



## Strengths and Strategies

### STRENGTHS AND STRATEGIES OF SIBLINGS

- There are misconceptions about the negative impact having a disabled brother/sister has on a sibling. While there are many concerns and special challenges, there are also significant positive attributes which may develop as an outgrowth of the experience.

### TOLERANCE

- The ability to accept differences in their disabled brother/sister extends to accepting and appreciating the differences in people. Siblings of disabled children have increased sensitivity to the needs of others and tend to be more tolerant of diversity.

### PATIENCE

- Siblings have experience watching their brother/sister master new tasks by taking very small steps. They must exercise self-control to allow their sibling to learn to do things for themselves. In addition, they develop patience as the family makes adaptations to accommodate the needs of the disabled child. Coping with their brothers/sisters' idiosyncratic behaviors requires siblings to exercise self control.

### MATURITY

- Siblings of children with disabilities often have important family responsibilities, which may result in increased self-reliance and independence. Siblings have a mature and realistic view of the world, understanding that life is not always as one would wish. Siblings often know that they make a significant contribution to the functioning of the family. They can be relied upon to fulfill an important role within the family unit because others depend on them to do so.

### TEACHING SKILLS

- Siblings are often extremely competent teachers of their disabled brother/sister. Their closeness and knowledge of the disabled child makes the sibling uniquely able to be effective. Siblings also are demanding and frequently have high expectations and belief in the ability of their sibling to achieve. They are often excellent motivators. Many siblings eventually use these skills and interest in helping professions.

### BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

- Having a child with a disability in the family requires that all members accommodate to the needs of that child. Often this means having to revise or cancel plans, adapting the environment or changing schedules to meet therapy sessions or medical appointments. Children learn that they must be flexible and accommodating in order to function as a family.

### HUMOR

- Humor is an effective coping mechanism, which helps children manage strong feelings, uncomfortable circumstances and stress. Laughing is a positive tool for coping with difficult life situations.