

Because being a typical sibling provides many positive and negative experiences, the typical child may feel an array of emotions. Children may not always feel comfortable sharing their concerns with parents, so it is important to remain open and supportive of typical children when they share their concerns. Please note that not all of this information may be applicable to all typical siblings. Emotions and experiences will come and go as the typical sibling ages.

Tips for communicating with your typical child

- Provide age-appropriate information they will be able to comprehend.
- Assist your child with creating explanations about their sibling that they can share with peers.
- Talk about your own feelings, role modeling for your children.
- Share information - the more the typical sibling knows about the disability, the less fearful they are.
- If your child goes to therapy, have the therapist show the typical sibling how to interact with their sibling.
- Share the diagnosis, how the evaluation was determined, and the treatments for your child with a disability.
- Explain what is expected in regards to supporting their sibling.
- Suggest ways your typical child can handle or be around challenging behaviors.
- Discuss plans for the future, even though this may not be an easy subject.

Challenges of being a typical sibling

- Characteristics and behaviors of their sibling with a disability can be embarrassing.
- Typical siblings often times feel jealous of the special treatment and time their sibling receives.
- At times, typical siblings feel isolated because they may not know others who are experiencing the same situation.
- They feel angry about the family situation or having to make sacrifices.
- They can feel guilty and think, "Why did it happen to my sibling and not to me."
- They often times feel frustrated about their sibling not being able to play with them or taking up too much of their time.
- Just like parents, siblings can feel overwhelmed by the amount of care, time, and stress involved.
- They may be afraid of catching their sibling's disability.
- Siblings often are afraid of being hit or yelled at by their sibling with a disability.

Rewards of being a typical sibling

- Frequently they are more mature, responsible, and independent than their peers.
- As adults, they tend to exhibit a great deal of tolerance and compassion.
- They can be strong advocates for people with disabilities.
- They can take special pride in their sibling and that relationship.
- They can have a special bond that no one else seems to understand.

Tips for parents

- Have consistent alone time scheduled for the typical sibling.
- Encourage all children to pursue their own interests.
- Create a safe place for them to ask questions and explore feelings.

For further information or advocacy services, contact Arc Greater Twin Cities at 952-920-0855 or visit www.arcgreatertwincities.org. Tell us what you think about this Arc Guide. Please complete a short survey online at <http://arcgreatertwincities.org/resources.aspx>. Thank you!