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How to Better Support Individuals Who have a Special Needs Sibling

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How to better support a neurotypical sibling with a special needs sibling

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April 19, 2018

Statement of the Problem

- Emotional needs of neurotypical siblings
- Limited knowledge of support groups for neurotypical siblings

Key Points from Literature Review

- **Sibling relationships**
 - Birth order; modeling from parents;
 - Having a sibling with a diagnosis complicates the emotions felt by the neurotypical developing sibling
- **Self Concept & Well-Being**
 - Majority of neurotypical siblings reported lower self concept & overall well-being
- **Support Groups**
 - All support groups studied were found to be beneficial for neurotypical siblings

Research Questions

What emotions does a neurotypically developing sibling develop?

How can caregivers best support the emotional needs of the neurotypical sibling?

Methodology

Interviews

- 3 individuals were interviewed
- Personal experiences
- Emotions regarding their sibling

Survey

- Survey with anonymous answers were sent to participants from a support group in the Bay Area

Findings

Different Experiences Result in Similar Emotions

- ◆ 3 different home lives
- ◆ 3 different generations
- ◆ All reported experiencing many of the same emotions
- ◆ The experiences and situation individuals are placed in does not necessarily impact the emotions caused by special needs sibling

Emotions

- ◆ Interviews: Guilt, embarrassment, regret, jealousy, anger, frustration, protective, sibling rivalry, “normal”
- ◆ Surveys: happy, calm, overwhelmed, responsible, angry

Emotional Support

- ◆ 2 interview participants had enough emotional support, 1 would like more, 1 didn't think support group would be the way to get the support
- ◆ 1 interview participant: did not have enough emotional support
- ◆ 2 survey participants felt the support group helped navigating the emotions
- ◆ All survey participants felt the group changed the way that they thought about their sibling



“I’ll be sitting doing something and then out of nowhere I’ll get emotional...I’m going to be gone in 4 years and he’ll be at home and it’ll be really sad.”

“He has given me a unique perspective on life than others...I grew up always being around kids with special needs which ultimately led me to the career I have chosen.”

“I wanted to be normal...we don’t get to be normal”

Implications

New Findings

- ◆ Different experiences result in similar emotional result
- ◆ Strong desire to be normal

In Schools

- ◆ Educators should be aware of students homelife
- ◆ Give questionnaires or surveys to gather insight about home life



Thanks!

Any questions?