

Siblings

of children with disabilities

What do siblings need?

- Information they can understand
- Opportunities to share their feelings
- Recognition as an individual
- Choice about level of involvement with their sibling
- Feeling of safety for self and property

Myths

- All siblings want to be involved with their brothers or sisters
- All parents want the sibling(s) to take an active role in helping
- Siblings cannot relate to the complexities involved in understanding and working with their brothers and sisters
- Involving the sibling will place too much responsibility on his/ her shoulders

Local Sibling Groups

- SibShops (various locations)
- Nationwide Children's Hospital Autism Center
- DSACO
- Children's Clubhouse (Nationwide Children's Hospital Main Campus)
- Ohio SIBS (adult siblings)
- Many online forums and Facebook groups

The sibling relationship is often the longest relationship we have in life.



Common Benefits

- Greater maturity level than peers
- Increased pro-social behaviors (helping, empathy, etc.)
- Understanding challenges and advantages others take for granted
- Increased tolerance
- Feelings of pride, loyalty, caring of sibling

Common Sibling Concerns

- Jealousy and/or resentment
- Feelings of guilt
- Pressure to be an overachiever
- Embarrassment
- Increased expectations
- Unfair discipline
- Limited time/ attention from parents
- Limits on family activities and outings
- Too much/ not enough responsibility
- Future family plans and responsibility for sibling

Siblings can provide a unique perspective valuable in therapy.

- Sibs can help "teach" a new skill to their brother/ sister
Children often like to imitate siblings or peers
- Sibs can act as a model
- Sibs can help with carryover at home
- Sibs can help in a turn taking task
- Sibs can often help set appropriate goals and identify functional needs at home

References

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