

5 tips for brothers and sisters

1. Remember that you are not alone! Every family is confronted with life's challenges... and yes, autism is challenging...but, if you look closely, nearly everyone has something difficult to face in their families.

2. Be proud of your brother or sister. Learn to talk about autism and be open and comfortable describing the disorder to others. If you are comfortable with the topic...they will be comfortable too. If you are embarrassed by your brother or sister, your friends will sense this and it will make it awkward for them. If you talk openly to your friends about autism, they will become comfortable. But, like everyone else, sometimes you will love your brother or sister and sometimes you may not like him or her. It's okay to feel your feelings. And often it's easier when you have a professional counselor to help you understand them – someone special who is here just for you! Love your brother or sister the way he or she is!

3. While it is okay to be sad that you have a brother or sister affected by autism, it doesn't help to be upset and angry for extended periods of time. Your anger doesn't change the situation; it only makes you unhappier. Remember your Mom and Dad may have those feelings too.

4. Spend time with your parents alone. Doing things together as a family with and without your brother or sister strengthens your family bond. It's okay for you to want alone time. Having a family member with autism can often be very time-consuming and attention-grabbing. You need to feel important too. Remember, even if your brother or sister didn't have autism, you would still need alone time with Mom and Dad.



“At first I felt lost and confused about my brother but now that my parents have helped to explain things to me, I can be a better big brother and help my brother when he needs it.”

5. Find an activity you can do with your brother or sister. You will find it rewarding to connect with your brother or sister, even if it is just putting a simple puzzle together. No matter how impaired he or she may be, doing something together creates a closeness. Your brother or sister will look forward to these shared activities and greet you with a special smile.