Generations & Conversations
A Sibling Journey

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Conversations

- Our story
- What the research says
- Suggested conversations to have with your family
Siblings provide the most long-lasting relationships for their sibling with an intellectual/developmental disability

Rossiter and Sharpe, 2001
Experts say:

In childhood sibling relationships tend to be close and positive.
Quality of sibling relationships & level of involvement depend on:

1. Childhood experience
2. Gender
3. Relative ages
4. Proximity
Our Family Influences Us Throughout Life

- **Biology:** Likes, dislikes, skills, abilities

- **Environment:** Neighborhood, socio-economic, education

- **Social:** Family and friend network, connection with community members

- **Policy:** Dreams, aspirations, house rules, cultural rules, expectations

Charting the LifeCourse
Second Conversation

Disability is normal, but the challenges are real
Considerations

• Advocate for your sibling, but remember to advocate for yourself.
• Find ways to de-stress
• It’s healthy to have separate lives
• Demand and seek support!
Third Conversation

Lessons from my children...
What do the experts say about building relationships?
Including each other is important to building relationships.
Typical siblings want:

• To feel safe and secure
• To get special attention
• To feel approval
• Information about their sibling’s disability
• To know someone understands their feelings
Siblings with disabilities want:

• The right to make choices and mistakes
• To feel valued and respected by family
• Power to disagree with their siblings
• Power to disagree with their parents
• To have a life of their own
• To have a say about the support they get
• To be included
Most non-disabled brothers and sisters turn-out just fine!
Recognize individual gifts and celebrate them!!
Fourth Conversation

As our parents age…
The life cycle of the family impacts each member

Family Cycle Impacts Member Life Cycle

Family Life Experience Impacts Trajectory
When my parents were 73

“Mom, I want my own apartment when I’m 35”
Advocating Against the Tide
Keep the conversation going.....
Fifth Conversation

As My Sister and I Age
Life Planning for my family while Planning for my sister’s life without me.
Siblings with disabilities teach their brothers and sisters some important lessons.
Thank You!!