



Hi, my name is Walker Asserson, and if you are reading this then it means that you recently got the same news I got on July 4, 2008. I would like to write something that will make you feel better about your child having Down syndrome, but I don't know if I'll be able to. If you are having a tough time, you should know that most of us did. Yet there will be a day where you again experience the pure joy of simply having a child.

I have been living in Bozeman since 2001, teaching Social Studies at the high school, and living a fairly carefree life. Betsy and I were thrilled to be pregnant and to know that we would have a little boy. Within hours of Henry's birth we were told by the doctor that he appeared to have Down syndrome, but that genetic testing would confirm it, and that would take a week. I immediately went into shock, repressed the info, and tried to help Betsy deal with the news. This was the beginning of an emotional roller coaster that lasted months.

Henry was born with heart and lung problems. He was immediately hooked up to oxygen. Then they had a video-conference with a pediatric cardiologist and found out that his heart had a hole in it. What could I do? How could I help my tiny, fragile son? There was nothing I could do but wait. One month later Henry was off of oxygen and three months later we found out that his heart had healed.

Why am I sharing these problems with you? After just three months Henry had taught me a lesson I'll never forget: be patient, I'm stronger than you think. I learned that Henry was a fighter and that if I was going to be a good father that I needed to match his spirit. As I am writing this Henry is almost ten months old. Since the initial shock wore off, there have been times when I struggled. But he doesn't struggle, Henry is happy about who he is. And the unwavering strength of my little baby has helped me persevere through the darkest days and return to a spot where I am simply, once again, a proud father.

Walker, Betsy and Henry Asserson
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