



# Sibling Support for Adult Sibs

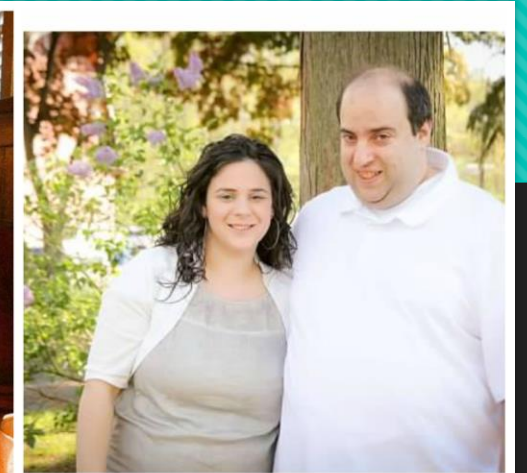
The Who, What & How of Seeking Formal & Informal Supports

# Presentation Overview

- Overview of Adult Sibling Needs/Concerns
- Formal Supports & Ways to Access Them:
  - Navigating “The System”
  - Family Support
  - Mental Health Support
- Informal Support
  - “Dis-Disenfranchisement”
  - Identifying your “safe people”
  - Online Support - Sib Net, Sibling Support Project, Sibling Leadership Network

# Who are “Sibs”?

- “**Sibs**” is the term siblings of people with special needs often use when talking about themselves; “**sib supporters**” acknowledge, validate, and help siblings in their roles as professionals, friends, or extended family
- Have an important role in the family system
- Experience is unique because of society and how families frame disability
- Their experiences vary; there is good but there is also the bad and the ugly
- Research shows birth order can impact how sibs perceive disability as well



# Shifting Focus from I to We: Family Systems

Focus is usually on the identified child or the parents

Shifting the focus to siblings for a moment is a good way to refocus on the whole family system

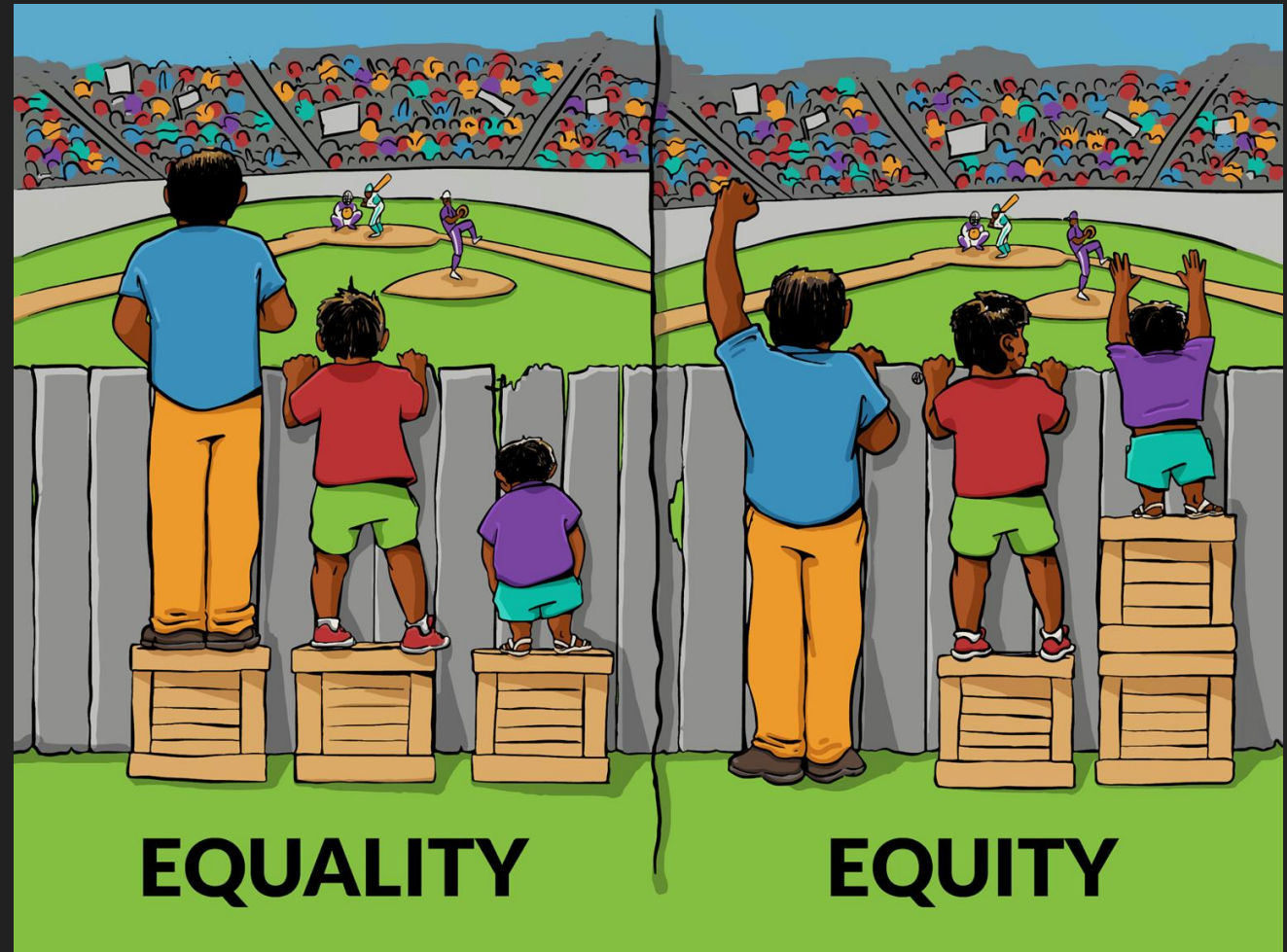
Holistically looking at the family system and considering all of the players and possible outcomes will lead to more positive responses and future outcomes for all members of the family, typically speaking





# Equity v. Fairness and the Impact in Families

- Equality v. Equity v. Fairness in Families



# Experiences for Sibs in Adulthood

- Relationships & Pressures of life
- Parentification
- #1 Concern = The FUTURE!
  - Financial Concerns
  - Legal Concerns
  - Navigating the system
  - Housing & Cohabitation

# Challenges that Occur In Adulthood-Late Adulthood

- Concerns over siblings well-being
- Do I see eye-to-eye with my parents on future planning? Have we talked about it?
- Medical concerns – FMLIA
- Cycle of resentment and guilt – I have my own life; still my sibs keeper
- Loss and Grief
- Caregiver Fatigue & Burn Out

# Common Mental Health Needs & Concerns

- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD/Trauma
- Dysfunctional Family Dynamics and Interpersonal Impact
- Social Isolation
- Regret
- Guilt
- Shame
- Loss - ambiguous, anticipatory, traumatic, complicated etc.



# Having the difficult conversations...

- Discussing plans with your family and knowing what to expect - getting started is hard
- The element of choice – what is really a choice, where are we drafted, and how do we negotiate these experiences throughout life. This is very individual.
- Understanding the different perspectives – may not see eye to eye but finding common ground or understanding people's individual experiences imperative
- These conversations may evoke a response

# Formal Supports

Consider what formal supports may exist in your community:

- Religious organizations/houses of worship
- Support Groups, Community Mental Health Organizations, Private Psychotherapists
- SIBS NJ - online and hoping to meet in person in the future
- SLN - Sibling Leadership Network
- Better Help/Talk Space (these would not be my top choice, but can be useful!)

# Finding Therapeutic Support

Look for someone who specializes in:

Family systems theory

Trauma

Anxiety/Depression etc.

Places to find a Therapist

- Psychology Today
- Insurance Company Directories (not always as accurate)
- Community Mental Health agencies/organizations
- Therapy Den
- Open Path Collective
- Seeking out referrals anonymously on community forum pages (i.e. local Facebook pages)
- Social Media - using hashtags/research purposes

One of the good things we have gained during this time is the expansion of teletherapy

# Navigating the Insurance Maze

If you have insurance, call the number on the back of your card for member services (or behavioral health benefits if you have them)

- ask if you have “outpatient mental health benefits” - find out what they are (i.e. number of visits, a deductible or coinsurance), ask if you have out of network benefits as well - this will help you get started as well!

If you do not have insurance, many therapists will work with you for what is called “sliding scale” or reduced fee- Open Path Collective is a great resource for this, but many private practitioners will work with you private pay and can develop a fee agreement that works for both of you!

# Informal Supports

Discard the idea that you are not entitled to support. PERIOD! (DIs-Disenfranchisement)

- Identify what you need and want
- Identify your “Safe people”
- Go online

Seeking out support from people we don't always expect:

- Friends or family who “get it” - aka a spouse, a childhood friend, etc.
- Other sibs via SibNet or other online platforms for “in the moment” support
- Co-workers/people who work in the field who have interactions with your sib



# Every Day Strategies for Support of Self

Use coping and grounding skills

- deep breathing
- journaling
- music/movement
- engaging in activities you like (sports, clubs, hobbies)
- connect to nature
- self-reflection, meditation
- sleep/basic needs

Acknowledgement - of self, and of boundaries

Create time for recharge: rest, play, or a combination

# Resources for Further Exploration

[A Beginner's Guide to Finding a Therapist](#)

[How to Find the Best Therapist for You](#)

[The Sibling Survival Guide](#)

# Time for Specific Questions

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