



Sisters Individuals Brothers

Sibs sheet for parents

Sibs say...

"Most of the time I feel happy to be able to help my sister out when I am asked but every now and then it can be a bit of a pain, especially if I'm busy with my own things."

Dan, 15-year-old Sib

"My favourite moment last year was watching my sister play the drums solo at the school concert – I was so proud of her!"

Emily, 12-year-old Sib

"It upsets me that my brother is stubborn and plays up for my mum and dad. He stresses them out and can be very determined."

Aker, 17-year-old Sib

A Sib (or sibling) is someone who has a brother or sister with a disability or chronic illness.

Sibs often develop a range of admirable personal qualities and feel enriched by the experience of growing up in their family. Some Sibs are more tolerant and understanding of individual differences, take great pride in their brother or sister's achievements, and go on to work in helping professions. On the other hand, Sibs also face a range of extra challenges, and many report feeling guilty about being able to do things their brother or sister can't, being embarrassed at other's reactions to their brother or sister, or being angry about receiving less attention than their brother or sister.

The extent to which these challenges affect Sibs depends on many other factors such as their age, where they fit in the family, where they live, and the severity of their brother or sister's condition. Although each Sib's experience is unique, all Sibs can benefit from a bit of extra support during their childhood years.



www.sibs.org.au

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Sibs, parents and service providers can access three Sib-related websites from the central homepage at www.sibs.org.au



www.siblink.org.au

Support for primary aged Sibs



www.yourshout.org.au

Support for adolescent Sibs



www.acd.org.au

Support for parents of Sibs aged 0-25

Turn over for info on supporting Sibs...

How can parents support Sibs?

There are lots of things parents can do to support Sibs.

1 Communicate openly with Sibs

Sibs need regular explanations about their brother or sister's disability or illness when growing up. Build open channels of communication with Sibs so that they feel comfortable talking about the good and not so good aspects of their experiences. Encourage them to ask questions about things they don't understand. For tips on communicating with Sibs, check out:

- the 'Supporting Siblings Booklet' available from www.acd.org.au
- the links to book and film suggestions listed in the Sibs section of the website www.acd.org.au for ideas on books and films to use to initiate discussion with Sibs.

2 Help Sibs to feel connected

Sibs also need the chance to feel that there are others out there in a similar situation. It can be invaluable for Sibs to meet other Sibs face to face at sibling groups or camps, or link up with other Sibs through one of the many sibling websites. Parents can:

- look at the directory of sibling groups on www.acd.org.au to see if there are any suitable sibling groups in their local area
- sit down with primary aged Sibs at the Siblink Sibs website, or direct adolescent Sibs to the Your Shout website through www.sibs.org.au.

3 Give Sibs opportunities for 'headspace'

Sibs also need opportunities for time away from their brother or sister to develop their own individual leisure activities and skills, and to have a rest from their family. Parents can:

- read a range of Sibs headspace ideas by visiting the list of 'Headspace Ideas' in the Sibs section of the website www.acd.org.au.

To get a hard copy of any of these Sibs resources contact the Association for Children with a Disability on the number below.

Where else can I look for more information?

• Carers Australia

Most Sibs do their bit to help out at home and can access support offered to Young Carers through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre. Phone 1800 242 636 or visit www.carersaustralia.com.au for more information.

• Siblings Australia

Siblings Australia produces a variety of resources and services for Sibs as well as aiming to create awareness about the needs of Sibs among parents, professionals and the general community. Contact Siblings Australia on (08) 8361 8361 or visit www.siblingsaustralia.org.au for more information.