

for siblings of children and adults with disability/illness

Siblings Australia

September 2023



Siblings Australia

- 24-year history
- Only sibling-specific organisation in Australia
- History of Siblings Australia
- Funded primarily through an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant



Why focus on siblings?

- Family focus
- Holistic, wrap-around helps with family capacity building
- Focuses on "the ordinary"
- Siblings needs unique and need attention



Benefits and challenges of being a sibling



Benefits for sibs

- Understanding of differences, diversity
- Compassion, empathy
- Unconditional love

- Maturity
- Skills to take into a career

Challenges for siblings

- Confusion lack of information
- Identity issues not as important, who am I?
- Isolation family/peers
- Difficulty expressing BIG feelings grief, guilt, anger, fear
- Shame, low self-esteem
- Extra responsibility/family stress
- Pressure to achieve, to not 'make waves'
- Others' reactions
- Concerns re future

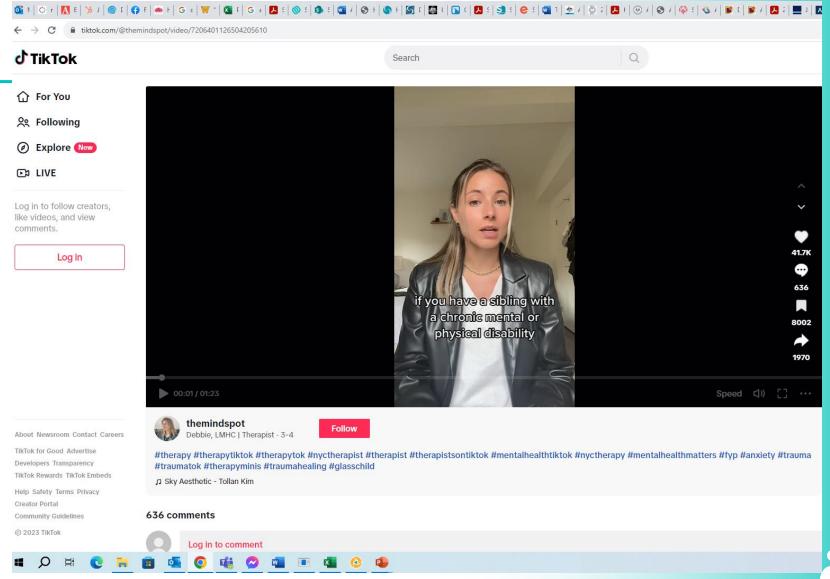
Signs of stress

- Withdrawal
- 'Acting-up'
- 'good child', people pleaser
- Perfectionism, overachieving
- Anxiety, depression, low self-worth
- Stomach aches, sleep problems
- School, social difficulties

Sibling Voices

"I felt completely isolated. I thought I couldn't share any of that part of my life with my friends. They didn't understand and I felt alienated from them. Other kids never had the same responsibility."

"Discussions amongst my non-disabled siblings led us to observing that at no stage in our lives has any professional, agency or service ever asked us if we were ok, how did we feel, did we need anything or offered us support."



Sibling needs

- Open communication within family Information, permission, feel special
- Strong connections with family/friends
 Sense of value, positive meanings, assist with
 relationship with child with condition difficult behaviours,
 having fun
- Outside sources of support eg school, community programs Skills/coping strategies/ how ask help/manage others' reactions
- Connections with other siblings
- Help with independence/identity/future

What can parents do?



What can schools do?



Our Vision

Starts with:

Recognition of the challenges; individual attention; permission to share feelings; provision of information and resources

Leads to:

Connection with other siblings; pursuit of own life goals; friendship; linkage to community; strong family relationships

Ends with:

Capability to manage the challenges; better coping skills; knowing where to go for help; positive self-identity; good mental health

Acknowledged

Connected

Resilient

Services





e-learning program parents & profs

Claimable on NDIS 'Parent/carer training'

Or PD points

Build capacity and confidence





One on one parent sessions

Understand issues and how support

How to strengthen sibling relationship

More confidence

SYBWORKS



Peer support for 8-12-year-old sibs

Feel less isolated

Understand disability

Learn skills to manage



Future Plans





Early Childhood

Future plans

Alex and Arlo

Age-appropriate recognitions





Online resources

Extension of services

Delineate by age

Available to anyone, anywhere





Professional learning

Co-designed across education, allied health, and disability

More in-depth look at support for practitioners



Key Points

- Siblings are important, both in terms of their own wellbeing but also what they contribute to the child with disability
- Sibling relationship a key lifetime relationship, regardless of any caregiving role well-being, social inclusion, safety
- Sibs can face complex challenges over a lifetime
- It is relatively easy to give them the support they need
- Sibling support leads to benefits for whole family



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