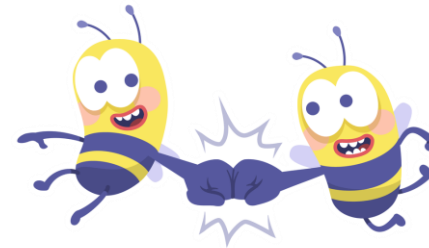


5 Things Families Can Do to Foster Relationships Between Children who Struggle and Typically Developing Siblings

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Sibling Relationships

- Provide significant opportunities for social interaction (particularly useful for children who struggle socially)
- Can provide safety and support as siblings age into adulthood
- Research largely indicates positive adult relationships between typical siblings and siblings with disabilities
- Research indicates that sibling relationships may be impacted by parental caregiving burden

Common Struggles for Typical Siblings Perceived by Parents

- Sharing (attention, materials, space, perspectives)
- Taking on a parenting role
- Managing sibling meltdowns in public
- Impact on typical sibling's behavior and adjustment

Areas of Concern Expressed by Siblings

- Concern about caretaking in the future
- Parental favoritism
- Feelings of anger/resentment
- Less time spent together compared to typically developing siblings



What Steps Can We Take to Address Concerns and Facilitate Positive Relationships?

Reframe

- Find the positives in the situation
 - Will be unique to each family
- Siblings have unique understanding
 - Siblings may be able to provide insight

Monitor Interactions to Gain Insight

- We may think we know why our children are not getting along/not interacting...but do we really?
- Pay attention during interactions to identify themes of disagreements or how the play/interactions/conversations fall flat

Identify What You Want to Facilitate & Define in Specific Terms

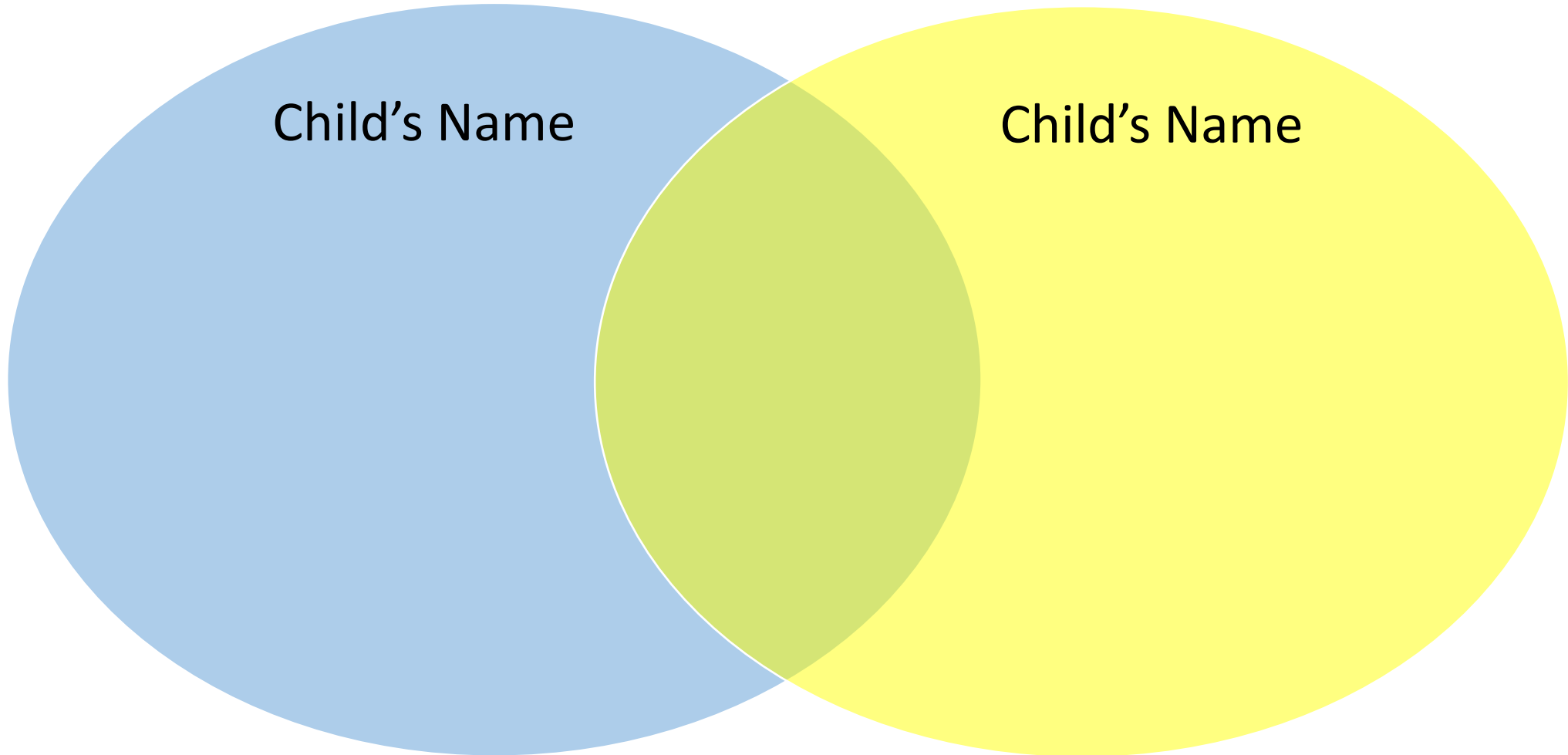
- Decrease bickering?
- Increase cooperative play?
- Increase interactions?
- Increase fun conversation?



Set up for success in interactions

- Identify play or interactions that you can help support
 - Have enough materials to minimize sharing but facilitate interactions
 - Set up parallel play situations
 - Model positive play interactions for both children
 - Avoid “hot” toys (such as restricted interest toys, unless there are enough to give both children without sharing)
 - Cooperative board games instead of competitive board games
 - Consider areas in which the child struggles and then compensate
 - Foster shared interests
 - Identify enjoyable experiences to engage in together (sensory-friendly movies, inclusive sports leagues, etc.)
 - Use a resource to help guide identifying activities with your children
[sesame street ven diagram](#)

Sibling Similarities and Differences



Set up for success in interactions (cont.)

- GET OUTSIDE (if physically able)
 - Pent up energy leads to irritation and fights
 - If inside –physical activities
 - Musical Chairs
 - Freeze Dance
 - Red light green light
 - Jump rope in garage or basement
 - Make small competition
- All of these ideas can be tried in small increments
- All of these are just ideas – you will find many more in your daily lives

Facilitate Knowledge and Understanding

- Provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for siblings to learn more about different types of neurodiversity or physical differences
- Provide opportunities for the typical sibling to ask questions and discuss the disability
- Model how to handle the questions or looks from strangers/acquaintances
- Label and praise strengths of each child daily



Not all things are equal – and that is ok

- Some children need more support than others
- Identifying that everyone in the family will get what they need, and it may not always be equal
- Avoid resentment by acknowledging the unevenness is real to the sibling, and providing 1:1 time with a parent or grandparent
- Acknowledge all emotions as valid
- Set limits on sibling caregiving
- Take time apart
- Allow siblings to treat each other as siblings do

Some days will be better than others

- On these days – note what worked.
- On days that are difficult – note the sticking points

Our attitude is important.



Resources

- Connecting for Kids “Meeting the Needs of Typical Siblings”
 - [podcast and resources](#)
- Sibling Support Project
 - <https://siblingsupport.org/>
- OAR Guide “Brothers, Sisters, and Autism”
 - <https://researchautism.org/how-we-help/families/sibling-support/>