

## The Pace

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The pace of our society is perceived to be increasing. The effect of the persistent stress of the rapid moving environment can lead to anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems. People with Down syndrome can perceive the stress of the fast-paced world. We have seen some of the complications of this in our patients. One particularly difficult complication can be described as obsessional slowness. We have also labeled it "the pace".

For some of our patients, the world seems to move too fast. They cannot keep up with the pace of the world so they (consciously or unconsciously) slow down. We have seen people who eat slowly and walk slowly and can take an inordinate amount of time to do daily tasks. They seem to shut down when they can't live up to the expectations of the pace of society.

Until recently, we had to speculate that our patients perceived that the world was going too fast. However, recently a patient who is moving very slowly reported that he feels that "the world is too fast".

Treatment must start with an acknowledgement that for these individuals, part of the acceptance of his/her disability (Down syndrome) must include an acceptance of the need to move at a slower pace. They will probably not move at the pace that society sets. They will probably not be able to function at their previous pace because that fast pace was too much for them and eventually led to their slowdown.

While acceptance is a large part of the therapy, there are some additional helpful approaches. Giving an allotted time for some activities and then moving on or discontinuing the activity at the end of the time can be helpful. For example, some people who eat very slowly will suddenly start eating more rapidly as they see the clock reach the final minutes of the allotted time for eating.

We have not had tremendous success with medications but have had some success in some patients. A common response to the rapid pace of our society is to race to keep up. However, occasionally this can be overwhelming to the point where a person cannot or will not keep up with the pace and may actually move very slowly as a defense against this stress. "The Pace" at which they function can be described as obsessional slowness and requires a degree of acceptance as well as intervention.