



Natural Learning Concepts

<http://www.nlconcepts.com>

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A Sibling On The Spectrum

3 years old

My typical daughter is building blocks. Painstakingly, she stacks them neatly making a tall tower. In walks her autistic brother and in one fell swoop, knocks them down. He thinks it's hilarious. My daughter looks at her hard work now scattered about the floor. Then she looks at her brother's laughing face and she starts to cry.

5 years old

My daughter wants a friend. She approaches her autistic brother and in a gesture of kindness, she offers him one of her toy animals. He accepts it gladly. She reaches for one of his action figures but with no intention of reciprocating the kind gesture, he roughly pushes her away. With hurt feelings, my daughter turns around with her head hung low.

7 years old

My daughter wants to play monopoly. She invites her brother to join her but he keeps taking the pieces off the board and lines them up instead. In frustration, she throws everything back in the box and stalks off.

11 years old

My daughter is excited. We're going on vacation and she wants to plan. She tries to discuss her ideas with her brother but he keeps talking about a blue whale. "You're just stupid" she screams at him as she runs from the room. He stares after her, not knowing why he made her so mad.

15 years old

My daughters friends come over. They watch TV, eat pizza and have a good time. As they're saying good-bye, her brother walks in, notices the pizza and begins to flap his arms. Everyone laughs at him and somebody comments "You're a freak family". In dismay she screams at her brother "You're an embarrassment and I never want to be seen with you again".

16 years old

My daughter is playing in a soccer match. With less than a minute to go, she is feeling over confident. Knowing she should pass the ball to her team player, she goes for the goal instead. She misses. The buzzer rings. The game is lost. Her team is mad. Everybody Boo's at her. As she looks up into the jeering crowd, she suddenly spots her biggest fan. Her brother. Not caring what anyone else thinks, he is cheering wildly. He knows she did her best and he is proud. Her heart fills with love and tears spring to her eyes.

17 years old

Walking out of school, my daughter is approached by the guy she has a huge crush on. To her delight, he asks her out and she accepts readily. "I was only joking" he says and everyone begins to laugh. Knowing she was set up, my daughter is crushed. Even her friends are not willing to risk ridicule and they lower their eyes, avoiding my daughters gaze. Suddenly her brother walks out the school. He doesn't know what happened but he knows his sister is distressed. Not caring about public opinion or swayed by popularity, he walks up to his sister, gives her a huge grin, interlocks his arm in hers and leads her away. With deep gratitude and tears in her eyes, she clutches on to him as they walk away.



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20 years old

My daughter fails her college test. Everywhere she turns, she faces disappointed stares. There is pity in everyone's eyes. In walks her brother. He understands she failed her test but it doesn't define her as a person. "Can you take it again?" he asks. "Yes" she replies. "OK", he says innocently. Then he smiles broadly at his sister and asks if she wants to watch a DVD. She is filled with love for him and the two walk off together.

24 years old

My daughter is at her job. Her boss offers her complimentary tickets to a famous tennis match. My daughter is filled with excitement and thanks him profusely. "Who are you going to take?" he asks. "My best friend of course", she says dialing the phone. "Hello" says her brother as he picks up on the other side.

To all those with autism, thank you for your unconditional love and for accepting us as we are. May we take a leaf out of your book and learn to do the same for you.

- By Jene Aviram

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