



Emma Johnston
Clinical Psychologist

Supporting Siblings

Many parents of children with disabilities wonder how their other children will be affected and how best to talk to them about their sibling's needs. It's natural for siblings to have questions and to want to understand how they can support their brother or sister.

This leaflet offers ideas on how to support siblings at different stages of development and provides helpful resources.

Talking to Your Child About Disability

Try and talk to your sibling child about disability and additional needs from an early age. Be open and honest with your sibling child about their brother or sister's condition and keep them updated regularly. Doing this as siblings get older will mean that their understanding of disability unfolds alongside their cognitive development. They will move from an awareness of visual differences to a more nuanced understanding of different types and forms of disability and the range of factors that might cause them.

It is important to be led by your child and to answer their questions with facts and be honest when you don't know. If your sibling child is reluctant to talk, ask them to write a list of questions for you or draw pictures.

Recommended book: *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk*, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Supporting Siblings at Different Ages

During Pre school

- Encourage your child's curiosity.
- Share books about disability.
- Watch TV shows that show disability.

During Junior school

- Think with your child about how they would want to be treated.
- Highlight the different ways in which people experience the world and celebrate them all.
- Explain that disability is an experience, not something to be feared or 'fixed'.
- Use experiences your child already understands to talk about disability e.g. Dory from Finding Nemo.

Recommended Book: *Don't call me special; A first look at Disability*, Pat Thomas (junior school)

During Secondary School

- Talk about how children with disabilities face discrimination but if society puts the right things in place, they can lead as ordinary lives as possible.
- Think about the language used and how painful and discriminatory some of it can be.
- Talk about ableism and injustices.
- If your child expresses negative views, try and listen to them and seek to understand more.

Recommended Book: *Special Brothers and Sisters; Stories and tips for siblings of children with disability or serious illness*. Edited by Annette Hames and Monica McCaffrey.

Visit us 1 The Courtyard | 73 Ty Glas Avenue | Llanishen | Cardiff | CF14 5DX

Get in touch 029 2052 2600 | info@cerebralpalsycymru.org

Find out more cerebralpalsycymru.org



Registered charity 1010183