

# YOUNG SIBLINGS WORKSHOP

**Age:** Under 10 years old

**Duration:** 2 hours

## Schedule

### 15 minutes: Icebreaker Activity

- Go around the room and have everyone say their name & favorite game to play with their sibling

### 5 minutes: Welcome

- Go over bathroom locations, confidentiality, respecting one another

### 20 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](http://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.

### **5 minutes: BREAK**

### **15 minutes: Sensitivity Game: Gloves & Coins**

#### **GLOVES & COINS**

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

- A pair of mittens for each participant
- Coins

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

- Participants will gain understanding and empathy for their siblings
- The empathy gained here will promote understanding and patience for siblings

For this game, brothers and sisters need to put on a pair of mittens and try to pick up coins. This will help brothers and sisters to understand what some of their siblings may be experiencing in difficulties with fine motor skill development.

## **15 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!

## **15 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.

## **5 minutes: BREAK**

## **15 minutes: Question Box**

### **QUESTION BOX**

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

- Index cards
- Markers/pens
- Shoe box

***Lessons learned:***

- Participants will have the freedom to ask questions about Down syndrome and their sibling, specifically, that they may not normally ask
- Participants will get accurate answers to their questions about Down syndrome, learning good facts
- Participants will benefit from the discussion and requisite growth around a particular topic

The Question Box is a great activity that gives brothers and sisters the opportunity to anonymously write any questions they have about 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 questions 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 question 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 *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!