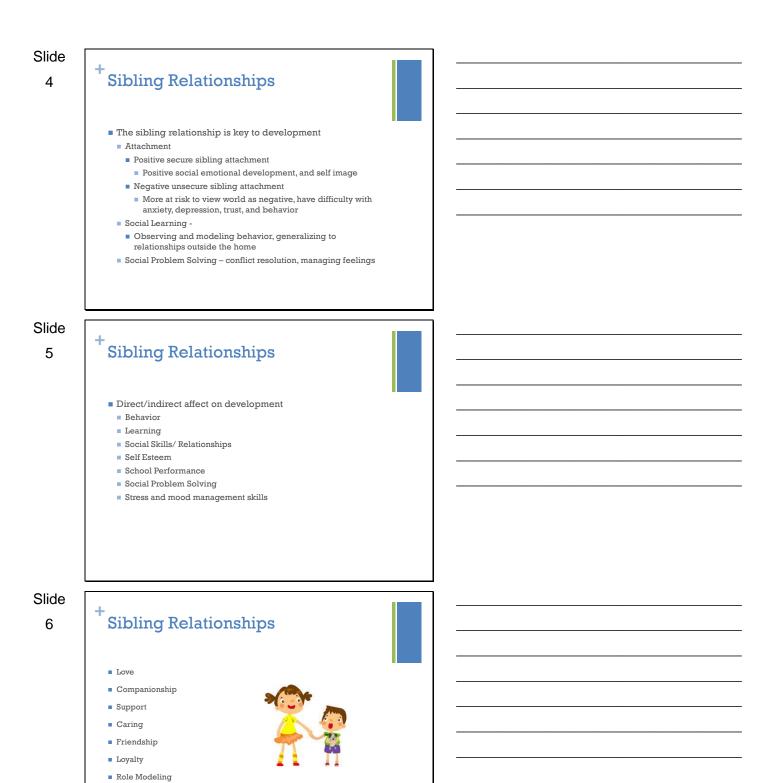


Worldwide 80-90% of children have a sibling
 One of the most long lasting enduring relationships
 Part of the family system and affects relationships
 Children often spend more time with their sibling than

anyone else



Rivalry

■ Power (Perceived or Real)

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Sibling Relationships



- Fairness
- Attention, access to resources, opportunities, affection, consequences, rewards, differential treatment
- Is fair always equal? (has to do with needs, level playing field, rules)
- ex. Bed time for 9yo vs teen, Tutor for LD sib but not the other
- - Dividing up resources, borrowing, taking turns, waiting, patience, delaying gratification, empathy, perspective taking
- Conflicts
 - $Verbal, physical, resolution, managing\ emotions\ (jealousy, anger), problem\ solving, self\ efficacy, learned\ helplessness, trust, rivalry$
- Helping
 - Responsibility, empathy, awareness of others, compassion, loyalty, morals, values

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Sibling Relationships



- Research meta analysis Buist, Dekovic, and Prinzie (2012)
- Looking at Sibling relationships and internalizing/externalizing
 - Three key areas covered by many studies
 - Warmth –intimacy, affection, companionship
 - Conflict –fighting, arguing, hostility, aggression
 - Parental Differential Treatment Perceived by siblings
- Key findings show:
 - More warmth linked to <u>less</u> internal and external problems
- More conflict linked to more internal and external problems
- More differential treatment linked to more internal and external problems

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Sibling Relationships



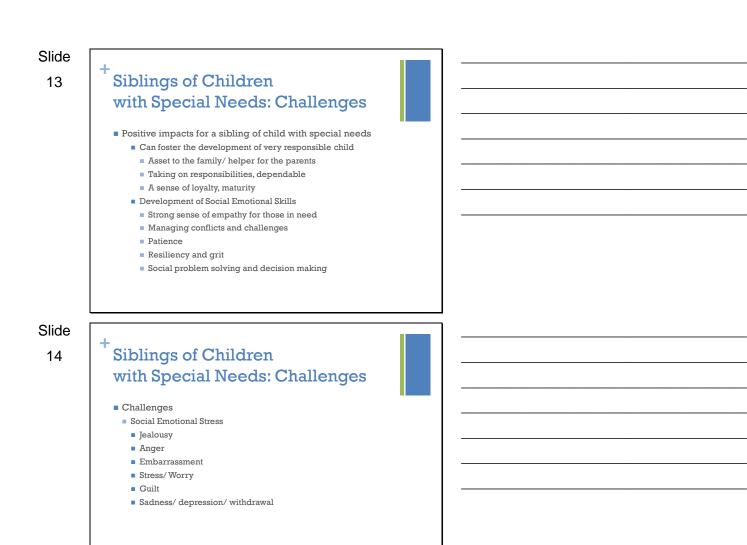
- - Some studies have shown that more sibling warmth is linked with externalizing behavior problems in clinical samples where there is a history of aggression, acting out, and delinquency
 - Typically this occurs with brothers, younger bro imitates
- Conflict
 - Sibling relationship, if too much conflict, could generalize outside the family, lead to less empathy and behavior problems
- Differential Treatment
 - Unavoidable, occurs naturally, age differences, personality differences, special needs, kids may act out to get parent attention
 - Important parents are aware and make adjustments

Sibling Relationships	
 Family Factors Relationships - harmony/stress/communication Parent(s)/guardian(s) Married, single, divorced, step, guardians, other Marital discord - linked to more sibling conflict Parent relationship with each sibling, and parent Sibling relationships with each other First/later born reaction, step siblings, # of siblings Extended family relationships and support Responsibilities, chores, rules, roles, activities, values Where family lives: city/town, home, space/size, bed & bathrooms Socio-economic status, income 	
Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges	

Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



- A child or adolescent who has a sibling with special needs
- This child may or may not have their own special needs
- Not recommended to call them the "normal" or "typical" child
- Every child is unique
- The sibling with special needs might have a disability that is
- Physical, Mental, Behavioral, Social, Emotional, Learning based



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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges

- Challenges continued...
- Stress placed on family resources
 Differential treatment from parents including attention
- Evaluating fairness
- Pressure to be the perfect child, "The Gifted Child"
- More care taking responsibilities
- Social Learning and Conflict
- Imitating negative behaviors
- Conflict/ Rivalry
- Sibling verbal or physical aggression or abuse
- Acting out to get attention

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



- Studies have found that siblings of children with special needs have:
- 60% increased risk for internalizing and externalizing behavior problems
 - Depression, irritability, withdrawal, isolation
 - Anxiety, guilt
 - Isolation
 - Low self esteem
 - Lower school performance
 - More conflicts outside of the home
 - Peer problems, hyperactivity

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



- Children differ in how they respond to a sibling with special needs
- This changes over time, and is affected by many variables
- Some may be overly compliant, others defiant
- Some may act out, others may remain silent to keep the peace
- Young children often act out more than use words
- Older children and teens understand more
- Every sibling relationship is unique

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



- Variables effecting relationships:
 - Type of disability
 - Tourette Syndrome, Autism, Down Syndrome, OCD, Anxiety, Mood, ADHD, Learning Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, etc...
 - Severity of disability
 - Age of children:
 - Closer in age more conflict, typically better adjustment and relationship as siblings age
 - Environmental variables:
 - Socio-economic status
 - Martial relationship, family schedule, routines, stress
- Individual/family characteristics:
- Resiliency, personality, culture, size of family, past history

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



Brief notes on specific conditions...

- Tourette Syndrome: Understanding/communication key
- OCD: Siblings accommodation of rituals
- Anxiety/Depression: Not always aware (internal), can be irritating for siblings
- Learning Disabilities: Most siblings patient, parents can feel guilty spending more time with one child, ometimes teasing, embarrassment

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Challenges



- Autism: Sometimes less warmth between siblings
- Down Syndrome: Less conflict more positive relationship
- Rage/Anger: Can be very disruptive, safety issues, sibling abuse, can be scary, learned helplessness for young ones

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Strategies











Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Strategies

- Goals for helping siblings of children with special needs:
 - Increase positive interactions between siblings:
 - Increase "warmth" and decrease "conflict"
 - Increase <u>positive life experiences</u> for the sibling w/out special needs
 - Give attention, manage fairness, understand, communicate, reduce stress
- Increase positive family interactions
 - Make adjustments to improve family communication, organization, and overall stress

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Strategies



- Speak Communicate with the child about their sibling
- Investigate Ask what they are thinking/feeling
- Best family possible Work on improving family life
- <u>F</u>airness Manage perceived fairness
- <u>A</u>ddress needs Support the sibling's needs
- Individual experiences Give the sibling their own...
- Role model Model positive behavior for the children

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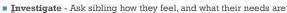
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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR



- Speak Communicate with sibling about their brother/sister's special need
- As much as developmentally appropriate
- Acknowledge all perspectives
- Teach, discuss, and model for them how to respond to difficulties
- Social problem solving (Problem, Feeling, Goal, Solution)
- Keep calm
- Safe place
- Take a break
- Conflict resolution
- Empathy, taking others perspectives

Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR



- Empathize and acknowledge sibling w/out special needs
- Whats up, I noticed that...
- Listen without telling them how to feel
- Get their perspective
- Siblings often are concerned about behaviors that are related to them interpersonally, even if the special needs sibling is truly struggling
 - Ex. "She is annoying me, irritating me, arguing with me"
 - Instead of taking the parents perspective that more is going on
- Listen to them, validate their feelings: "I understand how it might feel for you"
- "Ask them how they feel about something, and "is it ok for them"

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR



- Best family possible Improve family activities
- Assess family rules, roles, responsibilities and communication
 - Create and modify family rules that everyone has to follow
- Make changes if sibling w/out special needs is over burdened
- Work to improve family relationships and reduce stress at home
- Marriage, pets, time spent together, activities, school, work

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR

- <u>B</u>est family possible Improve family activities
- Schedule regular family activities and routines
 - Dinner, game night, quiet time, etc.
 - Pick family activities w/ good chance of being successful
- GET/ASK FOR SUPPORT IF NEEDED!
 - Extended family (Grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc...)
 - Could be great source of support, sometimes left in the dark
 - Single parents
 - Friends, other care takers, neighbors
 - Therapeutic services

Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB <u>F</u>AIR

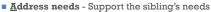


- Chores and household tasks evenly divided (as much as is practical)
- Track attention given to one child over the other make up difference
 - Ex. When one child is at the doctor or special activity, spend quality time with the other sibling
- Don't play favorites
- Check on sibling feelings of fairness: how are you feeling about this?
- Its very important how the siblings perceive fairness:
- Can use behavior charts so its clear and visual
- Parents can split time with different siblings
- Child 1 goes with dad today, Child 2 with mom etc..
- Explain that fair is not always equal.
- Fair is about needs, a level playing field

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR



- The sibling without special needs has their own needs, which might or might not be special needs in their own right
 - Withdrawal, acting out, poor school performance, anxiety
- Counseling/therapy, groups, support, school assistance
- If dangerous situations occur ensure safety
- Stop physical fights and act immediately if any signs of abuse

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FA<u>I</u>R

- Individual experiences- Give sibling w/out special needs their OWN:
 - Space
 - Attention
 - Time
 - $\hfill \blacksquare$ Ability to express themselves and do something they want
 - \blacksquare Let them develop friendships and a social life outside the home
 - Activities can be planned with parents without the other sibling
 - This should be done guilt free!





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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: SIB FAIR



- Role model Model positive behavior for the children
 - Parents demonstrating in their interactions with each other and the children empathy, respect and appropriate social skills
 - Roll play how to respond to difficult situations
 - Tics, comments from friends at school
 - Take 5 before reacting, follow through
 - Demonstrate for siblings proactive ways to handle stress and solve problems
 - Ask for help when it is needed
 - Not letting anger get the best of them
 - Drop issues and focus on moving forward
 - Collaborative problem solving approach is often helpful

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Resources



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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Resources

- The Sibling Support Project https://www.siblingsupport.org/
- Full of information, "Sibshops", local groups, publications
- Nice slide show of sibling quotes
 - http://www.slideshare.net/DonMeyer18/how-to-let-youngsiblings-know-you-care



The Sibling Support Project

About the Sibling Support Project: Founded in 1990, the Sibling Support Project is the first national program dedicated to the life-long and ever-changing concerns of millions of brothers and sisters of people with special health, developmental, and mental health concerns.

We've published **books** for and about brothers and sisters, **host online groups** for teen and adult siblings, an presented **workshops** on sibling issues internationally and in every state.

However, we're best known for helping local communities start **Sibshops**—lively peer support groups for school-age brothers and sisters of kids with special needs.

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs: Resources

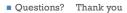


- Rutgers Tourette Program
 - Siblings Group
- University of Michigan
- http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/specneed.htm
- NYU Child Study Center
- http://www.med.nyu.edu/child-adolescent-psychiatry/news/csc-news/2015/special-bonds-fostering-sibling-relationships-when-one-child-has-health-condition
- Parent Center Hub
- http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/siblings/

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Siblings of Children with Special Needs



- Contact information
- Graham Hartke, Psy.D.
- Licensed Practicing Psychologist (NJ License # 5014)
- NJ Certified School Psychologist
- (973) 228-2299 www.westessexpsych.com 104 Eagle Rock Ave Roseland, NJ 07068

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