

# SIBLINGS

For OPTIMUM DEVELOPMENT



parents in old age as well as for the members of sibling groups. The complex interplay of family factors may involve negative parenting practices, such as coercive discipline (bribing or spanking) and inadequate parental monitoring (being unaware of where the children are and what games are being played). These ineffective parenting practices can combine with parental tolerance of sibling conflict, often leading to high level of negative sibling interaction. When actual preferential treatment of one sibling occur one sibling is treated with less affection and more coercion by the parents. The sibling rivalry, sibling aggression and sibling avoidance become more intense.

Overall sibling relationships are close during early and middle childhood. They decrease slightly during adolescence and in early and middle adulthood and increase in oldage as individual reaches the final stage of life cycle. Perhaps the most fascinating thing about sibling relationships is their sheer variety. No two sibling relationships are the same whether positive, negative or both. However from these interactions children really learn a lot about relationships.

There is great need to educate parents and both older as well as younger siblings for sensitizing them about developmental changes that take place in children with advancing age, their priorities and interests for preventing inter and intra personal conflicts in order to promote understanding and cordial relations among them in order to attain optimum development and sound mental health.

**Visala Patnam and Minal Bandale**  
Dept. of Child Development  
College of Home Science  
Marathwada Agricultural University, Parbhani

complementary, with brothers being the protectors of their sisters and the sisters being the "Spiritual mentor" of their brothers. Brother-sister relationships is of most important in marital arrangements and brother-brother relationship in social and economical activities. Brothers and sisters tend to influence each other's gender role development. Boys with sisters score higher in expressiveness than the boys with brothers and the girls with brothers score higher on competitiveness and assertiveness. Boys with brothers are reported as being more violent than boys with sister.

Competitiveness, rivalry, jealousy appears to be more intense between same-gender siblings than different gender siblings. It is also found that age gap of two to four years between siblings may be optimal for greater mental stimulation from one another while it reduces conflicts and that the closer siblings are in age, the greater their chances of sharing development events in similar ways. However play, companionship and affection are shown whether the age gap is four years or eleven months so too aggression, hostility and teasing. If there are three or more years between the children the younger children may idealize the older one rather than compete with them. Wider spacing allows the older children to experience seperation from mothers at their own pace. It is also found that if age gap of two to four years tends to produce more conflicts and rivalry because siblings with less gap have especially similar lives. However, research to date indicates that how well or how badly-siblings get along is actually more to do with the children's individual temperament. As the number of siblings increases the relationship between siblings negatively gets affected because additional siblings tend to dilute parental resources such as time, energy, money. On the other hand large sibling group offers a greater support system for



Sibling relationships often been identified as ones life's most influential and long lasting relationships lasting even longer than the ties with parents, spouse and own children. Older siblings are important because they know and study younger siblings right from birth. Older siblings provide emotional & moral support and guidance to younger ones in various aspects of life whether parents are alive or dead. Since older siblings belong to the same generation they understand and guide properly the younger siblings in which parents simply may fail to do so. Unlike parents, siblings do not choose each other, that's why their relationships become an unique one. Siblings act as a confidant as well as a buffer in situations of conflicts with family and friends. In crisis events like parental death or divorce or accidents siblings get support and comfort from each other to cope with, perhaps primarily their parents and adults in families become emotionally unavailable due to their stress, illness or preoccupation with responsibilities. Older siblings take up the roles of parents and provide affection and psychological support to younger siblings. Friends come and go in life, where as siblings remains in life forever and share life time worth memories and experince. Many child psychologists indicate that a brother or a sister provide encouragement, support, friendship and guidance to younger siblings all throughout life. The seeds of love sown in the day to day interactions with siblings during childhood grow up to be a sustainable supportive network for both younger & older siblings and to their family members.

Siblings typically spend large amount of time together, serving each other first as playmates and companions. Therefore, it is not surprising that sibling relationship influence their overall development. Young siblings learn many skills

either directly or indirectly from their older siblings by observing & studying their experience and achievements. The younger ones decide what to adopt and what not to adopt from them. The research work indicates that younger siblings imitate older siblings that is why older siblings serve as effective teachers and role models for the younger siblings.

Interactions between siblings have special significance in children's social, emotional, cognitive, motor and moral development domains. Siblings become as fundamental part of most children's social world. Older siblings act as guides, managers and helpers while playing with younger siblings and the younger siblings assume the corresponding roles automatically like follower managee and helpee. In such situations siblings learn not only about their own roles and responsibilities but also corresponding ones.

Having a older sibling helps a child learn how to make friends at an early age. The sibling relationships foster many skills required for building & maintaining peer relationships including intimacy, trust, conflict resolution, identity formation etc. Sibling interactions are frequent, uninhibited and intense. They offer unrivalled context in which they develop positive and negative social skills like comforting, sharing, co-operating, politeness, deceiving, manipulating, arguing, unrevealing etc.

Sibling relationship tends to display greater moral maturity and also provide strong emotional support for each other and they often grow closer in case of difficult and crisis situations like parental divorce or remarriage. It is noted that having siblings mean having always someone to get support, care, protection, guidance etc. The lessons learned from siblings can act as powerful

force in shaping one's personality.

Generally though siblings inherit on an average half of their parental genes, in born difference in siblings' nature, interests, potential etc are noted. When one likes studying, the other one may like playing. Many factors influence sibling relations such as gender, birth order, temperament, age spacing, number of siblings etc. Sibling relationships are embedded in the family and are also influenced by adopted parenting styles and kind of relationship parents maintain.

The second child usually doesn't get nearly the attention received by the older sibling and deviate from the pattern already established by the first born. Second born will often go outside of the family constellation as they grow up. The support of peers become more important than the tug of war of the parents. The second born are more social, crave for their distinct identity, good mediators, good at art of negotiation and compromise.

By the time the last born child comes along, parents become considerably liberal in their child upbringing practices and tend to treat lastborn as special children. The last born become attention seeking, manipulative, people-oriented and a charmer. Last born are social, loving and open but also demanding, tempermental, irresponsible and self-centered.

Gender often plays a vital role in sibling relationship. The relationship between sisters which appears to be the closest, with brother-sister pairs in between in closeness and brother-brother pairs least clonsess were noticed. Sister are more likely to take up care taking roles and maintain communication between the rest of the family and brothers. Sisters act as a counsellor and motivators for brothers. Sisters and brothers are regarded as