

Oh Brother! Resources and Books about Autism and Siblings

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Our relationships with siblings are often the closest that we will ever develop in our lives. This is just as true for those who have siblings with autism or other special needs. The pressures and expectations on these siblings is great, especially as some are asked to become caretakers. While this relationship has not been fully explored in the literature and Internet, I have pulled together some excellent resources on this subject and will be finding more for the website listed below.

Books (*Check your local library*)

Harris, Sandra L. and Beth A. Glasberg, *Siblings of Children with Autism: a Guide for Families*. Bethesda, MD : Woodbine House, 2003 (ISBN: 1890627291 (pbk.))

Harris and Glasberg offer another excellent entry in Woodbine's Topics in Autism Series. They examine the perceptions, needs, compromises, and inevitable demands on an autistic child's siblings throughout their lives. The personal narratives of both parents and siblings (of all ages) provide illustrations of the issues facing nonautistic siblings. This book is easy to read and offers great resources for the entire family, especially siblings.

Feiges, Lynne Stern, Mary Jane Gill-Weiss & Sandra L. Harris, *Sibling Stories: Reflections on Life with a Brother or Sister on the Autism Spectrum*. Shawnee Mission, KS : Autism Asperger Pub., 2004 (ISBN: 1931282544)

Book offers narratives from 20 siblings of people with autism. A chapter devoted to coping strategies is enhanced by end-of-chapter professional advice on how to maximize the sibling relationship. Book is available at the Autism Asperger Publishing Company (<http://www.asperger.net/index.htm>).

Karasik, Judy & Paul, *The Ride Together: a Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family*. New York : Washington Square Press, 2004 (ISBN: 0743423372, pbk.)

The Karasiks present a sibling's viewpoint of growing up with autism in a remarkable book that weaves prose and comics. Alternating between Judy's memoir and Paul's comics, they chronicle the life of their brother, David, from the 1950s to today. The authors recount the heartbreaks and joys of growing up with an autistic sibling and offer insights into the treatment of the condition at a time, when the medical and educational professions knew little about it and blamed parents (namely, "refrigerator moms"). While this does not relate directly to younger people with autism, the passion shown by David's sister and brother is very clear in this wonderful book.

Web Sites

SITE: Siblings of Autism and Related Disorders: A Support Page

URL: <http://www.siblingsofautism.com/>

DESCRIPTION: Great resource for siblings of ASD individuals. Page includes a variety of material and information that is written both for and by siblings of individuals with ASD. Some of the sections are still growing, but included are: definitions (some targeted to children), a place to record stories, links, and other resources that are useful for both the siblings and parents.

SITE: Siblings of Children with Autism: an interview with Sandra Harris

URL: <http://www.childrensdisabilities.info/autism/interview-harris.htm>

DESCRIPTION: From Children's Disabilities Information website, this interview is with Dr. Sandra Harris, co-author of *Siblings of Children with Autism* (Woodbine House, 2003). This has some nice key points to consider when evaluating or supporting the sibling relationship to someone with ASD.

SITE: Sibling Issues Page -- Autism Society of America

URL: <http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=livingsiblings>

DESCRIPTION: From the Autism Society of America, a nice concise description of the relationship between the individual with ASD and his or her siblings. Also written by Dr. Sandra Harris, this is a good introduction geared towards parents and adult siblings.

SITE: Information for Siblings (National Autistic Society)

URL: <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=124&a=2624>

DESCRIPTION: From the National Autistic Society (United Kingdom), this excellent site has compiled excellent information for both parents and siblings. The main sections of this page include: basic information, personal stories, and other resources. The basic information is geared to adults, but has links and lists of books that provide resources for siblings of all ages. Personal stories includes just a few narratives written by siblings that are hosted on the National Autistic Society home page.

SITE: The Ride Together

URL: <http://www.theridetogogether.com/>

DESCRIPTION: This website accompanies the book of the same name, written by Paul and Judy Karasik (Washington Square Press, 2003 (hardcover) and 2004 (paperback)). The book, told in Judy's prose and Paul's cartoons, tells the story of growing up with their autistic brother David in the 1950s and 1960s. The website includes reviews, excerpts, information on the authors, interviews, link, other information on their book and their family, and recipes ("to atone for the sin of having created something as self-serving as a website").

SITE: Sibling Support Project (The Arc of the United States)

URL: <http://www.thearc.org/siblingsupport/>

DESCRIPTION: These pages are from the Arc, a group that seeks to create an inclusive environment for all the "children and adults with cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities in every community." The Sibling Support Project "seeks to increase the peer support and information opportunities for brothers and sisters of people with special needs and to increase parents' and providers' understanding of sibling issues." This site includes information on the support project itself, workshop information, help with connecting to other siblings of special needs individuals, publications, and links. The site also has a section called sibshops, based on the books and curriculum material that is available to support the siblings.

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