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Foreword

Congratulations on the birth of your baby!

We wonder where you are reading this booklet “+Happy - The Seeds of Happiness” right now.

We bet it took a bit of courage for you to start reading it.

We are so happy and thankful that you decided to do so.

This booklet was created by those who have gone through similar experiences as you.

We would like you, the parent of a child with Down syndrome, to take your first steps forward with confidence.

If you are able to take the initial steps, you will find that moving forward isn't as difficult. We know that you are worried, but it will be ok. Children with Down syndrome grow up to be strong and kindhearted people.

Those of us who are raising children with Down syndrome are leading very happy lives.

Once again, it is going to be ok. Please try to enjoy parenting your new baby.

Life is a series of continuous miracles.

Please remember that your baby is here with you because of these miracles.

And again...

Congratulations on the birth of your baby!!

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*Cover picture: Moeko Inada

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Paste a picture of your baby or your family here

The reason you chose your baby's name

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What your baby was like when he or *she* was born

How you felt when you became a mom or dad

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For the Family

Raise your child as you would any of your children.

The precious life that was lovingly nurtured in your womb is now in your arms. You might feel anxious as you look at your small, fragile baby. However, although children with Down syndrome develop at a slower pace, they do grow and develop like other children. Raise your child the same way you would raise any of your children. Giving more care and attention to your child will lead to more growth and progress. You will mainly raise your baby at home and provide him/her with Ryouiku services when needed. (See p8 and 9 “What is Ryouiku?” for details.) Even if you feel unsure about how to raise your child, abandon the idea that your child cannot do certain things because he/she has Down syndrome. The best thing you can do for your baby while interacting with him/her is to think about what he/she needs and provide him/her with the best care that you can.

Health Management

Think of your child’s health first. Children with Down syndrome have vulnerable immune systems and catch colds easily during infancy. Some children with Down syndrome also have weak bronchi and can easily develop pneumonia. Try to find a family doctor in your neighborhood as well as an emergency clinic in your area that provides medical examinations and care at night. Create a support network for yourself (e.g., experienced moms, friends, grandmothers, etc.) so that you have a wide range of people you can contact when you are unable to decide whether or not to take your child to see the doctor. If your child has a medical issue and is hospitalized, make sure to talk to him/her a lot. Communicating with your child through talking and through physical contact (e.g. hugging or holding your child) should help to speed up his/her recovery. Also, make sure to talk to the doctor or nurse if you have any concerns at all. Keep asking questions until you are satisfied with the answers. It is important that you don’t bring your worries and fears home with you.

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For Mom and Dad

Mom, are you in good shape? Dad, is your work making you tired? Staying healthy is one of the most important things you can do while raising children. Take turns taking breaks in order to maintain your health. Do something relaxing from time to time for a change of pace. Raising children is hard work. Try not to do everything by yourself. Raise your children with support from those around you.

Taking Care of Siblings

How are the baby’s siblings doing? When a new baby is born, parents typically pay more attention to the baby than to the older children. Because they are now the “big brother” or the “big sister”, the older

children may push themselves unconsciously or feel pressure without realizing it. Remember to give lots of love and hugs to your older children too. Show that you appreciate them by saying, “Thank you,” “You are a big help,” and “I’m very happy that you are here with me.” I am sure that your baby’s siblings will help you out a lot in the future. Make sure to cherish your family members. Raise all of your children with lots of love.

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For Grandpas and Grandmas

Children with Down syndrome thrive on social interaction with many people. Smiles and kindness from other family members can really help encourage young parents who are raising children. Spend as much time with your grandchild as you possibly can. If you live far away and can’t visit frequently, then call frequently. Just hearing your voice can help new parents feel more at ease. We hope you will extend a helping hand to young parents.

Welfare Services

~Ryouiku Techou (e.g., Ai No Techou, etc.) ~

The Ryouiku Techou (Rehabilitation Certificate) system was established in 1973 to provide consistent guidance, consultation, and various benefits to individuals with Down syndrome throughout their lives. Because the Ryouiku Techou is a certificate issued by each prefecture, its name varies depending on the region. It is generally called the Ryouiku Techou or the Ai No Techou. The Ryouiku Techou can be issued to a person with disabilities at any age if it is deemed necessary. However, in some areas you can only apply for the Ryouiku Techou after your child has reached the age of one. The reason for this is that some areas find it difficult to determine the intellectual level of a child who is under one year old. The intellectual level of your child will be determined by the Child Consultation Center (Jidou Soudan Jo) in your area if your child is under 18 years old.

Obtaining a Ryouiku Techou will not put your child at a disadvantage when he/she, for example, enters school. On the contrary, you and your child gain access to various services. (The services offered differ depending on each prefecture.) Some familiar services that people of our child-raising generation use are as follows:

- Free admission to public zoos and aquariums for the child and, in most cases, for one of the accompanying parents as well
- Discounts for public transportation such as buses and taxis
- In some cases parking lots at certain facilities can be used free of charge

Individuals with Down syndrome and their families very much appreciate these services.

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In addition, you can receive the Tokubetsu Jidou Fuyou Teate (Special Childcare Allowance). This is an

allowance for parents raising a child with disabilities who is under 20 years old. However, you may not be eligible to receive the allowance if your income reaches a certain level. When your child turns 20, he/she will be eligible to receive the Shougai Kiso Nenkin (Disability Basic Pension) in his/her name.

Services and allowances offered vary depending on where you live. Please ask for details at the department in charge (e.g. welfare department) in your city, ward, town, or village office.

~Shintai Shougaisha Techou~

If your child has a medical issue such as heart disease, you can receive a Shintai Shougaisha Techou (Physical Disability Certificate) for your child. The Shintai Shougaisha Techou system is not the same as the Ryouiku Techou system; so, you can obtain both certificates if required. Ask a family doctor or nurse whether or not your child is eligible to apply.