

Suffolk Region

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**Special Education Report**  
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When we think of a family dealing with a child with special needs, we tend to focus on their needs at home, at school and in the community. We advocate for their services in schools, in the home and in the community. We preach inclusivity, and ask that our child is equally treated, like everyone else. As parents, we have anxiety every day, when we put them on the bus or drop them off at school. We worry and we hope that they are having a meltdown free day and pray that when they come home, it was a good day.

Siblings of children with special needs have a lot on their plates. They have a brother or sister, who depending on the severity of their disability, may take up a lot of their parents' or caregivers' time and attention. They see and hear their parents deal with the doctors, the therapist, the teachers and the school districts to make sure that their sibling is getting everything that they need to be a successful individual. Often, the child who does not have a special need, who doesn't experience social anxiety, has friends and doesn't require mom and dad to attend CSE meetings or have an IEP, can sometimes feel neglected and overlooked. As parents we have to remember and acknowledge that we may be the ones who are making our child feel this way.

I read an article in this month's **Parenting Special Needs Magazine**, "A Letter to the Sibling of a Child with Special Needs", by Jennifer A. Janes. The letter addresses how a sibling may be feeling and all the things that parents sometimes know, but are so overwhelmed that we forget. The letter touches on the fact that the sibling is still a child who needs guidance, needs to experience age appropriate activities and probably has already taken on more adult's responsibilities than they should have had to.

Letting your child know that you love them, thanking them for not "rocking the boat", for not making waves and for always understanding is important. Tell your child that you see them, see who they are becoming and let them know how proud you are of them. Acknowledge the fact that despite the frustration, and at times the anger they may feel, we know that they love their sibling and for that we are so happy. Let your child know that you are in their corner and that they can always rely on you.

Lastly, apologize. Apologize for the times that things are so hectic, and out of control. Apologize for forgetting to pick them up, drop them off or just remembering that they made the honor roll this quarter. Apologize for the times that, at the last minute, plans have to be scrapped or postponed due to a meltdown or a doctor's appointment or something that was beyond anyone's control. Apologize for the times when they have felt overlooked, felt unseen and unloved. Apologize for not spending more alone time with them. Ask for forgiveness and try to do better going forward.

**References:**

Parenting Special Needs Magazine- [www.parentingspecialneeds.com](http://www.parentingspecialneeds.com)