

Reciprocity

1. When a relationship is **reciprocal**, that usually means there is **relatively even give and take between both parties**. In our relationships with our brothers and sisters, however, many of us do things for them without expecting anything in return.
2. **Even though we understand why that happens, it can still feel pretty thankless**. This might not mean that we resent our brothers and sisters, but things wear down on us over time, and we could use more support.
 - a. Our brothers and sisters may not know how to be there for us emotionally.
 - b. Difficulties with executive function or demand avoidance might mean that we take on (or have been assigned) additional chores on their behalf.
 - c. They might not even know about all the things we do for them. We try to protect them from worrying and manage crises behind the scenes.
 - d. We can settle into patterns where it just feels easiest to do things ourselves.
3. **We find signs our brothers and sisters care about us in unconventional ways:**
 - a. Conversations and hugs or kisses might need to be scripted or prompted.
 - b. We can ask support staff to tell us how their moods shift before/after a visit.
 - c. Sharing childhood memories can be a really great point of connection!
 - d. We don't always enjoy hearing all about our brothers and sisters' special interests, but it can still help to remember that this is their way of reaching out.

Our relationships may also feel uneven beyond our brothers and sisters

1. Many of us **grew up learning self-reliance and independence**. We tried to be “the good child” and may have learned not to expect apologies or to feel guilty when we get upset. As adults, this can make it difficult to set boundaries and ask for help.
2. It can be frustrating to **feel responsible for managing our parents' emotions**. We find ourselves playing ‘**piggy in the middle**’, mediating or translating between our parents and our brothers or sisters when someone gets upset.
3. We spend a lot of time and energy fighting for our brothers and sisters' wellbeing. **We'd like to have more collaborative relationships with their care teams**, instead of getting pushback for involving ourselves at all.
4. **Being a sibling can feel really isolating**. We struggle with a lack of reciprocity and understanding from the wider world:
 - a. When gatherings are inaccessible or people stare at our brothers and sisters, our families miss out on building connections with our communities.
 - b. Our friends, extended family and co-workers don't always understand when we say that we can't do something (or have to do it differently).
 - c. Even our good friends don't always ‘get it’. That's why it's so important to have spaces like our Sibs groups!