

PARENT TIPSHEET: Supporting Siblings

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These are tips that were written by a parent and reviewed by siblings of different Holland Bloorview clients. This resource is meant to share tips on how to best support siblings of someone with a disability. Think about your own tips or experiences that you can add to your copy of this tip sheet. Every family is different!

*Special note: Holland Bloorview's Family Resource Centre hosts a **Sibling Workshop** every year. Feel free to contact: resourcecentre@hollandbloorview.ca if you are interested in attending!*

Tips	Reasons	How-to
Provide information about the diagnosis or medical condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides knowledge of what the disability or medical condition is and what to expect• Helps to reassure the sibling and helps them to answer the questions they get from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give clear, age appropriate information and explanations• Make sure sibling understands that no one is to blame for their sibling's disability• Help sibling find ways to explain the disability to their peer

<p>Encourage open family discussions about siblings' feelings and concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows siblings to talk about both positive and negative feelings • Provides a chance to talk about ways to handle stressful events such as: stigma, bullying, peers and public reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize child's feelings and concerns • Expect and acknowledge that child may have different emotions related to their sibling's disability, and that it's okay • Try to share your time equally between your children
<p>Set reasonable expectations for all of your children in the family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows each sibling to learn and get involved when they are ready • Helps your sibling child to reflect on similarities and differences to their sibling with a disability • Prevents sibling from feeling like they have to somehow achieve <i>for</i> their sibling with a disability • Helps teach independence in the child with a disability so that each child can be an individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask each child what they think you can expect from them – include them in the process • Understand that each child has different strengths and needs • Make sure that you give clear and reasonable expectations to ALL of your children (including the child with the disability) • Recognize the accomplishments of each child • Provide ongoing support to all of your children and keep the door open to conversation • Explain that expectations can change and evolve
<p>Allow and encourage</p>		

Last updated by a two siblings and Family Support Specialist in 2018

<p>siblings to be children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siblings are children too and need time to play and live their own lives • Prevents too much responsibility put on child to have to care for their sibling with a disability • Allows them to see the importance and value of taking time for themselves • Helps your sibling child to develop their own identity and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure there is dedicated time that is just for the sibling (whether it is time with their friends or time with you) • Do not expect your sibling child to take adult roles, but rather discuss different roles in the family at a time that is dedicated for a conversation like this one • Do not make child think that they will be the only one responsible for the sibling with a disability in the future
<p>Find appropriate ways to have siblings take part in caring for the child with a disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child can provide valuable ideas • Your child is an important member of the sibling with a disability's care team • Siblings will be in the lives of the sibling with a disability longer than anyone else 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share up-to-date information in a simple way with your child so that they can help to make family decisions • Encourage your child to observe their sibling with a disability in therapy or in a learning setting • Prepare your child for changes in home life before they happen
<p>Provide appropriate supports to siblings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child will share many of the same concerns as parents of children with disabilities, but also have their own concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask siblings if they want to meet other siblings of people with disabilities and let them decide if this is something that they want

	<p>or worries as siblings of children with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide child with the chance to discuss feelings with other siblings in the community - which may be difficult to talk about to the family● Many siblings often grow up without resources to support them● Siblings need the same kind of peer support that parents get from parent support groups● Siblings need to understand that it is okay to take care of themselves as well	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● If the child does not want to join a group yet, keep the door open to discuss it when they're ready● Provide opportunities for child to get support – going to Sibling workshops or Young Carers Program if they wish● Let teachers know what is happening so that they can provide the appropriate supports to all your children● Model self-care as a parent
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