

Difficult Moments

Imagine you're the parent of two sons, one of whom has Down syndrome and the other does not:

You notice that your five-year-old daughter, Melissa, has been behaving poorly when therapists come to the home to provide early intervention services for your eight-month-old daughter, Kimberly, who has Down syndrome. You are embarrassed by her behavior and worried at the same time. The therapist asks you how much Melissa understands about Down syndrome. You explain that you have never discussed it with her. How would you bring the subject up? And what might you consider doing differently to help therapy sessions go more smoothly?

Your dad is assigning chores for you and your sibling, Joe, who has Down syndrome, to complete before you can go out with your friends. Joe always gets easier chores than you do. Instead of cleaning his entire room like you do, Joe only has to pick up three toys and then dad comes and does the rest of it. This is not fair! To make it worse, Joe is the oldest, so shouldn't he be doing more chores anyway?! What can you do to make this situation better for yourself?

You were hanging out with your group of friends when they started to make fun of one of your classmates who walks awkwardly and with a noticeable limp. You were too self-conscious to speak up and defend the student, though. You feel miserable about this. What can you do next? If you talk to your parents or someone else, what do you think they would tell you to do?

Here are some notes on these:

- All of the topics addressed in these situations have sections in the "Topics" section of this site.
- It is very helpful to explain to younger children what Down syndrome is and how it will affect them and the family. You should also make time that is just for you and Melissa to spend together without Kimberly so that Melissa feels like she's getting the attention she needs.
- It will be important to help Larry understand that you are trying to be as fair as possible. Joe may not be able to do as many things as Larry, but maybe you all can look at some more things that Joe can do around the house to make things a little more fair. Joe is always learning new things and it's important for him to keep learning! One way he can do this is by picking up more responsibility around the house. Maybe Larry can even help teach Joe some new tasks!