

## Unit 2, a

### SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

The word sibling once meant anyone who is related to you, but now it's reserved for children of the same parent or parents. Most people grow up in a family with at least one brother or sister. A sibling is one of two or more individuals having one or both parents in common. **A full sibling is a first-degree relative.** A male sibling is a brother, and a female sibling is a sister. In most societies throughout the world, siblings often grow up together, thereby facilitating the development of strong emotional bonds. The emotional bond between siblings is often complicated and is influenced by factors such as parental treatment, birth order, personality, and personal experiences outside the family.

The relationship between siblings can be marked with rivalry and conflict, but can also be one of the closest and intimate relationships a person has in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990;Volling, 2003).

**Three reasons why sibling relationships are very important:** During Childhood to Young Adulthood the sibling relationships plays an important role in every sphere of their life. Even in old age the people can relish the taste of a healthy sibling relationship. The benefits of a healthy sibling relationship can last a lifetime. Throughout the years they can become supportive friends.

1. Friendships may come and go, but you're stuck with your sibling. This relationship is oftentimes one of the longest relationships in a person's life.
2. Sibling relationships are authentic. Often siblings grow up in the same environment, share the same parents, and share common memories and similar experiences.

3. Our siblings are our family tree. They are a part of who we are and that relationship is a shared history that makes this unique relationship invaluable.

4. They shape the person you become: Kids raised with siblings have a natural understanding that people can be very different. The brother might be quiet, and an avid reader. The sister might be a barefoot adventurer at heart. When you grow up with people with different aptitudes and personalities than yourself, it instills a very high social and emotional understanding of people around you; even much later in life.

5. They help you communicate better: People with siblings have negotiated a lot in their younger days. Watching and listening to siblings helps kids strengthen their communication loop. They quickly understand what will work and what won't with their friends. They also develop unique methods to negotiate with their parents.

6. They cement your attitude towards the opposite sex: People who have grown up with siblings of the opposite sex are presented with ample opportunities to understand the challenges of the opposite sex. This study of the Pennsylvania State University found that siblings of different sexes have an easier time attracting the opposite sex and succeed in very high levels of engagement while getting together.

7. It translates to real success. All that better understanding of human nature and relationships translates to real success.

8. It's one of the most enduring relationships of your life. Children who grew up with healthy relationships with their siblings tend to feel more supported and secure during adulthood. Not surprisingly, this is because siblings know you right through your soul as a result of sharing the same parents, same environment, same conditioning, same discipline and even the same disappointments.

### **Types of Sibling relationships:**

Most research shows that there are at least **five types** of sibling relationships.

- 1) **Intimate** – extremely devoted, placing sibling relationship above all others.
- 2) **Congenial** – close and caring friends, but place a higher value on marriage and parent/child relationships.
- 3) **Loyal** – based on common family history, maintain regular contact, participate in family gatherings and are there in times of crisis.
- 4) **Apathetic** – don't really feel connected and have infrequent to no contact.
- 5) **Hostile** – based on resentment and anger. **\*\*\*(SIBLING RIVALRY)**

Of those five types, the healthiest adult sibling relationships are either congenial or loyal. Viewing your siblings as close friends and having some family loyalty can come in handy as you get older and your social circle shrinks. Many older adults find sibling relationships more satisfying and reliable in their lives. Some look at sibling relationships as an hour glass effect. Very close in the early years, slim to none in the teen to young adult years, then growing closer as the years go by.

**\*\*\*SIBLING RIVALRY** – Sibling rivalry describes the competitive relationship or animosity between siblings, blood-related or not. Often competition is the result of a desire for greater attention from parents.

However, even the most conscientious parents can expect to see sibling rivalry in play to a degree. Children tend to naturally compete with each other for not only attention from parents but for recognition in the world.

Siblings generally spend more time together during childhood than they do with parents. The sibling bond is often complicated and is influenced by factors such as parental treatment, birth order, personality, and people and experiences outside the family.

**Causes:** There are many things that can influence and shape sibling rivalry. **Sigmund Freud** saw the sibling relationship as an extension of the Oedipus complex, where brothers were in competition for their mother's attention and sisters for their father's.[39] For example, in the case of Little Hans, Freud postulated that the young boy's fear of horses was related to jealousy of his baby sister, as well as the boy's desire to replace his father as his mother's mate.

According to Kyla Boyse from the University of Michigan, each child in a family competes to define who they are as individuals and want to show that they are separate from their siblings. Children may feel they are getting unequal amounts of their parents' attention, discipline, and responsiveness. Children fight more in families where there is no understanding that fighting is not an acceptable way to resolve conflicts, and no alternative ways of handling such conflicts. Stress in the parents' and children's lives can create more conflict and increase sibling rivalry.

**So while all of this may sound nice, how do you encourage and promote a healthy sibling relationship?**

- ✓ Start early. Parents encourage respect among siblings from the get-go. Don't tolerate negative and harmful behaviors in the sibling relationship.
- ✓ Provide your children with opportunities to share time and activities with you. Be wary of sibling rivalry and try to "nip it in the bud" if you see it beginning to occur.
- ✓ Avoid showing favoritism. This is probably the most common reason for sibling resentment. Let your children know that you value each and every one of them by making one-on-one time for each child. Set aside some time to spend with your children. This will help them feel special and appreciated.
- ✓ Set a time for family meetings (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly). Get together with all of the family to talk freely about grievances, issues, and celebrations. Give each person a chance to speak about what's on his/her plate and then focus on finding solutions to the problems.
- ✓ Encourage healthy communication between siblings. If they have disagreements allow them to work it out in a healthy way. Teach them how to negotiate and compromise (give and take) and how to look for win-win

solutions. You may have to help them establish the rules and guide them at first, but once they are able to do it on their own, stand back.

- ✓ As children get older, encourage them to maintain a relationship or to do things together. This can become more of a task when they are teens and have independent lives, but a little family time built into each month is a great way to encourage this relationship.
- ✓ Heal the past. The first step to establishing a healthy adult sibling relationship is to release baggage you're carrying from childhood. A common source of resentment between siblings is a feeling that a parent favored one over the others. It's important in these situations not to be defensive, and to listen and appreciate a sibling's perspective.
- ✓ Share your goals. Like friendships and romantic relationships, sibling relationships require ongoing check-ins to make sure everyone's needs are being met. An easy topic to bond over is where you want to go in life, both in terms of this specific relationship and your overall goals.
- ✓ Avoid contentious issues. When talking with your sibling, don't bring up anything that could create strife, like politics, religion or even rehashing traumatic childhood memories.
- ✓ Don't compare yourselves. While it might seem that siblings start from the same playing field, research shows that birth order affects children's experiences.
- ✓ Verbalize your appreciation. Just as you might regularly tell your spouse or partner you love them, siblings need those reassurances too.
- ✓ Cultivate a friendship. It's simple to fall back on your shared history with a sibling, resting on the idea that you both must deeply know each other because you grew up together. But aging changes us into vastly different

people, and it's entirely possible your sibling might not even know who you truly have become as an adult.

- ✓ There's always hope. For mothers who had a poor relationship with a sibling growing up, their offspring had a more positive relationship relative to the other families in the study.

Most parents want nothing more than their children to get along. Siblings are essential to child development. The benefits of a healthy sibling relationship can last a lifetime. Throughout the years they can become supportive friends.