

# **OLDER SIBLINGS WORKSHOP**

**Age:** Over 10 years old

**Duration:** 1 hour

## **Schedule**

### **15 minutes: Icebreaker Activity**

- Go around the room and have everyone say their name & favorite flavor of ice cream

### **5 minutes: Welcome**

- Go over bathroom locations, confidentiality, respecting one another

### **20 minutes: Understanding Down syndrome: *Similarities & Differences***

#### **SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES**

#### ***Supplies Needed:***

- Paper and drawing utensils

#### ***Lessons learned:***

- Participants discuss strengths and weaknesses of themselves and their sibling to learn that they are alike.
- Participants will get accurate answers to their questions about Down syndrome that may arise as participants discuss differences.

For participants on the younger spectrum of the age group of 10 and older, they can draw a self-portrait and then another portrait of their sibling. They can then use these pictures to prompt discussions of similarities, differences, what makes each of unique, what you like and don't like about your sibling, etc. Also talk about the ways in which participants are similar and different to their siblings. For example, they may share the same hair or eye color, or they may have the same favorite TV show. They may have differences within their favorite sports, how fast they learn, and favorite teacher or subject in school. These questions and prompts can lead to further discussions about various situations and experiences brothers and sisters may find themselves in. Many of these situations and emotions will be covered in the Topics section of this site, so be sure to check that out, so that you're prepared for the conversations that will arise!

## **10 minutes: Difficult Moments**

### **DIFFICULT MOMENTS**

#### ***Supplies Needed:***

- Index cards
- Markers/pens
- Shoe box

#### ***Lessons learned:***

- Participants will have the freedom to bring up Difficult moments they have had in the past
- Participants will get a chance to discuss these issues with their peers and the facilitators and have their feelings be validated
- Participants will leave with practical solutions to handle future difficult moments
- Participants will benefit from the discussion and requisite growth around a particular topic

Combining the Question Box activity with Difficult Moments is a great way to give brothers and sisters the opportunity to anonymously write any difficulties that they have had with their sibling on an index card and drop it into a shoe box or bag positioned in the room. You may want to start with a time to write some situations down at the beginning of the Workshop and then follow up with some designated time throughout the rest of the Workshop. Brothers and sisters should also know that they can write questions throughout the Workshop, outside of the designated times, as well. It will be important to leave the index cards and pencils out for participants to use through the Workshop. At other times throughout the Workshop, assemble the brothers and sisters into a circle (different circles for each age group). Ask one of the participants to pull a difficult moment and read it out loud, and then you can ask for some advice from the other participants. Oftentimes, siblings can help each other and answer their own questions! Other times, you might need to jump in and offer some direction or reflections. Use these questions as opportunities to talk about some larger topics that are important to brothers and sisters. Make sure you create a safe environment so that brothers and sisters feel safe to share their thoughts and ask any questions there that they may have.

## **10 minutes: Closing Remarks**

- Share with them the *Benefits of Having a Sibling with Down syndrome*
- Have siblings come up with their own list of benefits

### **BENEFITS OF HAVING A SIBLING WITH DOWN SYNDROME**

There is a long list of all the benefits of having a sibling with Down syndrome. Your sibling will show you things about the world and your life that you never would have learned except through them. We are a special group of people; I can promise you that. Things can be tough; there's no doubt about it. But your sibling will provide you with unconditional love and teachings about yourself and others. Siblings of people with Down syndrome listed the following things as just a few of the benefits they've gotten from being the sibling of someone with Down syndrome.



### **KEEP IN MIND...**

1. Acknowledge the range of feelings that siblings may bring to the workshop.
2. Say what they feel is common—others experience that, too.
3. Give them practical things to do to remedy the situation.

## **RESOURCES TO CHECK OUT**

1. Read up on different Topics to prepare for any questions that may arise!
2. Look under Activities to download worksheets and explore different games.
3. Check out Dr. Skotko & Sue Levine's book *Fasten Your Seatbelt: A Crash Course on Down Syndrome for Brothers and Sisters* for more helpful information!