



Safia's Story

These notes are to accompany the Sibs Talk Lite Primary School worksheets

My name is Safia. Some days I am late for school. This is because it can be hard to leave the house in the morning. My brother has something called Cerebral Palsy. This means that he needs lots of extra help to get ready for school as he can't do everything for himself, even though he is older than me. My Mum has to help to wash him, dress him and give him his breakfast. He has a special car seat and my dad needs to help to put him in the car. He goes to a different school to me so we have to take him there first and sometimes the roads are really busy. It can make me feel worried when I know that I am going to be late. I also feel scared in case I get told off because I haven't brought something I need like a PE kit or my homework. I feel embarrassed because everybody else is already doing their work when I arrive. When I feel sad I can talk to my teacher about what is happening at home so they can help me. I can also tell my friends what life is like for me at home so they can help me too.

Questions

1. Why is Safia late for school?
2. What do you know about Cerebral Palsy?
3. How does it affect Safia's brother?
4. What is home like for Safia?

5. How does Safia feel?
6. What might help Safia?
7. Who can Safia ask for help?
8. How can Safia's friends make her feel better?

Difficulties at school – pre-reading

Many siblings have times when things get hard at school because of what is happening at home. Friends and teachers may not understand what things are like for you.

Siblings tell us that it can be hard to get homework done because there is lots going on at home. They get interrupted by their brother or sister, or may have to help to look after them. It is very difficult when this happens.

Some things you can do if you find it hard to do your homework

1. Ask your parent to help you find a quiet place at home to do your work where you won't be disturbed.
2. Tell your teachers if things at home are making it hard for you to do homework.
3. Ask your parent if you can do your homework at a friend's house sometimes.

Many siblings tell us that they get woken up at night by their disabled brothers and sisters, or by their parents caring for their brothers and sisters during the night. You need sleep to stay healthy, to learn at school and to have energy to do sport and fun activities.

Some things you can do if you get woken up at night

1. Talk to your parent about being disturbed at night.
2. Ask your parent if things like nappies and equipment can be stored in another room that you don't sleep in.
3. Ask your parent to tell your teacher that you get woken up at night.

Cerebral Palsy (pre-reading)

Cerebral palsy (or CP for short) is when someone's brain has not developed as it should do, so it can't control the muscles in some parts of the body.

What is it like for siblings if their brother or sister has CP?

Siblings often get on very well with their brothers or sisters who have CP. They might be able to communicate with them really well, when other people find it difficult. Siblings may have to help their brothers and sisters more if they have CP. They may also worry about them or feel guilty that can do things that their brothers and sisters can't, like running or riding a bike.

What causes CP?

It happens when something stops the brain from developing properly. This may be before a child is born, during their birth, or when they are a baby. Sometimes it is possible to find out what caused it – maybe a serious infection, or a brain injury. But sometimes nobody knows why it happened.

What does it mean?

CP affects everyone differently, as it depends on which part of the brain is affected. Some people will only be affected a little bit and others may be affected a lot. People with CP may have difficulties talking, chewing or swallowing. Their speech may be quite slow and hard to understand and they may find it hard to eat, or need their food cut up small so they don't choke. They may also find walking difficult – some people will have just one leg affected whilst others may have all their arms and legs affected. Some people may need crutches or splints and others may use a wheelchair. They may have difficulties going to the toilet – either because they can't get there, or because they can't control the muscles that allow them to wait. Some people will also have other conditions, like epilepsy, learning disability, or poor sight or hearing. However, many people with CP also live successful, happy lives.

What help is there?

CP cannot be cured but there are things that help people with CP:

- Speech and language therapy to help with talking, chewing and swallowing
- Physiotherapy or occupational therapy to help to keep muscles working better
- Operations if muscles get too tight and start to pull the person's bones out of shape, or stop joints (like the wrist, ankle or hip) from moving

- Medicines to stop muscles getting too tight
- Equipment of some sort to help them with their lives – things like wheelchairs or crutches to help them get around, computers to help them write or even to talk for them, or special tools with big handles that are easier to hold

About Sibs

Sibs is the only UK charity representing the needs of siblings of disabled people. There are over half a million young siblings and at least 1.7 million adult siblings in the UK, who have grown up with a disabled brother or sister. Sibs aims to enhance the lives of siblings by providing them with information and support, and by influencing service provision throughout the UK.

Thank you for supporting siblings in your school.

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Sibs relies on donations and grants to support siblings. If this information has helped you in your work, please consider making a small donation at www.sibs.org.uk/donate