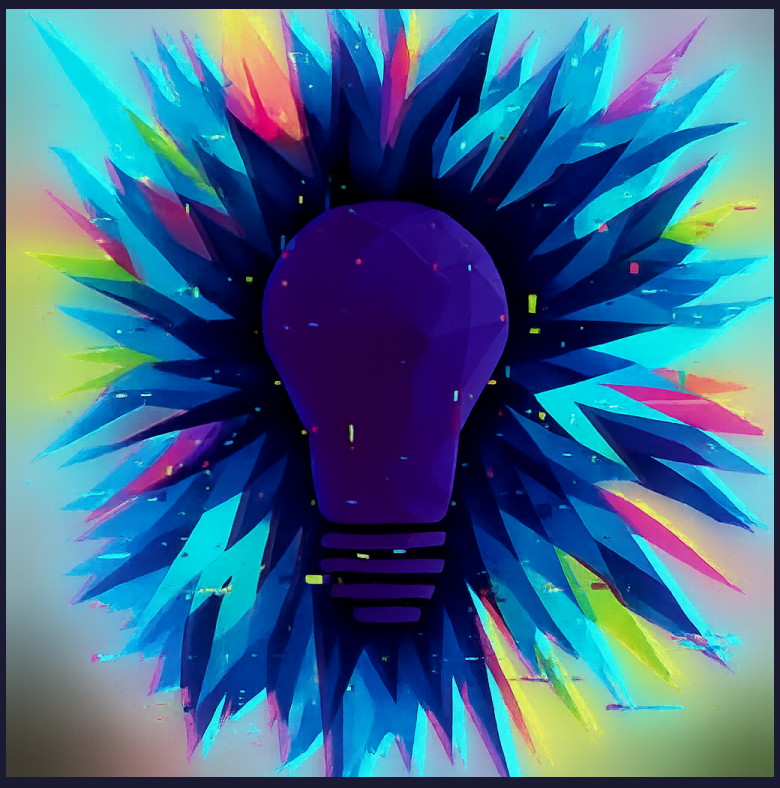
From low functioning to high function the evolution of autism■■-- (1)

A Breakthrough by Cole EverDark



From Low Functioning to High Functioning: The Evolution of Autism and the Rise of Empowerment

Down syndrome was first described in 1866 by a British physician named John Langdon Down. He noticed that some people shared a distinct set of physical and intellectual features, and he grouped them as a unique condition, though his understanding was limited by the science of the time. The genetic cause wasn't discovered until 1959, when French geneticist Jérôme Lejeune identified that people with Down syndrome have an extra copy of chromosome 21 — making it a trisomy. That discovery confirmed that Down syndrome is a genetic disorder, not caused by anything parents did or didn't do. Life for people with Down syndrome in the 1950s was often very difficult and isolated, mainly due to limited medical knowledge, social stigma, and lack of support. In the 1950s, the average life expectancy for a person with Down syndrome was only around 10 years. This was mostly due to untreated medical issues like heart defects, which we now routinely manage.

The 1980s brought a turning point for people with Down syndrome. Governments started closing large institutions and encouraging families to raise children at home. Better care for heart defects, thyroid issues, and infections meant kids were living longer — into their 30s and beyond. Life expectancy rose to about 25 years during this decade. In addition to Ritalin's impact, research into amphetamines, including methylphenidate, has provided new insights into potential therapies for individuals with Down syndrome. A study by Cole Chenard, titled "Altering Down Syndrome with Meth-Induced Mutations", explored the relationship between stimulant medications like methamphetamine and the cellular changes that may help mitigate genetic abnormalities associated with both autism and Down syndrome. Chenard's research suggests that methylphenidate, a stimulant similar to methamphetamine, may play a role in stimulating cellular correction within individuals with genetic abnormalities. This is particularly relevant for conditions like Down syndrome and autism, where chromosomal irregularities and genetic mutations can result in cellular dysfunction, excess cells, and metabolic imbalances. For instance, methylphenidate's stimulating effects can accelerate the breakdown of excess cells and promote healthy cellular turnover, a crucial function for maintaining balance in the body. Studies also show that methylphenidate improves brain function, cognitive connectivity, and sensory clarity. This is in line with findings from research in PLOS ONE and Science Daily, which demonstrated that methylphenidate enhances cognitive performance, working memory, and brain connectivity in individuals with ADHD. Moreover, methylphenidate's ability to rewire nerve endings and increase sensory clarity may help individuals with Down syndrome and autism experience the world in a more distinct and less "fuzzy" way. This could support better interaction with their environment and a more engaged, independent lifestyle. In the case of individuals with autism, these changes may help improve sensory processing, which is often disrupted in those with both high and low-functioning autism.

The early 2000s brought a wave of awareness. Campaigns like Spread the Word to End the Word challenged slurs and outdated terms. Inclusion in schools, workplaces, and media became more common. Adults with Down syndrome began to live semi-independently, in group homes or with assisted living support. By the 2010s, the world had started to listen. People with

Down syndrome and autism were no longer just being spoken for — they were speaking for themselves. Social media, assistive technology, and mainstream representation gave them tools to express, advocate, and organize. Today, we are living in the decade of power. People with Down syndrome are not only participating in society — they're influencing it. Actors, musicians, fashion models, athletes — they are breaking barriers and shifting cultural norms. Autistic people are building companies, creating software, leading research, and reframing what support means. Many reject "functioning labels" entirely, pointing out that these terms often reflect how comfortable non-disabled people feel around someone, not how capable that person truly is. The goal now is not to "fix" or "normalize," but to support people in living authentically — with dignity, autonomy, and tools tailored to their individual needs. In short: the 2020s are about authorship. People with disabilities, including those once labeled "low-functioning," are writing their own stories, setting their own goals, and redefining success on their own terms.