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The Resentment and Guilt of not having a disability

As if dealing with the pandemic was not enough, siblings of siblings with special needs/disability feel now more than ever resentment and tremendous guilt for not being born or having a disability. Quite often they feel they do not get the attention needed. More times than not, feeling they are being put on the back burner becomes the “norm” for them. Anger, anxiety, depression, and negative emotions toward their sibling with specials need often arise. These emotions are heightened when plans are made between parent and non-special needs child to have time together. When those plans are disrupted to take care of a special needs child, it sends the message that, while you are important, “you are the lucky one, and should be thankful you don’t have a disability”.

Unequal expectations, consequences for behaviors and responsibilities also add resentment and friction amongst siblings feeling left to do it all. Having to give up daily schedules, social time, events, family time, and vacations greatly impacts the way they themselves feel viewed as a valuable family member.

SMALL WAYS TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR SIBLINGS WITHOUT DISABILITIES

Acknowledging and validating their feeling.

Recognizing when they give up something, re-planning and sticking to it.

Ask a family member or family friend to help with the special needs child in advance to help keep quality time with their other children/child that are not special needs.

Show support for what’s important to them, not matter how big or small.

Seek professional guidance to help keep you while managing both. Support groups are both beneficial and impactful for parents and sibling.

Visit your public library as they often offer activities for both special needs and non-special need sibling with professional support. This allows you the time to attend each activity with each child.

Have your special needs child be part of the recognition of their sibling, this will help build a stronger bond verse resentment.