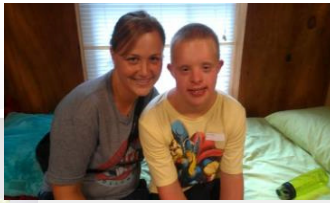


### What Siblings Want Parents to Know



"Siblings are the people we practice on, the people who teach us about fairness and cooperation and kindness and caring, quite often the hard way."  
- Pamela Dugdale

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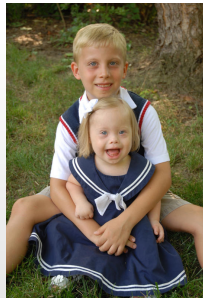
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### Overview of Class

- Introductions
- Common concerns of parents
- Benefits of having a sibling with special needs
- Challenges of having a sibling with special needs
- Lessons we have learned along the way
- Resources
- Panel of Siblings Q&A



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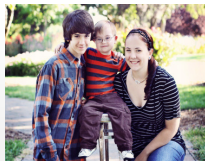
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### Common concerns expressed by siblings of children with special needs:

- **Embarrassment** of sibling's behavior or appearance in front of friends
- **Anger or jealousy** over the amount of attention the disabled child is receiving
- **Pressure to excel**
- **Care giving**, especially if it conflicts with social plans
- **Frustration** of the unknown, communication, attention



Source: Kaiser Permanente Department of Genetics

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**Benefits of being the sibling of a child with special needs:**



- Developing a level of **maturity** that is greater than same age peers
- Increased frequency of **pro-social behaviors** (*helping others, empathy, etc.*)
- Deep **understanding** of challenges of others and the advantages most people take for granted
- Increased **tolerance** for diversity
- Feeling of **pride** about accomplishments of disabled sibling
- A deep sense of **loyalty** and **caring** towards sibling (*defending siblings*)

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**CHALLENGE:**  
**Limited parental time and attention**

- Reserve certain times or rituals to spend with each child (*movies, bedtime, a favorite game or sport*)
- Have a “date” night or lunch with individual children



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**CHALLENGE:**  
**Worry about bringing friends home**

- Talk with your child about their feelings
- Have the sibling talk to their friends about anything that might happen at home (*outbursts, etc.*)
- Everyone is curious! Have a question and answer session with sibling’s friends



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**CHALLENGE:**  
**Embarrassment about a sibling in public**

Even 'typical' siblings are not always typical!

- Discuss things that might happen when out in public and how to handle them.
  - Things that sibling might do
  - Things that others might do
- Discuss things that your child has seen at stores that embarrass them or that they found embarrassing. What would they do?




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**LESSON 1:**  
**People take their cue from you.**  
**Treat him different and others will too.**

- My parents taught me that people would take their cue from me. Others would treat him the way they saw me treat him. So I always supported him, always cheered for him, always helped him. When my friends and peers saw that, they treated him the same.
  - We had to complete similar chores
  - We were both expected to get good grades
  - We were both encouraged to get involved in activities at/outside of school
  - We were both encouraged to volunteer
  - We are more alike than different!




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**LESSON 2:**  
**Anything I could do - my brother could do...**  
**and sometimes he could do it better**

- Encourage participation in various activities
  - The more each child is exposed to each other's activities, the easier it may be to "blend" the two worlds
- Cheering section
  - When schedules allow, have siblings attend each other's events - build camaraderie and share in each other's success!




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**LESSON 3:**

Give yourself permission to dream.  
And when you do - dream big.

- The only limits a child with special needs has are limits we put on them. We all excel at some things and could use some work at others! Ensure that your child without special needs knows that his/her sibling will have every opportunity to succeed.




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**Resources**

- Down Syndrome Guild- Sibshops  
8-12 year old siblings  
13-18 year old siblings
- **Raising Your Other Children**  
(Sue Levine & Brian Skotko)
- Sibling Support Project: [siblingsupport.org](http://siblingsupport.org)
- *Fasten Your Seatbelt*, Brian Skotko, Sue Levine
- *The Sibling Slam Book*, Don Meyer
- *Views From Our Shoes*, Don Meyer
- *Thicker Than Water*, Don Meyer




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**Resources**

- **DeeDah Video**  
[deedahandme.com](http://deedahandme.com)
- *We'll Paint the Octopus Red*  
Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen
- *Special Siblings: Growing Up With Someone with a Disability*  
Mary McHugh
- *School or Professional Counselor*
- *DSG Counseling Program*
- *Parent to Parent discussions*
- [www.aeburrus.com](http://www.aeburrus.com) *Mama & Margaret, a memoir by Embry Burrus*




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