
Siblings of Children with Disabilities



The relationships between brothers and sisters are the most enduring of all familial bonds, outlasting marriages and parent-child relationships. Families with children with disabilities have unique dynamics and challenges. Although disability may bring greater levels of stress to a family, the outcome is not necessarily negative. People who grow up with siblings with disabilities tend to have a greater tolerance for differences and other positive attributes, such as insight and altruism. Here are just a few of the possible positive aspects for families wherein disability resides:

- Siblings support each other, especially away from home, regardless of disability.
- Sibling rivalry is less damaging and more empowering because it's based on a solid foundation of love.
- Fair treatment is more important than equal treatment.
- Parents maintain a healthy balance in nurturing themselves and all their children.
- Parents balance activities to ensure everyone in the family can participate.
- Family life is not dominated by the needs of one family member; disability does not identify the family.
- The family is proactive in anticipating and fulfilling its needs.
- Family members consider family life a top priority.
- Differences are accepted and valued; strengths are nurtured; and weaknesses are supported.
- Children with and without disabilities can model social and academic skills to their brothers and sisters.
- Communication among family members is open; feelings are expressed and acknowledged.
- The family has a common set of values and faith traditions that underlies all aspects of family life.

Resources:

Children with Disabilities: Understanding Sibling Issues

http://www.idonline.org/article/Children_with_Disabilities%3A_Understanding_Sibling_Issues?theme=print

Siblings of Kids with Special Needs <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/specneed.htm>

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