

# Raising Your Other Children

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1. **Be open and honest, explaining Down syndrome as early as possible.** Encourage other children to ask questions; answer them on their level as honestly as possible. But don't wait for siblings to ask questions. Bring up the topic routinely in conversation.
2. **Allow brothers and sisters to express negative feelings.** Acknowledge the fact that sometimes it is hard to be a brother or sister to someone with a disability. And don't expect siblings to be saints.
3. **Recognize the difficult moments that brothers and sisters may be experiencing.** As brothers and sisters grow up, they often begin to realize that not everyone in society shares their family's beliefs and values. Recognize situations that may be potentially embarrassing or stressful and do what you can to help minimize the difficulty.
4. **Limit caregiving responsibilities.** Children need to be children. Allow them to be brothers and sisters, rather than becoming an extra parent. Your children with disabilities also benefit from having siblings rather than a family full of parents.
5. **Recognize the individuality and uniqueness of each child in the family.** Be sure to point out what makes your children special; they want to know that you notice them, too. Celebrate their accomplishments and schedule special time with each of your children.
6. **Be fair.** Listen to both sides of the story and be certain to make sure each child has responsibilities appropriate to their level of ability.
7. **Take advantage of supports for siblings.** Both local and national groups have opportunities for siblings to meet each other. Such experiences are often validating.
8. **Encourage parents to access support for themselves.** When parents seek out support systems for themselves, they tend to be better equipped for the journey.