

# JANUARY 2017

## PARENT NEWSLETTER

*From the Autism Spectrum Disorder Department at Easterseals Joliet Region*

Visit our [website](#) or find us on [Facebook](#)

### What's Going On At Easterseals....

#### Winter Session Social Skills Groups –

##### There is still time to sign up!

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other social communication delays have difficulty developing social skills, and may benefit from a therapy group focusing on teaching and practicing specific skills. Groups are best for children who have made progress in individual therapy and are ready to start practicing those skills in a group setting. At each group parents receive a schedule of activities, a hand out discussing the skills that are targeted for that day and ideas on how to continue working on those skills at home. Groups are led by behavioral therapists from our outpatient treatment program. The groups are 8 week sessions and cost \$150 for the entire 8 weeks, due at registration. This service may also be billable through your insurance.

- **High Schoolers (grades 9 – 12):** Tuesday from 4:00 – 5:00 pm starting Tuesday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and ending Tuesday February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- **2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade:** Thursdays from 4:00 – 5:00 pm starting Thursday January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and ending Thursday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017



Call Donna Ferraro at 815-651-2018 for more information or to register. Space is limited!

Spring Session will be starting in March and is already in the planning stages. If you would like your child to be one of our social skills therapy groups, call our coordinator today at 815-927-5465 to be added to the waitlist.

#### Music Play Group (age birth to 5)

##### Using music to promote social interaction, social imitation and language

Come join the fun! Researchers and parents everywhere agree that music has an amazing affect on development in young children. Music promotes language, social interaction, imitation, memory, cognition, movement and sensory regulation. It can be especially helpful for children with developmental delays that benefit from repetition and different teaching approaches. During our music play group we will tap into all of your different senses to promote learning, while also facilitating social emotional development. Group will be led by social workers from our outpatient and Early

Intervention treatment program. They will choose songs that target specific skill areas, they will provide a variety of sensory and movement activities to complement the songs, they will facilitate parent-child and peer interactions to enhance social skills and will have weekly handouts with activities you can carry over at home. Children from birth to five years old of all ability levels are welcome in our group with their parent or caregiver. Siblings are welcome to attend as well, as long as they are in the birth to five age range. All songs and activities will be modeled and adapted for different ages and abilities.



Group meets **every Friday from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m., starting on Friday February 10<sup>th</sup>** through Friday April 28<sup>th</sup> (12 weeks) and the cost is \$10 per class per family. Attendance is not required at each class, families are welcome to come whenever it works in their schedule, but you must be registered to attend. Contact us today to register your child at 815-927-5465.

## Grandparent Autism Workshop

Are you a Grandparent to a child with Autism? In March Easterseals will be hosting our first Grandparent workshop, where Autism professionals will present basic information about Autism, treatment, how to support your family and answer all of your questions. If you or someone you know might be interested in a workshop like this, call Valerie at 815-927-5465. We would love your input as we are planning this new program. Check back in next month's newsletter for details!

## Parents Raising Children with ASDs

Our parent support group continues to meet the **second Wednesday of every month from 6:00 – 7:30**. This program is a wonderful way to meet other parents, get information and get connected to resources in your community. This month we will meet on **Wednesday, January 11th** and as always, childcare will be provided for those who sign up ahead of time by Easter Seals staff. Both the group and childcare are free of charge. Please call Laura with any questions or to register for childcare at 815-927-5466.

## Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres de Familias que Hablan Espanol (Support Group for Spanish Speaking Parents)

This is a parent support group for families that have children with Autism and would like to meet other parents, get information and stay connected to community resources. The group will be led by a social worker from our Autism Department and a translator from our parent education program. Group will meet **the first Friday of every month from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. This month we will meet on Friday January 6<sup>th</sup>**. This group is open to all parents, and children are welcome to attend with their parents. For this month only Easterseals is providing childcare for free during the group since school is out of session. Please contact Blanca with questions at 815-927-5494.

## Free Developmental Screenings

Easterseals offers multiple ways for parents to complete a developmental screening for their child. Parents and caregivers can complete a free online screening tool on the Easterseals website which you can find here: <http://www.easterseals.com/mtffc/> If you would prefer for your child to be screened in person by an Easterseals' staff member, drop by to our Barney location on the second Friday of every month from 9:00 to noon, no appointment required! We will have several staff on hand to complete developmental screenings for children age birth to 5 years old, and Autism screenings for children age 18 months to 18 years old. They will be able to recommend to you whether your child is in need of a full evaluation, and explain how you can set up that process through either Easterseals or other community programs that are available. Contact Karrie if you have any questions about our screenings at 815-927-5471.

## What's Going On In Your Community...

### Workshops & Resource Fairs

#### Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

On Saturday January 14<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 – 5:00 First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn is offering this training and certification program. This training is being presented by Linden Oaks. CEUs are available for mental health professionals. The cost is \$45 and lunch is provided. Learn about how signs and symptoms of mental health conditions in youth, how to assess risk, interventions and strategies that work and how to refer families for more help. To register go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/youth-mental-health-first-aid-first-congregational-church-of-glen-ellyn-tickets-27259514943>

#### Autism and Related Disorders Course FREE

Yale University has a seminar on Autism and Related Disorders on iTunes FREE to listen to. The course covers diagnosis and assessment, etiology and treatment of children, adolescents and adults with autism and related disorders of socialization. Don't have time to take a course on Autism? Listen to lectures on your daily commute or while getting ready! Once again, these are FREE to download on iTunes! For more information, go to <https://itunes.apple.com/us/course/autism-and-related-disorders/id495056283?enlh=7&mt=10&ls=1>

#### Star Net Sensory Webinar

##### “My Shirt Tag Is Bugging Me”

On January 12, 2017, from 3:00-4:45PM, STAR NET is offering a Webinar called “My Shirt Tag Is Bugging Me,” presented by Nancy Pufahl. This workshop will look at an overview of the sensory system. We will discuss sensory “seekers” and sensory “avoiders”. Many easy suggestions for play activities for use at home and school will be shared during this workshop. You can register online here <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07edhaicwq3ace828f&oseq=&c=&ch=>

## **Autism Home Support Services Webinar**

### **“Meaningful Solutions for Problem Behaviors Associated with Autism”**

On Thursday January 12<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 8:30 AHSS is hosting an in-face and webinar parent training titled “Meaningful Solutions for Problem Behaviors Associated with Autism”. The presenter is a BCBA who will discuss highly individualized assessments of behavior concerns and treatments that parents have seen success with. Register online at [www.autismhomesupport.com/events](http://www.autismhomesupport.com/events)

## **Recreational & Social Opportunities**

### **Art of Faces Entries and Art Showing**

Merchant Street Art Gallery is calling for submissions of art work showing faces of anything or anyone, created by artists with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This artwork can be in any style, and can be of animals, people, or imaginary, so long as it is original to the artist. Cost is \$15 for up to 5 entrees, and fees will be returned if the entry is not accepted. The artwork will be shown in the gallery from January 13<sup>th</sup> until March 25<sup>th</sup>, with an opening reception on January 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:00. During the reception artists have the option to present their work and receive a positive critique of the art by Elmira Wilkey. Contact Merchant St Art Gallery at 815-685-9057, or online at [merchantstreetartgallery.org](http://merchantstreetartgallery.org) for more information.

### **Plainfield Township Disability Family Fun Skate**

On Sunday January 8<sup>th</sup>, from 6:15pm-8:30pm, Plainfield Township Disability is hosting a Family Fun Skate! Come join a night of roller skating, laser tag, and arcade fun at Skate America, located at 2333 Theodore St., Crest Hill, IL 60403. They will provide free pizza and skating for residents with a disability and one guest or support person. Non-skating adults are free! Additional family and friends pay \$5 per person at the door for skating and pizza. Game tokens may be purchased separately. Laser Tag may be purchased for \$3.00 per person. Registration is required. Contact Marie Adams to register at [marie.adams@mckesson.com](mailto:marie.adams@mckesson.com).

## **Recurring Monthly Events**

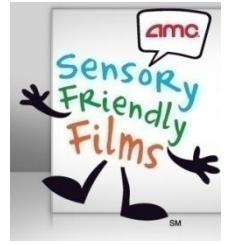
These events are going on every month out in your community. Please contact them directly for more information!

### **Exploration Station Special Needs Nights**

Exploration Station is a wonderful children’s museum in Bourbonnais. They host a special needs night on the **First Sunday of every month from 11am-12:30pm**. The staff at Exploration Station has taken special care to adapt the environment and provide an opportunity for children with special needs to explore their exhibits so they can learn through hands on interaction. The museum is only open to families with special needs children during this time, which provides a safe and accepting environment. The fee is \$2.50 for residents and \$3.50 for non-residents. Exploration Station is located at Perry Farm Park on 459 N Kennedy Drive in Bourbonnais. Pre-registration is required. Call 815-933-9905 ext. 3 for more information or visit them online at [www.exploration-station.org](http://www.exploration-station.org).

## Sensory Friendly Films at AMC

AMC has EXPANDED their Sensory Friendly Film program to include some evening hours with films geared towards an older crowd! The auditoriums dedicated to the program have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing! They will now be on the **second and fourth Tuesday at 7pm AND second and fourth Saturday at 10 am every month.** Go to <http://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films> for more information and to find a nearby theater that is participating in this great program!



## DuPage Children's Museum Special Needs Nights

Did you know that the DuPage Children's Museum has a dedicated night for families of children with special needs? They do! It is the **third Thursday of every month from 5pm-7pm.** It is a time designated for the families of children with special needs to enjoy the museum in an inclusive, typically quieter, less crowded atmosphere. They have a creativity drop-in studio that implements sensory-based activities with a different theme every week along with purposeful play with peers, adaptive equipment, and guides to help parents use the exhibits for therapeutic benefit. Admission is \$11 per person, ages 1-59, and \$10 for anyone over 60. For more information go to their website at <http://dupagechildrens.org/>

## Sensory Story Times

The Plainfield Public Library is hosting a **FREE** drop-in Sensory Story time one Saturday every month. After free play, socializing, and tactile activities, gather for a story time designed for children of all abilities. Friends and siblings are welcome. Children ages 3 to 9 must be accompanied by an adult. Drop in event, no registration is required. Find dates/time and more information at <http://il.evanced.info/plainfield/evanced/eventcalendar.asp>

Fountaindale Public Library (in Bolingbrook on Briarcliff) offers a **FREE** drop-in Sensory Story time on the second Saturday of every month from 10:30 to 11:15 for children from 2 to 6 years old with a caregiver. This story time is geared "especially for children with sensory integration issues". Visit their calendar at <http://host7.evanced.info/fountaindale/evanced/eventcalendar.asp>

## ASD Life Transition Group

Alexian Brothers Health System presents the ASD Life Transitions Group. This **FREE** group will be held on the 4th Tuesday (Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>) of every month from 7pm until 9pm at the Alexian Brothers Women and Children's Hospital, in the Lower Level meeting rooms 3 & 4 (1555 Barrington Road, Hoffman Estates). Each month they invite a different speaker to present to the group and address a variety of issues specific to this population, including college transition and accommodations, job skills, independent living, volunteer opportunities, government benefits, driving, exercise and more topics of interest. Additionally, our young adults will break out for the second hour where they will be able to enjoy game nights, time to socialize, and more! This group is for young adults 16 and up and parents. To register please email [Ana.Garcia-Maldonado@alexian.net](mailto:Ana.Garcia-Maldonado@alexian.net) or call 847-755-8536.

## Play For All at Chicago's Children Museum

On the second Saturday of every month at 9:00am, the Chicago Children's Museum will open and host Play For All: For Families with Children with Disabilities. The museum invites children and families with disabilities to come and experience CCM's playful, multisensory exhibits for a special private hour inside the museum. Play For All Families are welcome to stay and continue exploring the museum all day. The first 250 visitors to register receive FREE admission. Pre-registration is required. This is held every second Saturday of the month. For more information and to register, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/january-2017-play-for-all-for-families-with-children-with-disabilities-tickets-29392243993?aff=erelpanelorg>

## NAMI of Will-Grundy: Family Support Group

NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) Family Support Group is a peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental illness. Families can gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar circumstances. NAMI's Support Groups are unique because they follow a structured model, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard and to get what they need. NAMI Will-Grundy offers a variety of locations and times for these free support groups. For more information visit <http://namiwillgrundy.org/familysupport/> or contact NAMI Will-Grundy at (815) 731-9103 (call returned within 48 hours) or email [info@namiwillgrundy.org](mailto:info@namiwillgrundy.org). Locations and dates listed below.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Joliet	Presence St. Joseph's	6:00-7:30pm 1st and 3rd Sundays	Jan. 1st and 15th
Morris	Morris Hospital	7:00 - 8:30 pm 2nd Tuesday	January 10th
Bolingbrook	Adventist Hospital	6:00 pm – 7:30 pm 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	January 1 <sup>st</sup> and 22nd

*Do you have an event coming up that would be of interest to families that have children with special needs?*

*We help to spread the word about events that are reasonably priced and promote awareness, inclusion, learning opportunities and fun for the special needs community! Please submit your events to [vlentz@joliet.easterseals.com](mailto:vlentz@joliet.easterseals.com) to be considered for our next newsletter*



## Articles of the Month

Autismspeaks.org has an online blog called “Got Questions” where parents and caregivers can submit questions related to Autism and get answers from professionals on the Autism Speaks staff. Visit [autismspeaks.org](http://autismspeaks.org) for more posts.

Autism & Cold Weather Dangers: Teen Needs Help Transitioning to Winter

Every year, cold weather brings two big challenges for our teen, who has autism: the transition to heavier clothes and understanding the danger of cold weather. When he sees snow, he wants to run outside. Advice?



*Today’s “Got Questions?” answer is by psychologist Stephanie Weber, of the Kelly O’Leary Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. The center and hospital are part of the [Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network\(ATN\)](#).*

The cold weather sure came on quickly in many parts of the country this year. This can intensify the challenges you describe – challenges

shared by many families affected by autism.

So let's start with your first question. The seasonal change to heavier clothing commonly poses difficulties for those who have sensory sensitivities. Your son may prefer the lighter touch of summer clothing. So it may help to start with putting that summer clothing away and out of sight. If your son asks where it has gone, consider simply stating, "It's not available until the weather is warm again."

### **Selecting some motivators**

Next, we want to help your son put on that coat and keep it on. Let's start by identifying a reward to help motivate him. Given the time of year, perhaps he's really into Christmas cartoons, or maybe candy canes. You can provide these rewards for each small success, or use a token or sticker board to earn "points" toward a reward. You know your son best. Use that understanding to gauge how much or little of the reinforcement you need to keep him motivated.



### **Mastering the coat**

Now, you're ready to help your son begin practicing with that coat. A timer can help you both with the task of keeping the coat on for increasing periods. This can be an audible timer that beeps or rings, or a visual one such as a digital clock. Depending on his level of resistance, you might want to start with as little as 5 seconds in the coat. I suggest beginning by increasing the time in the coat by 5 to 10 seconds with each early success. Using your judgment, you can try increasing the time increments by 15 to 30 seconds with subsequent successes.



If getting into the whole coat is too much for starters, try one arm in the coat for 5 seconds. Work up to putting the whole coat on for 5 seconds, before increasing the time with the whole coat.

It's important to start wherever your child is ready. Continue to build on each of his successes with those positive reinforcements – be they stickers, small pieces of candy cane or short cartoon breaks.



## **Introducing the new routine**

Of course, your goal is to have your son put on his coat before going outside in cold weather. Perhaps this will need to become part of his morning routine before leaving for school. As with other changes in routine, it helps to start the transition with advance “warning” followed by repetition of the new steps involved.

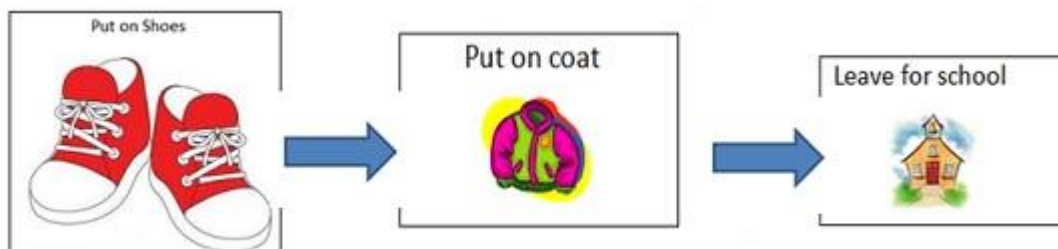
I find this to be true with any big transition – be it moving to a new school or putting on a heavier coat. So, when possible, I encourage families to allow time for practice steps leading up to the new expectation. For some children, it helps to begin talking about the change days or weeks in advance. Other children do not do well with warnings too far in advance. You may consider only a week or a few days of talking about the changes with your son.

In either case, I suggest explaining the reason for the change in simple terms. For example, “It’s cold outside. We need to wear our coats,” or “Wearing shorts is done. It’s time to wear long pants.”

If your child can read, you can write these reminders and leave them up in your home. Many individuals affected by autism respond best to visual supports. I find this to be true even for those who have excellent receptive language skills. (Receptive language refers to the ability to understand what others are saying.) There’s something about writing down expectations and/or illustrating them with pictures that makes them more concrete for many people with autism.

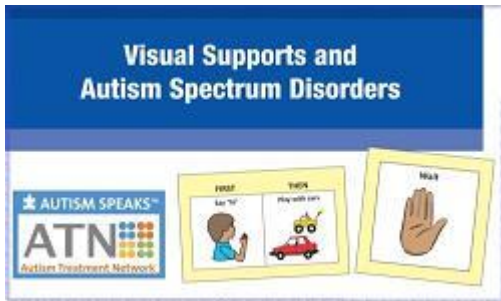
## **Creating a visual schedule**

So once your son has mastered putting on the coat and keeping it on, consider adding this new step to a visual or written schedule. In the example below, we’ve added a picture for “Put on coat” between “Put on shoes” and “Leave for school.”



This may feel excessive if your son has already mastered getting ready for school. But I’ve found that returning to step-by-step instructions – if only temporarily – can help a child or adult with autism

master a big change such as dressing for winter weather. Use this visual support as long as needed. Then, gradually remove it from your son’s routine.



For more information on using visual supports, see [“Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorder,”](#) an Autism Speaks ATN/AIR-P tool kit. Follow the link for free download.

### Introduce a mantra

Another strategy I often use to help children master a change in routine is to have parents and other caregivers use a “mantra.” In this case, it might consist of two short phrases such as, “The weather is cold. We wear our coats outside.” With consistent repetition, this may help your son not only understand your expectation but also make the connection to protection from the cold.

Taking this idea a step further, many caregivers and therapists use social stories to help an individuals with autism understand expectations. In this case, you might take a picture of your child’s coat and other cold-weather clothing. Also take a picture outside your home. Then, write short sentences (based on your child’s level of understanding) that outline the “first-then” steps in this story.

For example:

*Winter is here. It’s cold.*



*I need to put on my long pants,*



*and long-sleeved shirt,*



*and my coat*

*before I can go outside.*

*(Picture of the front of your house)*

You might add the positive reinforcement of a reward to this story, as in:

*First, I put on my winter clothes, then I earn extra play time!*

*(Picture of your child's favorite toy or activity)*

For more, see [“Social Stories: Their Uses and Benefits.”](#)

### **Explaining cold-weather dangers**

Advice on helping your son understand the dangers of cold weather will depend on his developmental level. With some children it helps to develop or read stories that include descriptions of extreme weather and people taking shelter from it.

For other individuals, stressing “understanding” isn’t appropriate or useful. In these cases, it works best to keep the focus on expectations and rewards or consequences. For example, you want to make clear that he is not allowed to go outside if his coat is not on. If he is playing outside and takes his coat off, you need to promptly direct him back inside until he puts the coat back on. The mantra and visual supports described above can help you keep this simple and straightforward.

### **Indulging the need to be outdoors**

Many children who love being outside have difficulty when cold or stormy weather confines them indoors. If this is true of your son, consider alternating relatively short periods playing outside with “warm up” breaks indoors. For example, you could use a visual schedule to let your son know that he can play outside for 10 minutes, then come inside for 10 minutes before returning outside for another 10 minutes.

I recommend some sort of positive reinforcement to encourage transitions from a favorite activity such as being outside to a less-preferred activity such as coming indoors. For example, begin the transition indoors with something you know your son will enjoy. That might be a short game with you rather than, say, bath time or homework.

## Thinking ahead to next year

Finally, consider making a note on next year's calendar – on a date before the cold weather really hits – to remind yourself to let your son know that the time for heavier clothing and a coat is coming.

Thanks again for your question. Please let us know how these strategies work for you and your child.

*Editor's note: The above information is not meant to diagnose or treat and should not take the place of personal consultation, as appropriate, with a qualified healthcare professional and/or behavioral therapist.*

*Got more questions? Send them to [gotquestions@autismspeaks.org](mailto:gotquestions@autismspeaks.org)*



*Subscribe to Autism Speaks Science Digest to receive research news, “Got Questions?” and other expert-advice columns delivered biweekly to your inbox.*

*The Autism Speaks blog features opinions from people throughout the autism community. Each blog represents the point of view of the author and does not necessarily reflect Autism Speaks' beliefs or point of view.*

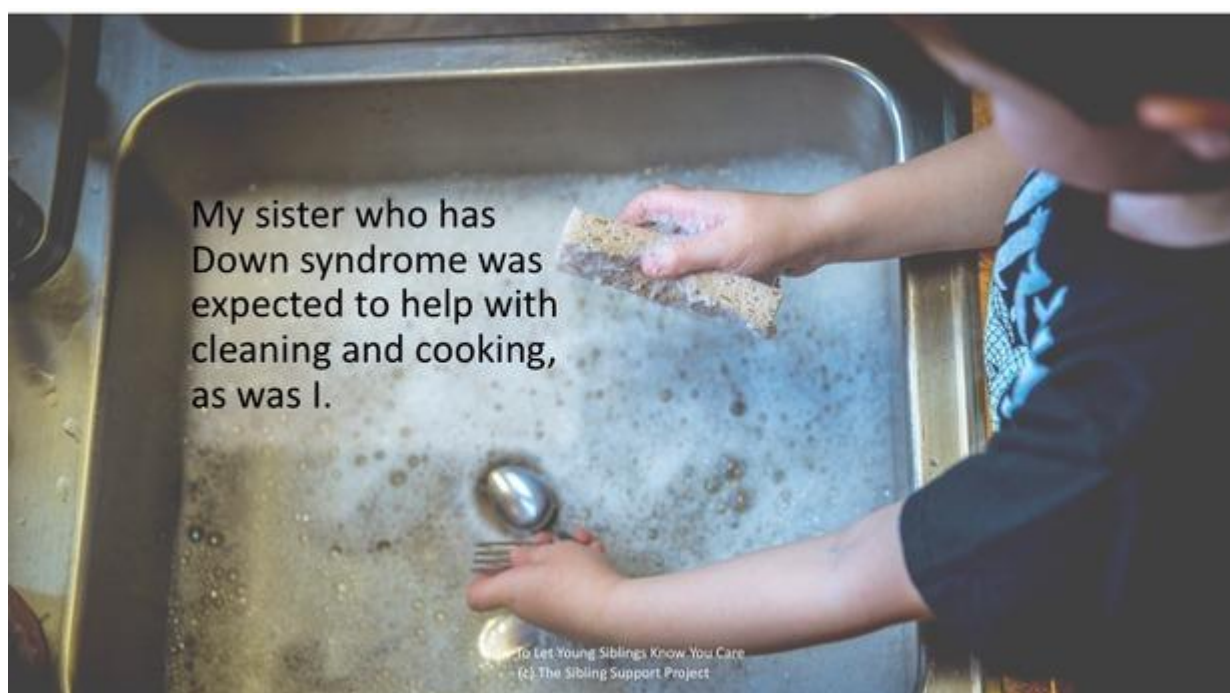
## How to Let Young Siblings Know You Care

This article was posted by [The Sibling Support Project](#), a [Kinderling Center](#) program, by Don Meyer, Director [206-297-6368](tel:206-297-6368) [info@siblingsupport.org](mailto:info@siblingsupport.org)

Siblings will be in the lives of family members with special needs longer than **anyone**. With a relationship that can easily exceed 65 years, brothers and sisters will be there after parents are gone and special education services are a distant memory. Because of the life-long and significant contributions they will make throughout their lives, typically developing sibs deserve our respect and attention.

Sibs, even young sibs, need to be supported, validated and acknowledged. All too often, young sibs can feel invisible.

However, if brothers and sisters are seen, heard, and recognized, they can grow up well-adjusted and able to help their sibs with special needs lead dignified lives from childhood to their senior years.

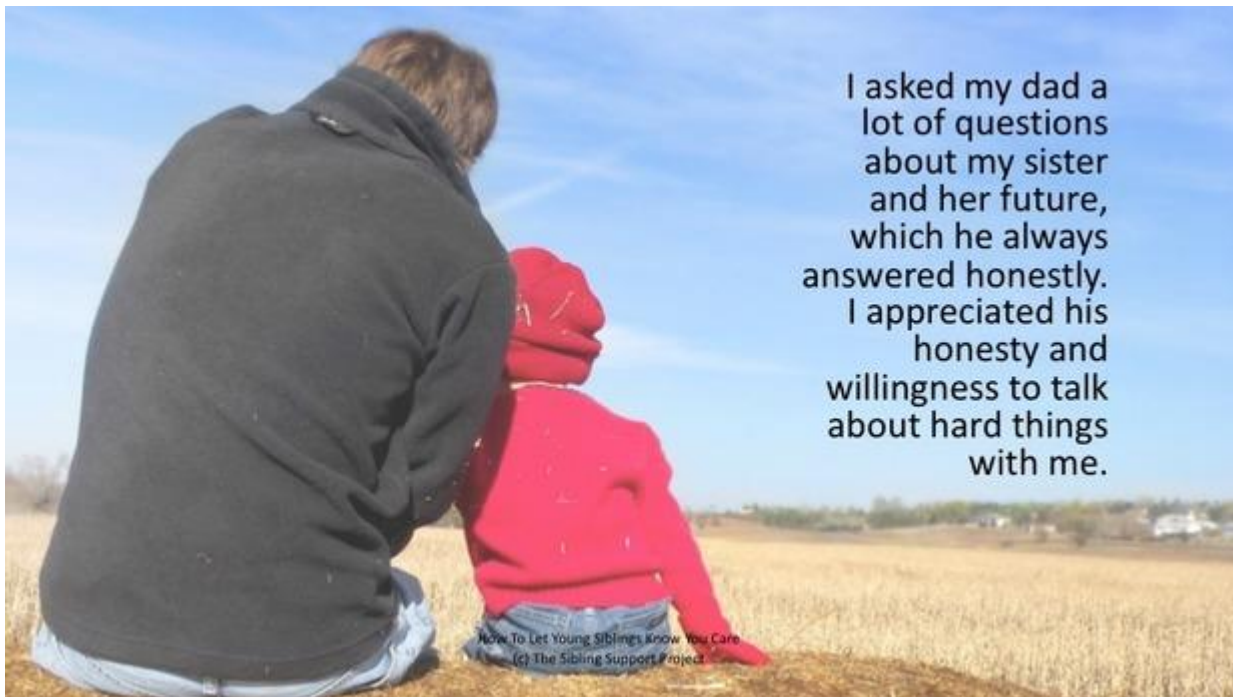


[The Sibling Support Project](#) asked members of our [SibNet](#), [Sib20](#), and [SibTeen](#) Facebook groups to help with a project we called “**How to Let Young Siblings Know You Care.**” We wanted members’ thoughts on how parents and service providers can help young brothers and sisters feel acknowledged, appreciated, and less invisible.





Over fifty teen and adult sibs shared their thoughts with us. **You can see more of their wise advice [in a slide show on our website](#).**



**About the Sibling Support Project:** For over 25 years, the Sibling Support Project has provided support and information to thousands of young, teen, and adult siblings from around the world. We're best known for [Sibshops](#), but we have other sibling initiatives, including [books](#), [workshops](#), [trainings](#), and [social media](#).

We think sibs are a remarkably deserving community. If you agree, here are two easy ways to support our work: [Donate to the Sibling Support Project](#) and shop at the [Sibling Support Project's Amazon Astore](#).

This article was posted by [The Sibling Support Project](#), a [Kindering Center](#) program, by Don Meyer, Director [206-297-6368](tel:206-297-6368) [info@siblingsupport.org](mailto:info@siblingsupport.org)

