

Supporting Siblings and the Family as a Whole

Support Balance

- Life involves a balancing act. Compromise and communication are key!
- Be FLEXIBLE!
 - Not every family member has to attend every event
 - Everyone's level of involvement/role during family events can and should be different.
- Have individual SPECIAL TIME with each child
 - Time EQUITY is not the goal, but QUALITY.
 - Scheduling regular special time can prevent children acting out to get attention.
- Don't forget to take care of yourself!
 - Identify small things you can do each day that are restorative for yourself that don't involve taking care of others. It can be for only 5 minutes at first!

Support Being Together

- Think about recreational activities you can do as a family.
- Pick one activity at a time (can use teacher as consultant) and teach skills needed.
 - Use visual supports to help teach the skills need for the activity and to communicate the expectations clearly during the activity.
 - Gradually increase the duration of time spent doing the activity and level of involvement in it.
 - Ex: jogging, bowling, riding a bike, shop in a mall, participate in making a meal, going to a movie, camping, road trips
- Modify the activity as needed to promote success for everyone.
 - Decrease lag time to and from the activity.
 - Change the order of the activities within it and surrounding it.
 - Involve your child in only certain parts of an activity or for shorter amounts of time.
 - Temporarily decrease the amount of demands during activity.
- How to minimize/avoid teen and adolescent sibling embarrassment:
 - Siblings may voice feelings of embarrassment directly or avoid family activities if their sibling with ASD "acts up."
 - Listen and understand sibling's current experience.
 - Comprise and choose your battles. There may be events that the sibling would feel more comfortable attending alone or with others.

- Make a clear plan of action for the activities you have prioritized. Communicate this with the sibling and let them know what they can do if they are beginning to feel embarrassed.
- Plan ahead to reduce chances of difficulties arising
- Consider activities where there are likely less crowds, such as riding bikes in the country, camping in a national park, or attending an event during an “off hour.”

Support Private Time and Space

- We all need time to ourselves to recharge.
 - Make sure that between helping with childcare, household chores, and homework, your typically developing child also has time for themselves!
 - This might involve facilitating having your child with ASD participate in a different activity. For example, when the sibling has a friend over, have a separate space that is designated for them and support your child with ASD to participate in an activity in a different part of the house.
- Ensure siblings have a private space for themselves. If they share a bedroom, make sure they have a secure space for valued items (i.e. locked footlocker, drawer, or closet)

Support Family Contributions

- Siblings of children with ASD **SHOULD NOT**:
 - Have regular extensive childcare responsibilities after school/weekends
 - Be responsible for discipline or decision-making about sibling’s welfare
- Siblings of children with ASD **SHOULD**:
 - Assume modest, age-appropriate roles with siblings in order to contribute meaningfully to the needs of the family.
 - Learn basic chores and skills for independent living that may help the family as a whole and their sibling with ASD.
 - Learn how to use basic evidence-based supports, such as visual schedules or prompting, to most successfully engage with their sibling with ASD.