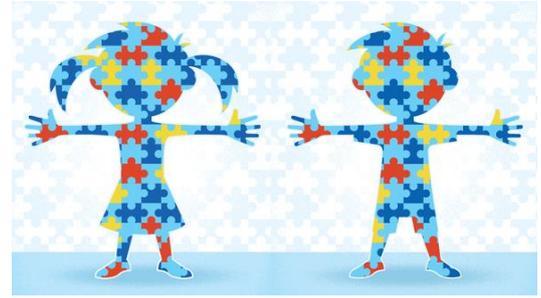




Siblings and Autism

*Some information adapted from NAS website



Being a sibling of a person with Autism is likely to have a significant impact on everyday life

Younger people who have a sibling with autism might experience:

- Teasing from other children
- A lack of privacy
- Disruption of their home life
- Limited one-to-one time with parent(s) / family outings
- Feelings of resentment that the whole focus of the family is often on the person with autism
- Feelings of embarrassment about inviting friends to the house
- Being tired through disturbed sleep

Older siblings may worry about whether they are going to have to look after their brother or sister when parents are no longer able to do so, and what support they might receive.

There are positives to being a sibling of a person with autism. Lots of brothers and sisters say that learning to see the world through the eyes of their sibling has taught them to become more tolerant of people's differences.

"It's the same as in any brother or sister relationship, only the feelings are exaggerated"

How Parents Can Help

- Protect certain times to spend with siblings, e.g. bedtime, swimming
- Organise short term care for important events, e.g. sports days
- Put the needs of the siblings first and let them chose sometimes
- Discuss how to explain autism to friends
- Invite friends around when sibling is out
- Try not to expect sibling to always include child with autism
- Support sibling to develop their own social life
- Put a lock on sibling's bedroom door for privacy and safety of possessions
- Include siblings when getting advice about managing behaviour
- Reassure the sibling that you still love them equally. Explain that the child with autism may not get told off/receives more of parent's attention because they need help for things that the sibling is able to do independently
- Try to keep a sense of humour
- Plan activities that everyone can enjoy, e.g. swimming, picnics
- Try and find holiday schemes that child with autism can attend
- Use help from family, friends and agencies
- Talk about your own feelings with sibling to normalise feelings they may share
- Give siblings the opportunity to talk to someone outside the family
- Look for signs of distress and encourage child to talk
- Speak to the school about how they can help promote positive attitudes to autism
- Rehearse how to handle unpleasant remarks/bullying
- Explain the diagnosis to sibling and discuss the possible long term needs for child with autism
- Talk about care plans for the future
- Encourage them to leave home when they are ready

How Siblings can Help a Brother or Sister with Autism

- When your brother or sister needs time alone to be by themselves, give them some space
- Try to be calm and patient with them even when they do something which may hurt your feelings
- Speak slowly and clearly when you are talking to them (so they can understand what you are saying), especially if they are upset/angry
- When your brother or sister says they can't do something remind yourself that they probably **can't** do it (it is not that he doesn't want to do it)
- Your brother or sister has a spiky profile – just because they can do something one day doesn't mean they can't do it again in future
- Remember that your sibling may lose their temper quickly because they find it difficult to recognise and express their emotions
- If you use non-literal language explain to your sibling what it means
- Tell your brother or sister how you feel and why, e.g. "I'm really happy that it's the school holidays", or "I'm really angry that my football game has been cancelled"
- Talk to your brother or sister about their interests, as they may not get many opportunities to have a conversation that they enjoy
- Sometimes it will all get too much for you. This is ok. It happens to everyone. Plan what can you do when it all gets too much
- Remind yourself that your parents will treat you differently to your brother or sister because you are able to do many things independently and you don't have autism
- Remember that your parents love you and always try to do what is right for you. This will be different to what is right for your brother or sister because you are different people

Other Support for Siblings:

- **Talking with friends or someone from outside the family** can be comforting, offer a different perspective and give the opportunity just to have a chat without interruption
- **Talking with other siblings** experiencing similar issues through websites, local support groups and sibling workshops.
- **Talking with professionals**, e.g. a teacher, a social worker, a health professional or a trained counsellor

Websites for Siblings:

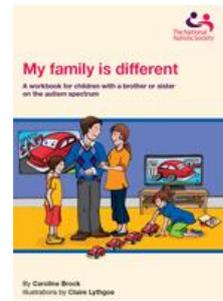
There are websites and chat groups that have been set up for brothers and sisters of people with autism. These include:

- **Sibs:** <https://www.sibs.org.uk/>
- **Young Sibs:** <https://www.youngsibs.org.uk/>
- **Barnardo's:** <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/willow.htm> (for families in Leeds)
- **Contact a Family:** <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/advice-and-support/in-your-area/offices/yorkshire-and-humber/?s=leeds&t=pc>
- **National Autistic Society Autism Helpline**
<http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/about-us/contact-us.aspx>
Tel: 0808 800 4104 or email: info@nas.org.uk
(Mon-Thurs 10am-4pm & Fri 9am-3pm)

Books for Younger Siblings:

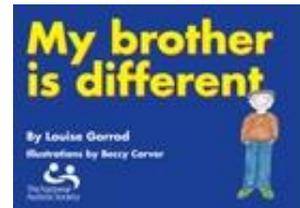
My Family is Different Workbook

<http://www.autism.org.uk/products/core-nas-publications/my-family-is-different.aspx>



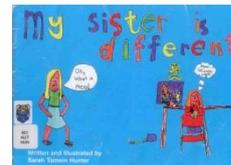
My Brother is Different

<http://www.autism.org.uk/products/core-nas-publications/my-brother-is-different.aspx>

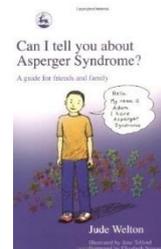


My Sister is Different

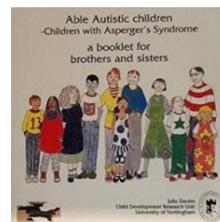
<http://www.autism.org.uk/products/core-nas-publications/my-sister-is-different.aspx>



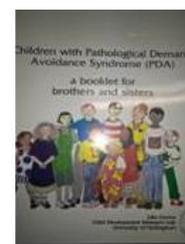
Can I tell you about Asperger syndrome? A guide for family and friends by Jude Welton



Able Autistic Children, Children with Asperger's Syndrome: A Booklet for Brothers and Sisters by Julie Davies



Children with PDA: A Booklet for Brothers and Sisters by Julie Davies

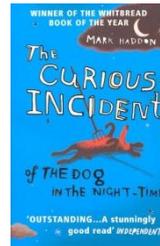


Books for Teen Siblings

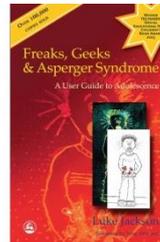
The Blue Bottle Mysteries by Kathy Hoopmann



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon

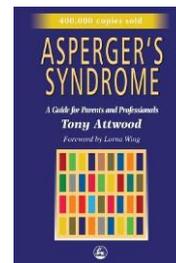


Freaks, Geeks and Asperger's Syndrome
by Luke Jackson



Books for Adult Siblings

Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Tony Attwood



Why Does Chris Do That?

By Tony Attwood



Sex, Drugs and Asperger's Syndrome: A User Guide to Adulthood by Luke Jackson

