

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.

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: Feelings- Happy, Sad, or Mad

FEELINGS- HAPPY, SAD, OR MAD

Supplies Needed:

- Paper or stick puppets
- Writing utensils
- If younger group, have a "feelings board" that can be found here!

Lessons learned:

- Participants will find a new way of expressing and understanding their feelings about their sibling.

- Participants will have the opportunity to talk with other siblings, as well as the facilitator, about their feelings and find ways to help tough situations.

There are a few ways you can do this activity:

1. Help the participants fold a paper into three columns. At the top of each column, make a happy, sad, and mad face. Discuss with the participants when they feel happy, sad, or mad about their sibling with Down syndrome. Do the same for when the brother or sister thinks they make their sibling happy, mad, or sad.

2. Make stick puppets that each represent happy, sad, or mad emotion. Then, use these to help brothers and sisters express what makes them happy, sad, or mad that their sibling does. Do the same for when the brother or sister thinks they make their sibling happy, mad, or sad.

Reassure them that their feelings are normal and okay, using some resources as outlined in the Topics section. Provide some steps for brothers and sisters to take when they're feeling really mad or have a big problem with their sibling. They should always be encouraged to go to their parents and try to look at the situation differently. More specific steps can also be found in the Topics section of this site.

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: Disability Pictionary

DISABILITY Pictionary

Supplies Needed:

- Pictionary topic cards
- Paper
- Writing utensils

Lessons Learned:

- Participants will learn people-first language
- Participants will learn empathy and understanding of other disabilities

Play a game of Pictionary disability-style by making all of the questions about disability! This is a great opportunity to practice teaching people-first language, too. To prepare, write the following words each on a separate index card:

- Chromosome
- Wheelchair
- Seeing eye dog (guide dog)
- Special Olympics
- Hearing aid
- Translocation Down syndrome chromosomes

Ask the group to divide into two teams. Alternate between teams, inviting one person up to be the illustrator. Show them one of the cards privately, and they then would have 60 seconds to draw without using any verbal cues. If their teammates are able to guess the word, then they would score one point.

At some point, a participant might blurt out a phrase that is not in People First language. Use this as an opportunity to take a mini-break to discuss the pdf below.

After you have had enough back-and-forth rounds, ask each team to assemble and write one word on a card, which will be used for the Final Round for the other team. For example, if Team 1 were to write, “occupational therapist,” you would then present this card to Team 2 during the Final Round. Points can be tripled during the Final Round!

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!