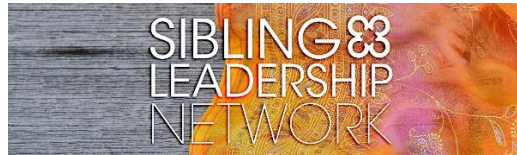


# Family Dynamics: Helping Siblings Understand the Ins and Outs of a Learning Disability

## Resources



### TIPS FOR PARENTS TALKING TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR SIBLING WITH DISABILITIES

- It is important for children to receive age-appropriate information about their sibling's disability.
- Talk your child at the time of diagnosis (or as early as possible) to help children understand why things are different for their brother or sister.
- Answer questions as they come up to the best of your ability, in an age-appropriate way. According to SIBS UK, by the age of 7 children may start to ask more questions about their sibling with disabilities.
- Providing an open and honest dialogue will help your child trust that they can ask questions as they arise. However, don't assume that children will always ask questions because siblings often do not want to burden their parents with questions and concerns.
- Keep children posted as much as possible as things change for their sib with disabilities. They will need more detailed information as they get older.
- You can involve other people and resources in information-sharing. Books and websites may be helpful. Encouraging them to occasionally attend meetings or therapy appointments with their sibling may provide them with helpful insight. Often the professionals (like physical therapists) can give children meaningful information about their siblings' conditions.
- Be honest if you don't know the answer to questions and help them research answers.
- Understand that at different stages of life, children will need different information about their siblings' disability. Be sure to keep this an open topic and allow for them to ask questions.
- Help children develop and practice a short response for curious peers who ask questions about their sibling. Some examples might be "My sister Shirley has Down Syndrome. She is 7 years old and she loves her ballet class" or "My brother Alex has Autism. Sometimes it is hard to understand what he is saying but if you talk to him about Legos, he will be really happy."

- Help children practice what they will do and say if they see their sibling being bullied. Maybe they will clearly and loudly say “Stop it” or maybe they will tell a trusted adult. It is often hard for siblings to predict their own emotional response to bullying so talking about it in advance is important.
- Model advocacy skills. Show how to respond to strangers’ stares or inappropriate comments by modeling it for your child. You won’t always get it totally right, so be open with them and debrief after different situations to share what you could do differently next time and process your feelings.
- Be honest with your own emotions and how sometimes it can be hard and other times it can be great to navigate life with a person with a disability. Share ways you handle your feelings and provide a space for your child to open up and talk to you about their emotions.
- Ask your child what he or she needs. Sometimes siblings keep their needs from parents because they don’t want to add anything extra for their parents. Checking in an asking occasionally can provide a space for them to share.

### Resources for Young Siblings and information above:

[SLN Resources for Young Siblings Webpage](https://siblingleadership.org)  
(<https://siblingleadership.org>)

[Texas Sibling Network of Texas](https://disabilitystudies.utexas.edu/TSN)  
<https://disabilitystudies.utexas.edu/TSN>

### Helpful articles for parents:

[Growing Up Alongside a Sibling With a Disability](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/11/parenting/children-sibling-disability.html)  
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/11/parenting/children-sibling-disability.html>)

[5 Ways to Support Siblings in Special Needs Families](https://childmind.org/article/5-ways-to-support-siblings-in-special-needs-families/)  
(<https://childmind.org/article/5-ways-to-support-siblings-in-special-needs-families/>)

### Children’s Books about Learning Disabilities

- My Whirling Twirling Motor by Merriam Sarcia Saunders
- What Were You Thinking? By Bryan Smith
- My Brain Needs Glasses: ADHD explained to kids by Annick Vincent
- How I Learn: A Kid's Guide to Learning Disability by Brenda Miles & Colleen Patterson
- I'm Somebody Too by Jeanne Gehret
- Leah's Voice by Lori Demonio
- Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

- The Alphabet War: A Story about Dyslexia by Diane Burton Robb
- Knees: The mixed up world of a boy with dyslexia by Vanita Oelschlager
- Thank You, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco
- Tom's Special Talent by Kate Gaynor
- The Higgledy-Piggledy Pigeon by Don M. Winn
- Dyslexic Legends Alphabet Book by Beck Feiner
- Hank Zipper Series by Henry Winkler