

The logo features the word "Sibs" in a large, white, sans-serif font inside a dark purple circle. To the right of the circle is a yellow speech bubble containing the word "talk" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A thick, wavy yellow line loops around the top and right sides of the purple circle.

Sibs talk

# Why do they do that?

## Coping with behaviour that is difficult

A booklet for young people who are siblings of disabled children



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Sibs talk

What's  
this?

## About this booklet

We have written this booklet for children and young people like you (siblings) who are growing up with a disabled brother or sister. Siblings tell us it can be hard when a brother or sister shows behaviour that makes them feel upset or worried.

Talking about behaviour that challenges can be tricky for siblings and their families. We have asked siblings, parents and people who work with siblings to help us write this booklet.

We hope this information will help you understand why it happens and how you can get help.

We would like to know what you think of this booklet. You can write to us at [info@sibs.org.uk](mailto:info@sibs.org.uk)

Remember you can find lots more help and advice written for young siblings at [www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs](http://www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs)

*the Sibs team*



take me to  
the youngsibs  
website

Do you  
know


## What is behaviour that challenges?

**Behaviour that challenges** is when someone with a disability or who is autistic displays behaviours such as:

- **Hurting others** by hitting, kicking, biting, scratching or screaming
- **Hurting themselves** by banging their ears, biting themselves or picking at their skin
- **Damaging things** by ripping clothes, breaking windows or throwing things

They might also have tantrums, run away, eat things that they shouldn't. They may also rock backwards and forwards.

When your brother or sister displays **behaviours that challenge** it can make you feel **unsafe, sad or frightened**. It is important to get help with these feelings. **It is NOT OK to get hurt.**



Talk to your parent or teacher about what it's like for you to live with a brother or sister who displays behaviour which is difficult.

so...

## How does it make you feel?

When someone in a family displays **behaviours that challenge**, it affects lots of brothers and sisters like you. You might feel lots of different things when your brother or sister displays behaviours that challenge or which you find difficult to cope with. You might feel:

- **Frightened** in case you get hurt
- **Worried** in case your brother or sister hurts themselves
- **Annoyed** because it's interrupting your family life
- **Angry** because it's not fair
- **Embarrassed** because it happens when other people can see it
- **Guilty** because you can't make it better
- **Tired** because it keeps you awake at nighttime
- **Upset** because you've been hurt
- **Lonely** because nobody understands
- **Scared** because you have seen a parent get hurt

**It is VERY normal to feel all of these things.** It can help you to talk about your feelings to somebody like a parent, teacher or school counsellor. The YoungSibs website has lots of information about what life is like when you are a sibling. You can ask your teacher or parent to help you find this information.

I can speak to somebody about how I feel about my brother or sister's behaviour.



But...

## Why does it happen?

There are lots of different reasons why your disabled brother or sister might display **behaviours that challenge** or behaviour which you find difficult to cope with.

If you are hungry, want to play your favourite game or you have hurt yourself, you can probably make a choice and tell people what you want. Your sister or brother with a learning disability or who is autistic may not be able to easily let people know what they want or how they feel. They might feel very frustrated or upset.

Behaviour which might seem challenging to you might be the best way for your brother or sister to show people that something is not right or they need something. Your disabled brother or sister might also display behaviours that challenge because:

- They are hungry or tired
- They are in pain or uncomfortable
- They are confused or worried about something
- They feel anxious
- They want to do something or have something
- They are bored
- They want attention
- They want something to stop

When your brother or sister displays behaviours that challenge, **you might feel that you get blamed for it.**

It is important to remember **that it is not your fault** if your brother or sister hurts you or your family. **It is not OK for anyone to get hurt.**



Ask your parent if they can tell you more about what causes your brother or sister's behaviour.

Help...

## What should I do if I get hurt?

When your brother or sister with a learning disability or who is autistic displays **behaviours that challenge**, they might hurt you. There are different ways that you can get hurt:

- Being hit, punched, kicked, bitten or scratched
- Having your hair pulled
- Stuff being thrown at you

**It is not OK if any of these things happen to you.** If you are badly injured by your brother or sister, an adult must take you to the nurse or a hospital. You might have:

- A broken bone
- Bad bruising
- A bang to the head

Even a small scratch might need looking at. **It is important that you get help if your brother or sister hurts you.**

Sometimes, when a person displays behaviours that challenge, situations can get out of control.

If a parent is getting hurt, is being attacked with an object like a knife, or you think **that they are in danger, you must dial 999.**

Tell somebody if you ever get hurt.



How...

## Can I stay safe?

When your brother or sister displays **behaviours that challenge**, it can make you feel unsafe. You might worry that you will get hurt by your brother or sister. You might feel sad that you don't feel safe.

### It is important that you know how to stay safe:

Some things you could do are:

- Leave the room when your brother or sister is displaying behaviours that challenge
- Go to your bedroom, or another room and shut the door
- Phone a family member or friend who can talk to you whilst it is happening and who will reassure you
- Ask your parent to make a plan with you to protect you from being hurt
- Ask your parent if you can spend time out of the house with a relative or a friend
- Be aware of what might make your brother or sister display behaviour that challenges and if you notice that they are starting to get upset, you can keep yourself safe



Ask your parent to make a plan with you to help you to stay safe.

Hey...

## Where can I get help?

When you have a brother or sister who displays **behaviours that challenge**, there can be a lot happening at home. **It can make school difficult too.**

It can be hard when:

- There is nowhere quiet to do homework
- Homework gets damaged or destroyed
- Night times are disturbed
- You are late to school
- You can't have friends round to your house

**It is important that you get help from school and at home.**

It's also important to look after your own health and wellbeing. You could take a break, make time to listen to music, go for a walk or have a chat with family or friends.

You could also:

- Ask your parent to help you find a quiet place at home to do your work where you won't be disturbed
- Tell your teachers if things at home are making it hard for you to do homework
- Ask your parent to contact your teachers and tell them about what is happening at home
- Look at [www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs](http://www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs) for information about being a sibling
- Go to [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) if you need help or support

Tell a teacher or a person you trust about what things are like for you at home and at school.



take me to  
the youngsibs  
website

