A top-down photograph of two children lying on a grey paved surface. The child on the left is wearing a green space helmet and a blue and green striped long-sleeved shirt. The child on the right is wearing a blue helmet and a red, white, and blue striped long-sleeved shirt. To their left, there are colorful chalk drawings on the pavement, including a yellow sun, a blue and red planet with a ring, and a large, multi-colored abstract shape. The text 'MY SIBLING HAS A DISABILITY' is overlaid in white, uppercase letters across the center of the image.

# MY SIBLING HAS A DISABILITY



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# MY SIBLING HAS A DISABILITY - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Sometimes our brothers and sisters are born different or, as a result of an accident or illness they can no longer do what they could before, or do the same things children their age do. There are thousands of different types of disabilities affecting kids and adults. One important thing to know is you cannot catch a disability from your sibling.

## **A disability might affect:**

- How they behave
- How they communicate
- How they get around

This might mean they need more help – such as a teacher aide more doctor visits, a speech therapist, caregiver, or behavioural therapist.

They might use special equipment like a wheelchair, communication device or hearing aids or go to a special school.



# When your sibling is first diagnosed you may have many questions about what this means. Questions are okay.

Can I catch it like a cold?

What will happen in the future?

Will my sibling be like this forever?

Will they die?

How will it affect me?

Can my sibling play with me?



## Children with disabilities have different abilities to our own.

**Sometimes a child with a disability may be referred to as a special sibling.**

Do you have a special sibling?

What is special about your sibling?

What does your sibling need help with?

What is your sibling good at?

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**You can ask your family for more information about the disability and what you can do to help your sibling. You or your family can contact Parent to Parent NZ for accurate information on your sibling's disability.**

# FEELINGS

It is normal to feel many different things when you have a special sibling with a disability. Sometimes there will be good times with positive feelings and sometimes there will be bad times with negative feelings.

You might feel sad that your brother/sister cannot do things with you. You might feel proud when they achieve something. You might feel happy to have a special sibling. You might feel guilty for wanting special time with Mum or Dad. You might feel angry that your sibling is different or if other children are saying mean things about them.

**Happy** when my sibling and I are hanging out and having fun

**Sad** that my sibling cannot do something I can do

**Surprised** when my sibling does something new

**Jealous** when my sibling gets more attention than me

**GUILTY** for wanting my own time with my parents and wanting my own space and toys

**Worried** when I do not know what will happen next

**Scared** when my sibling is in hospital

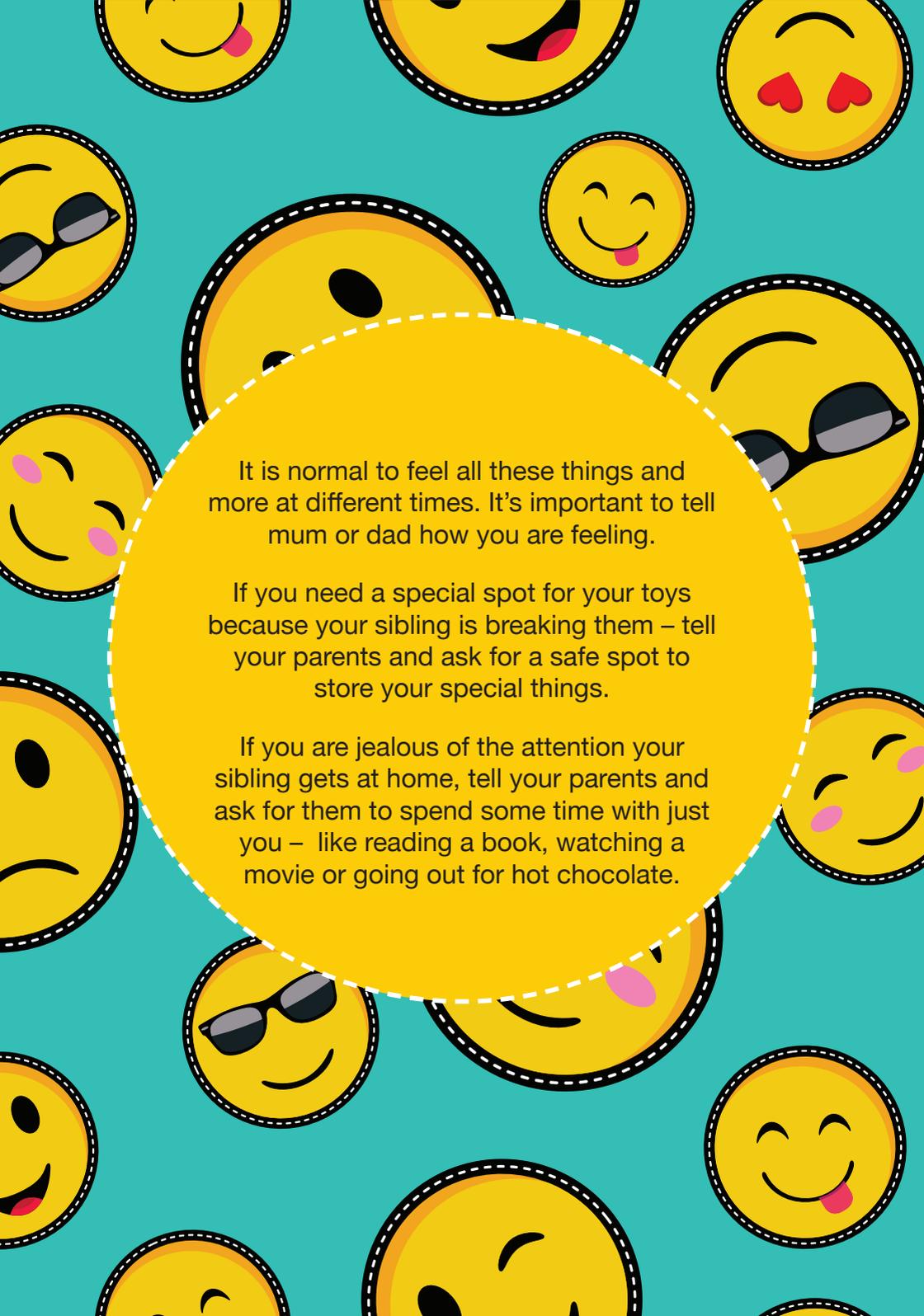
**Embarrassed** when people stare at us

**Angry** when people say mean things to my sibling or me

**Frustrated** when I have to help my sibling a lot

**Lonely** when I can't spend time with my friends because I need to help my sibling

**Annoyed** when some friends don't understand what it is like to have a special sibling



It is normal to feel all these things and more at different times. It's important to tell mum or dad how you are feeling.

If you need a special spot for your toys because your sibling is breaking them – tell your parents and ask for a safe spot to store your special things.

If you are jealous of the attention your sibling gets at home, tell your parents and ask for them to spend some time with just you – like reading a book, watching a movie or going out for hot chocolate.



## SOME ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR SIBLING:

- Play board or card games
- Do a puzzle or word search
- Read them a book
- Play a ball game
- Build a sandcastle
- Watch TV or a movie
- Play a computer game
- Draw a picture or colour in
- Who can sit without laughing the longest
- Play frisbee
- Build a fort
- Take some silly photos

**Do you have any other ideas?**

## **Difficult situations:**

*Sometimes we face difficult situations because our sibling is different. This could mean:*

- They break our things
- They are violent towards us (hit, kick, pull hair)
- People at school are mean to us
- People stare at us.

If any of this is happening, let your parents or another trusted adult (such as an aunt, uncle, caregiver or teacher) know.

You could ask your parents to help you decide what to say to people who stare at your sibling, or if they ask questions. Find out what information your family wants to share with people asking questions, and how should you react to mean comments.

## **Being helpful**

*Sometimes you may want to help but don't know how to.*

- Learn about the disability and ask questions
- Help your sibling if they need help
- Praise them for trying new things
- Show your sibling how to do things if they do not know
- Part of being helpful is doing things for yourself (looking after yourself).

## **Looking after yourself**

*You are important to your parents too, so you can:*

- Ask to spend time with your parents by yourself.
- Do something relaxing by yourself such as a favourite activity.
- See if you can go to a friend's house to spend time away from your sibling.
- See if you can have your own activity after school such as sport. Perhaps a team-mate can help with ride-sharing if your parents need to be at home or have appointments with your sibling.



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