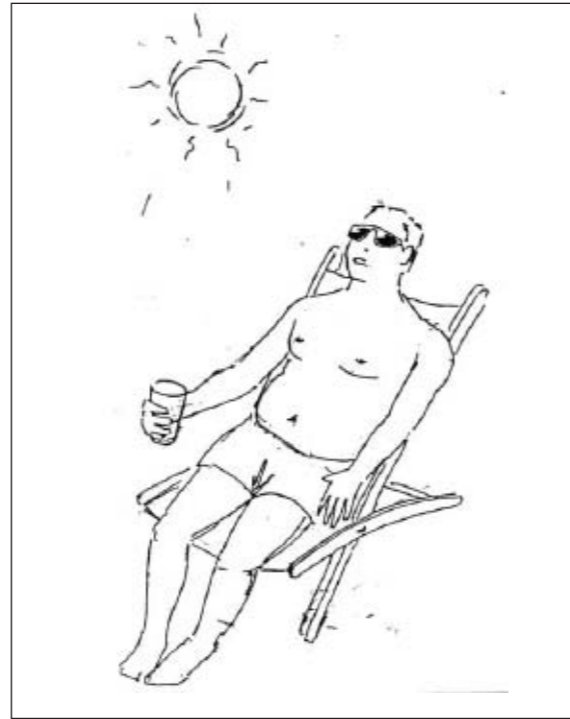


When children grow up they become adults. They are able to do more.

Their mum, dad or staff encourage them to do things on their own, or with a little help.

They can help with the cooking, cleaning and washing clothes. They may be able to go to the shops and buy things with their own money.

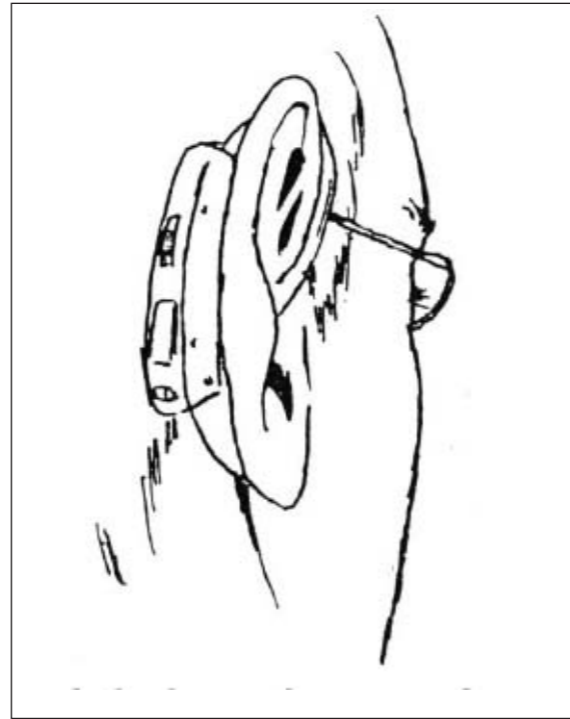
Some adults have jobs or work experience. Others go to college or centres.



Adults like to go out and enjoy themselves. They may go to clubs and go on holiday with their friends. They may have a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

Some adults may leave home and live on their own or with other people. Others may stay at home with their family. They may care for their mum and dad as they get older.

Adults can make choices about their lives. Some may choose to have children of their own.



As adults get older, the way they look changes. Their hair becomes grey and may be thinner.

They may have more problems seeing things and hearing things. Some people will wear glasses or hearing aids to help them.



Older people cannot do things as quickly. It may take them longer to walk downstairs or get out of a chair.

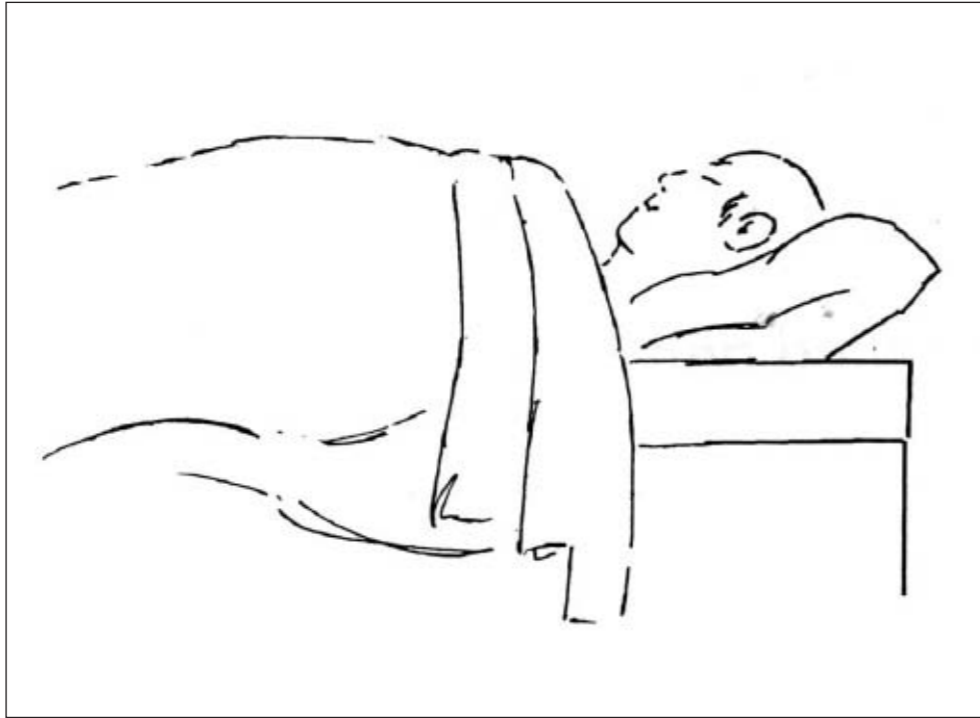


Older people may spend more time at home. They may stop going to work or to the centre.



Older people may get more illnesses. Their doctor will find out what is wrong with them. They may give them tablets or medicine. They may ask them to see other people who can help them.

They may have one of the special problems of old age called dementia. This is when someone's brain stops working as well as it did.



Very old people often need lots of care.

They may need help with washing, dressing and eating their meals. They may need somebody to look after them.

Their bodies are not able to do as much as before. They may spend more time in bed and sleep a lot.

Like everyone else, the person will die. Their friends, family and staff will be sad. They will think and talk about them. It may make them think about other special people who have died.

The Journey of Life

Everybody starts life as a baby. Babies grow to become children.

When children grow up they become adults. They have friends, make choices and do more things for themselves.

Adults get older. Very old people often need lots of care.

This booklet tells you about how we change from being a baby to an old person.

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