

# tips for siblings



## Friendships: Building a Good Life



### Friendship development is important to SIBLINGS!



Siblings are the first peers to spend extended time together, and they see their sibling as a valued person.

Like their parents, they want others to see their sib in the same way. They are often on guard for people who do not know their sib as they do. They are affected by negative comments or interactions with their brother or sister. They fear that their sibling will be dismissed, mistreated or seen as inferior. Like their parents, they see their brother or sister as “typical,” and they want the world to see them the same way.

In their day-to-day life, they participate in common activities and naturally make the needed adaptations in communication and activity levels. They act as untrained “facilitators” daily.

#### What Siblings Can Do

#### **ELEMENT 1:** **Shared Activities** *(same activities, same time, same place)*

- Sibs can observe their sibling with a disability in the community and identify areas where there are opportunities for shared activities. Is there a community event – like a football game, pep rally or school groups that regularly meet – that will be attended by other students in the same age range as their sibling?
- Teach your sibling the latest game or computer app so that they have the same understanding and language for what is popular among their peers.
- Invite your friends to your home and share activities with your sibling so that others can come to know your sibling.

These 6 Elements of Friendship Development are based on a PATTAN Webinar Series (2013) by Erik Carter, Vanderbilt University, archived on the PATTAN website at <http://bit.ly/2lj1bb>.



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## What Siblings Can Do

### ELEMENT 2: Shared Interests

- Sibs often know their brother or sister well and can identify the activities and clubs that may be of interest to their sibling. They also can identify where in school or the community those interests might be explored and how to sign up or join.



- Introduce, teach and practice skills with their sibling that may be of interest to same-age peers. Examples include video games, use of mobile apps, age-appropriate TV shows or movies, sports, sports figures, musical instruments, current music and performers.
- Provide support and “positive interpretation” of their sib. They know what their sibling enjoys, dislikes, and how they express themselves. They can offer information and assist in communication when others are unsure of the messages being conveyed.

*Provide support and “positive interpretation” of your sib.*

## What Siblings Can Do

### ELEMENT 3: Valued Roles for All



- Are you always in a helping role? How can you set up ways for your sibling to help you or play in a way that establishes common ground?
- Look for outside resources like sibling groups, which can help you find ways to interact with your sibling in different ways. Exposure to how other family models work can help you to best determine the type of relationship you will have.
- It also is helpful to gain skills about how to provide guidance to others on how to interact with your sibling. It is better to provide information rather than shutting out people who may not have much knowledge.
- Model ways of interacting with your sibling that demonstrate respect for their communication style, age, and value as a person. Show people that your sibling is not a “baby” in a grownup body.



## What Siblings Can Do

### **ELEMENT 4:** *Share Information about each Other*

- Make sure your friends and classmates see how to effectively communicate respectfully with your sibling.
- Model the behavior you hope to see in others when interacting with your sibling.
- Provide examples of how your sibling expresses interest in something or how effective adaptations and accommodations can be in maximizing their participation and enjoyment.
- Offer thoughts to facilitate the meaning of communication attempts and interpret actions of your sibling.
- Don't be put off by inquiring stares from others. Smile and offer to start a conversation.

*Model the behavior you hope to see in others when interacting with your sibling.*



## What Siblings Can Do

### **ELEMENT 5:** *Just Enough Support from Adults*

- Provide parents with feedback on their worries about the value of taking risks.
- Role play with his or her sibling at home to practice rules, roles and routines needed within particular settings.
- Encourage others to rely on peers or siblings to provide support for their sibling, instead of paid adults.
- Model how best to support their sibling in the least intrusive ways.



## What Siblings Can Do

### **ELEMENT 6:** *Reflection*

- Talk with or observe your sibling and get feedback on how they feel their relationships with peers are going.
- Think carefully about what may or may not be working to ensure that your sibling is able to have maximum opportunities to develop friendships.
- Be part of the team that examines how things are going and provide honest and open input into the process.

**FRIENDS**

## NOTES:

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