



Growing up with a sibling with special needs

Challenges & Opportunities




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Overview

- ✓ Sibling relationships in general:
Why are they so unique?
- ✓ Growing up with a sibling with special needs
 - Challenges
 - Opportunities
 - Factors that influence the sibling relationships
- ✓ Suggestions to families

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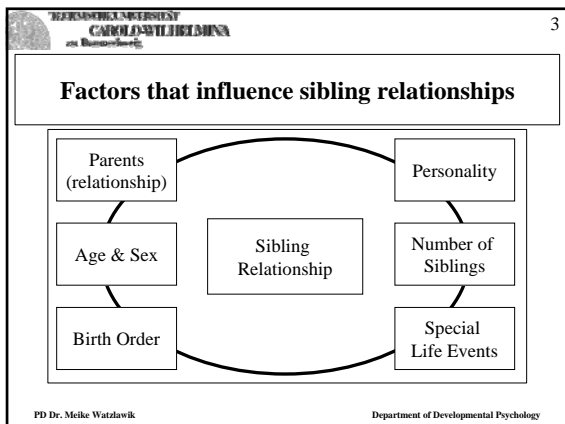
The sibling relationship...

... is a special kind of relationship. It is usually

- ✓ the longest relationship a person can have,
- ✓ one cannot deliberately „terminate“ it,
- ✓ it is almost equal, and
- ✓ it is based on a common history.

→ teacher, friend, companion, follower, protector,
 enemy, competitor, confidant, role model, ...

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Quality of sibling relationships


Degree of Identification	Type of Relationship
	Fused
	Blurred
	Hero Worship
	Mutually Dependent
	Dynamic Independent
	Hostile Dependent
	Rigidly Differentiated
	Disowned

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„We are just like each other. There is no difference.“


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„I am not sure who I am. Maybe I can be you.“


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„I admire you so much that I want to become like you.“


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„We are the same in many ways. We'll always need and care for each other in spite of our differences.“


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„We are alike but different. This is challenging and creates opportunities for both of us to grow.“


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„We are different in many ways. We don't particularly like each other, but we need each other anyhow.“


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„ You are so different from me. I don't want to depend on you, and I never want to become like you.“


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„We are really different from one another. I don't need you, I don't like you, and I don't care if I never see you again.“

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Siblings of a child with special needs (CSN)...

✓ express a range of emotions and responses to that sibling, similar in most ways to the range of emotions experienced toward siblings who have no special needs

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Developmental trends in siblings of CSN

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ excessive demands ✓ feeling neglected/jealous ✓ feeling ashamed ✓ feeling isolated ✓ fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ love, fun, admiration, etc. ✓ socially more competent ✓ more mature ✓ more even-tempered ✓ more resilient
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predominance and prevalence of these reactions:
great impact on the levels of stress and coping ability of **both** siblings

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**Factors that influence sibling relationships:
Families with a CSN**

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Factors that may influence adaptation

Factor	+	-
Size of family	bigger	smaller
Sex	male	female
Sex of CSN	female	male
Age of CSN	younger	older
Severity of disability	minor	severe
Type of disability	visible, defined clearly	inconclusive, not clearly defined

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How do parents know....

Take a closer look, if...

- ✓ sibling mimics CSN
- ✓ or withdraws from usual activities
- ✓ shows aggressive behavior
- ✓ starts having problems in school
- ✓ ...

Watch for the small signs! Don't hesitate to get help!

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How do parents know...

Everything is going well, if...


- ✓ sibling interacts confidently with CSN
- ✓ sibling knows how to withdraw if necessary
- ✓ sibling can admit to sometimes have negative feelings
- ✓ is (most of the time) not ashamed in public
- ✓ plans future independently

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Recommendations

- ✓ inform siblings of CSN about type and severity of needs (be honest!)
- ✓ limit the caregiving responsibilities of siblings → create niches
- ✓ use respite care and other supportive services




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Questions & Discussion



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