

YOUNG SIBLINGS WORKSHOP

Age: Under 10 years old

Duration: 1 hour

Schedule

15 minutes: Icebreaker Activity

- Go around the room and have everyone say their name & favorite animal

5 minutes: Welcome

- Go over bathroom locations, confidentiality, respecting one another

15 minutes: Understanding Down Syndrome: *Reading a Story*

READING A STORY

Supplies Needed:

- A children's book that will prompt conversation about Down syndrome. There are many to choose from. Find your book by checking out www.woodbinehouse.com.

Lessons learned:

- Participants will get to know facts and experiences of Down syndrome
Facilitators should use this activity as an opportunity to teach brothers and sisters about Down syndrome, factually and from practical experience. Participants should use this activity to address some facts, feelings, and difficult moments about Down syndrome. Some important facts can be found in the "Activities for Older Participants" section of this site, specifically in the Jeopardy game. In our Topics sections, you can learn about commonly experienced feelings from brothers and sisters. Facilitators can also use this to begin discussions about brothers' and sisters' individual experiences of having a sibling with Down syndrome.

10 minutes: Sensitivity Game: Spelling Test

SPELLING TEST

Supplies Needed:

- Paper
- Spelling words for leader
- Writing utensil

Lessons learned:

- Participants will gain empathy for their siblings and others, especially in an academic context.

In this game, leaders should have a list of spelling words that they ask participants to write down on their paper. Have participants number their papers 1-10. Then, instead of saying the spelling word, sign it! Talk about

how confused they feel with the words presented in that fashion. Discuss when their sibling might feel this way in a school setting.

10 minutes: Difficult Moments

DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Supplies Needed:

- Paper bags
- Facial feature art pieces (googly eyes, etc.)
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Popsicle sticks
- Other decorations!

Lessons learned:

- Participants explore negative experiences and feelings with their sibling.
- Participants learn it's okay to talk about the difficult moments that their siblings and they, themselves, may sometimes experience because of how they are acting.

While there are many good times, all sibling relationships have difficult moments. To better examine some of those times when your brother or sister can really make you angry, try making monsters! You can make paper bag puppets, or as in the photo above, you can have each child make a set of eyes and a mouth. Pre-cut the shapes and supply markers, crayons, etc., so that they can decorate. Add a Popsicle stick to the eyes and another to the mouth so they can be more easily held up to the face to use as a mask. Note the mouth can be held either with the smile or the frown. Have the children

talk about when their sibling acts like a monster. Similarly, have the children say when they act like monsters to other family members!

5 minutes: Closing Remarks

- Share with them *Benefits of Having a Sibling with Down Syndrome*
- Have them 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.

Some benefits that other siblings have come up with include:

- Someone to play with
- Happy
- Best friend
- Loving
- Kind
- Caring
- Fun

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!