



# NEWSLETTER

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## ATTENDING A PARTY WITH YOUR CHILD!

It's the Christmas season! It's the party season!

But a noisy party with too many people, lights and sound can be an unpleasant experience if your child has sensory processing difficulties.

Here are few ways to make your experience a pleasant and memorable one!

### **Prepare your child in advance:**

Prepare your child in advance visually and verbally, about what he/she must expect at the party. Show them pictures of the people he/she may meet, also prepare them for meeting people they don't know at the party. Talk to the child about what will happen, who all will be there and what they can do at the party. If possible know the schedule and activities planned for the party and prepare accordingly. Using a social story can be helpful. Visiting the venue before the day can assist you and your child. The child will be more comfortable with the place and you can find a quieter calming spot as shelter for your child if things go out of hand on the actual day.

### **Start early and end early:**

It is a good idea to reach the venue early with your child, this will help acclimatize your child to the environment, as there are fewer people and so your child may have less anxiety. Also, it will give you an opportunity to see how your child reacts to the atmosphere and excitement of the place.

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Although, watch your child carefully as he/she may give you signs of distress. When you anticipate a meltdown, take it as a sign to exit. It is best to leave before things fall apart. A short fun time is better than a long one with a meltdown in the end.

#### **Sensory Strategies:**

Bring your child's calming toys with you to the party, such as a ball, noise cancelling headphones, favorite thick blanket etc. they will be helpful in case the child feels overwhelmed and/or over stimulated. The moment you anticipate a meltdown, move your child to a calmer, quieter environment. Maybe, taking him/her for a walk in the lobby or around the block can be helpful. After using the toys and going for a walk decide whether your child is ready to go back in or you need to head straight home.

#### **Surprise in the car:**

Plan a surprise/treat for your child to play and enjoy in the car on their way back home. This can help ease transition.

#### **Reinforce and validate your child:**

Praise your child and validate his/her feelings. Tell them how you are proud of them because they were so brave at the party. That they did not cry in spite of the loud noise and many people. Play their favorite game if possible on reaching home or read to them their favorite story at bedtime as a positive reinforcer to in general help them wind down and motivate them to visit another party soon!

A noisy party with too many people, lights and sound can be an unpleasant experience if your child has sensory processing difficulties.



*“A short fun time is better than a long one with a meltdown in the end.”*

## A SIBLING OF A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Every parent love, care and nurture their children equally. But, often due to obvious reasons parents with a special child are required to devote more time towards caring for the needs of that child. It is essential to realize that a sibling of a special needs child is equally special and unique. In fact, this sibling possesses qualities that most children his/her age can far from comprehend, such as;

- Compassion and empathy
- Supportiveness and kindness
- Bravery and patience
- Responsibility, dependability and loyalty
- Inclusiveness (acceptance and openness towards differently abled)



The sibling learns these qualities while caring for their brother/sister with special needs. They live a life that takes a strong heart and a stronger mind. They mature much faster than all their schoolmates. But being the sibling to a child with different needs can be a struggle! These children can face a difficult time while growing up, as they have to reel with pressures that we may not even comprehend. We should understand, that they might not have the mental or physical strength to deal with such stresses. Hence, they might not be able to communicate or manage their feelings and are often in need of help.



They ride through a roller coaster of conflicting emotions. You may notice that some days they may be jealous of their brother/sister as for getting all the attention, and on others they may be worried sick, fearing the loss of their sibling. On some occasions they may be extremely angry or upset with them for being too rough while playing and on others they may feel extremely happy that they played with them amicably. On certain days they are tremendously proud of their sibling's smallest achievement, looking forward to celebrations.

But there could also be days, when they may resent their sibling for having a life different from the rest of their friends, i.e. they often have to make changes in their plans such as not being able to attend a friend's birthday party because they have to take care of their sibling. They may also experience a downhill, while feeling guilty for having such negative feeling towards their brother/sister. Also comes a time when they may be embarrassed about their sibling's difference and at other instances that they may be willing to wage a war with those who ridicule their brother/sister. Most of the times, they may display a sense of responsibility, while looking out for their sibling or sticking up to others for them.

We as parents and caregivers are responsible to take measures to remedy this or try and nip it in the bud.

*“They ride through a rollercoaster of conflicting emotions”*

In order to ease your child's worries, clear up any confusions, and maybe even give them a chance to help out with caring for their brother/sister, it is important that we answer the child's queries and questions in an age appropriate, open and honest manner. Explain to your child that their sibling may require more attention/help as compared to them. When the child asks about their sibling's abilities, use simple language in a way they can understand. Use real words with respect to the diagnosis, like “Cerebral palsy” or “Autism” instead of “booboo”. This prevents confusion in children who get their own cuts and scrapes — you don't want them to be overly concerned about a bump on the head. At the same time also, tell them in simple words, the extent of their sibling's difficulties for e.g. if your child has cerebral palsy tell the sibling “Your brother/sister has difficulty walking, and we are going to help him/her get stronger and walk with support/on their own”. In case the child is autistic “Your brother/sister may want water but, may not be able to communicate the same using his/her words” or “Your brother/sister does not know how to play with any other toy except, his/her colorful cups/I-pad”. Understanding their specific difficulties will equip them to rationalize and reason out their sibling's behaviors. They will also be able to learn ways to support their sibling more effectively.



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It is typical for your child to feel that, due to being special their sibling gets away by not working on his/her household chores and having inappropriate behaviors. Comparisons are normal, but explain that while it seems unfair, nobody gets away. During family time, provide opportunities for all children to contribute in the daily chores. Make sure to provide each child with equal workload and responsibility as per their skill level. This will encourage their participation and further development. Motivate, praise and reinforce all your children's efforts when he/she accomplishes the assigned tasks of their daily routine and behaves appropriately at home or in any social setting. Also, be sure that you don't expect too much from your child when it comes to chores, schoolwork, or extracurricular activities. Typically developing children sometimes feel extra pressure to be perfect so that their parents don't have to worry about them.

As a parent, caring for a child with additional needs, your role can be time consuming and draining. In this process, it can be hard for parents to equally allocate time to all their children. But it is essential for parents to set aside one-on-one time with their child. This can be a challenge, but even a few minutes- an hour spent playing ball or allowing your little one to "help" you in the kitchen at mealtime can provide the mommy or daddy time that your child needs.

When dealing with your teenager, take into consideration their emotional state and need for control. Make certain to never bombard them with responsibilities such as babysitting/ watching their brother/sister while parents are at work. Let them choose how much they want to help out. Always give them an option, for example: "It would be great if you could watch your sister, but if you want to go out with your friends, that's OK too." Let your teen know that wanting more independence and experiencing more of the world is normal, healthy, and encouraged, within safe limits.

Some siblings can be really sensitive and tend to develop stress or fear of loss. It is a good idea for parents to encourage them to write a journal, be physically active, or participate in creative arts like dance or music to handle strong emotions.

Just as parenting a child with special needs can be joyful and frustrating, children and teens that have a brother or sister with special needs will have ups and downs. But as parents provide all your children an environment where they are understood, loved and feel secure about their spot in the family. This will in turn promote the bond between siblings. It will help them thrive together, and as individuals.

*Make sure to tell your child the following "You know true love, you know true heartache and you know what's truly important. You will be an awesome individual and you're going to change lives for the better... all because you are the sibling of a child with special needs."*



For any question or concerns regarding the newsletter please write to us on:

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