



SIBLINGS GROUP

Course Guide



GROWING
HOPE

SIBLINGS GROUP

The siblings group is for children aged 5-11. It aims to enable brothers and sisters of children with additional needs to share some of their experiences and feelings of being a sibling. We want siblings who participate to be able to realise that their experience is not an isolated one and to be able to connect with each other's stories.

Each siblings group needs to be run by two trained facilitators. The group can take place in any local community setting (such as in a school or church). Once facilitators have completed the training they can run the group as many times as they would like to.

The group is specifically designed for brothers and sisters of children with additional needs. These needs could be wide ranging and include physical, learning, mental health or undiagnosed needs which are impacting upon a child's participation and their behaviour within their family.

Over the seven weeks of the group the focus is on enabling children to participate and share their experience through a range of activities such as using puppets, painting, writing and drawing. The group also supports children to develop strategies to help them cope when things are difficult, this includes, drawing or writing down their feelings, taking deep breaths and other calming activities.

15.9%
of children in
the UK have
additional
needs.¹



*"I liked that we could
feel free to tell others
what we thought."*

Siblings Group Attendee

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SUMMARY

SIBLINGS GROUP

RESEARCH

- 🌿 Bridget Murray Law (2020)² suggests that involving siblings in autism intervention could help to strengthen the whole family.
- 🌿 Studies report how there is often tension around the expectation for older siblings to look after their brother or sister. Also, siblings of children with additional needs are often on the sidelines within the family and can feel left out. (2018)³
- 🌿 Sharpe and Rossiter (2002)⁴ suggest that having a sibling who has a chronic illness, particularly an illness impacting daily life, can have a negative psychological effect.
- 🌿 Tsang Ma (2004)⁵ discusses the impact of a child's poor mental health on their siblings, finding that siblings are at high risk of their own mental health problems and that further interventions to support siblings are needed.
- 🌿 Interventions for siblings of children with chronic physical or mental illness and found these can have a positive impact on wellbeing. (2018)⁶
- 🌿 A study (2012)⁷ carried out with brothers and sisters of children with Down's syndrome found that the majority of siblings felt they were better people because of their siblings disability. We have also observed this within the Siblings Group and we want to give space for siblings to talk about positive experiences in their family as well as the more challenging times.

"Really well run & useful. I feel well equipped and excited to run this group, and have a better understanding of how to listen and empathise with siblings."

Facilitator Training Attendee

Siblings who have brothers and sisters with additional needs experience increased levels of loneliness. (2009)⁸



SIBLINGS GROUP

The group is designed to run as seven 45 minute sessions which happen once a week. The course uses equipment provided by Growing Hope, games, puppets, interactive activities and a feelings box to consider different scenarios children have experienced and how that might make them feel.

Each of the seven sessions is designed to enable children to think about different feelings they may have and different situations they may have been in. A summary of the sessions is seen in the table. Through giving different scenarios we provide brothers and sisters the opportunity to process a range of experiences and also think about their own examples.

“The course was easy to follow and equips you well to lead a group. The resources are really useful and clear!”

- Siblings Group Facilitator

Session	Key topic	Key activity or story
1	Differences between my sibling and me	Introducing the puppets
2	My family	Painting our families
3	Feeling responsible	Bouncy castle story
4	What it's like in my family	Looking at our painting of our families
5	When people stare	Melt down in supermarket
6	When it's not fair	Mum and Monkey baking
7	Celebration	Luggage tags

SESSIONS

SIBLINGS GROUP

As a charity, we measure the outcome of the groups that we run in order that we can show the impact they are having to grant providers and future attendees. We use the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS) to measure the success of the Sibling Groups. GAS is commonly used within research to measure the effectiveness of therapeutic activities. GAS goals are seen to be an appropriate and sensitive outcome measure which allow healthcare professional to measure the effectiveness of their services.

Three goals are set at the beginning of the Sibling Groups and Facilitators record whether children have achieved these goals at the end of the course.



Sibling Group Goals:

1

To be able to participate within the group by joining in with activities by the end of session 7.

2

To be able to share a story of a family experience with an emotion attached by the end of session 7 (either directly or through their puppet).

3

To be able to use a strategy for letting go of feelings within the group e.g. feelings box, telling someone, deep breaths, hand massage.



GOALS

As well as recording the GAS goals achieved by siblings attending the Siblings Groups, we also ask them a few questions at the end of the course to get their thoughts and feedback.

The feedback we have received shows how important a safe space to express their feelings is for children who have brothers and sisters with additional needs. It also highlights the importance of activities that increase emotional vocabulary and strategies to help children relax and reflect.

What did you like best about the group?

**“I like having ball squash.”
[relaxation strategy with a gym ball used at the end of the sessions]**



What did you like best about the group?

“I liked bouncing on the ball, playing with puppets and drawing activities.”

Feelings I thought about in the group?

“Happiness, sadness, anger and enjoying things.”



SIBLINGS GROUP

Head to growinghope.org.uk/siblings to book your child or a child you work with onto a local in-person course. We can also run courses for schools, churches and other organisations.

If you are interested in becoming a Siblings Group Facilitator and running the course in your local area go to growinghope.org.uk/training for more information and to sign up.

If you have any questions then please get in touch by emailing: info@growinghope.org.uk



What was your highlight of the course?

‘Learning how to hold the space for the children and not to view it as a space to fix things or problem solve solutions.’

Facilitator Training Attendee

‘The resources and learning material are so clear and beautifully presented. Lots of practical examples made it easier to feel confident to run the course.’

Facilitator Training Attendee



SIGN UP

SIBLINGS GROUP

Siblings Group has been designed by and is administered by Growing Hope.

Growing
HOPE

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