

We know how **difficult** it can be on **all the family** to have a child with a health condition. We also know it can be especially difficult on their **siblings** due to all the **changes** going on.

We have created this leaflet to outline some of the main **emotions** siblings may go through as well as some **suggestions** that might be **helpful** for siblings and for you as their grown up.

We hope you found this helpful!
If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us



A GROWN UPS GUIDE TO HELPING SIBLINGS

Paediatric Psychology Service

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust
Children and Family Services
Monkmoor Campus
Woodcote Way
Shrewsbury, SY2 5SH

HERE ARE SOME SIBLING RELATED RESOURCES YOU MIGHT FIND HELPFUL

www.sibs.org.uk and
www.youngsibs.org.uk
Information, support and training for
siblings, parents and professionals

Shropshire Young Carers

Support for young people who care for
a family member who is ill or disabled.

There are also lots of books out
there that talk about having a
poorly sibling



Shropshire Paediatric Psychology Service



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[www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/
paediatric-psychology-team](http://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/paediatric-psychology-team)



It is just as important to take time to look
after yourself as well as your family

How can we best support siblings of
poorly children?

HOW SIBLINGS MIGHT BE FEELING



Worries, fears and anxiety about the illness, the treatment and the long term effects. Your child might not understand what is happening so can't make sense of all the changes, or might worry about things being so uncertain and unpredictable.

Being more 'mature' or 'grown-up' due to feeling as though they need to be extra well behaved or helpful. This can result in them not talking about or showing their own feelings or putting other's feelings above their own.

Missing parents due to having less attention from them or spending less time with them. This could be at home or because parents are spending time in hospital.

Worries about own health. Children might worry that what has happened to their sibling might happen to them too, or that they might 'catch' the illness. They may also worry about normal coughs and colds or worry they are ill when they are not.

Guilt about their sibling being ill when they are not, or they may feel guilty for their normal demands on their grown ups.

Copying unhelpful or unusual behaviour that their sibling does if they feel they can also get away with it too.

Problems at school such as a lack of concentration or expressing emotions through behaviour.

Becoming withdrawn. Some siblings withdraw into themselves because of their worries or if they don't feel involved or included. Many children will want to contribute and feel important and valued.

Jealousy towards their sibling if they are getting more attention than usual, even if they know this attention is necessary. Some children can feel this is unfair.

Anger or resentment because things have changed so much. Many may feel sad that things are not like they used to be.

WHAT COULD YOU DO TO HELP?

INFORMATION, REASSURANCE AND BOUNDARIES:

It is helpful for siblings to know what is happening to help with their **worries** and give them opportunities to ask **questions**. Try to be as **honest** and **straightforward** as possible. Providing them with **age appropriate** information can be more helpful than no information at all. Also explain that rules about **behaviour** have not changed and if things are different for their sibling explain **why**.

INVOLVING SIBLINGS:

This could be by bringing them to hospital appointments or clinic visits when appropriate to help them **understand** what is happening and to ask any **questions**. Also, it can be helpful to find **practical** ways of feeling **involved** such as including them in treatment **plans** and **activities**.

ONE TO ONE TIME:

Arranging **specific time** to spend with your other child/children can be really helpful to help them feel **important** as well as **recognising** helpful and good behaviour and giving **rewards** and **praise** for their efforts.

KEEPING THINGS 'NORMAL':

Maintaining **normal routines** and **rules** can help your child to feel less unsettled and more **secure**. **Reassure** them that it is okay to have **fun** and enjoy things as much as before and ensure they know that other things in their life are still **important** and matter.

PERMISSION AND LISTENING:

It is important that your child knows that you **understand** whatever it is that they might be **feeling**, whether this is good or bad. Letting them know that these feelings are **natural** and that you still love them.

