

# SPECIAL TIMES

## Community Therapeutic Day School

187 Spring Street, Lexington, MA 02421 781/861-7081

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### SIBLING GROUP MEANS...

*by Bridget Keefer and Olivia von Ferstel*

Five times a year on Saturday mornings, we eagerly and with great anticipation meet in the Upper Barn at CTDS and prepare to greet an extraordinary group of children. This group consists of the brothers and sisters, the “siblings” of the students who attend our school. Sibling Group is especially for them. We have carefully and thoughtfully planned the next few hours around a specific therapeutic theme utilizing the expressive arts. Through music, movement, drama, writing and artwork, we create a dialogue and activities which strike a balance between giving the siblings an opportunity to share and discuss both their unique perspective and personal thoughts, as well as giving them support and understanding of their unique role; that of being a sibling to a child with special needs.

In any family, each sibling, each relationship that siblings have is unique, important and special. Brothers and sisters influence each other and play important roles in each other’s lives. Sibling relationships often make up a child's first social network and can become the basis for his or her interactions with people outside the family. Over the years, siblings may be many things to one another: friend, companion, teacher, follower, protector, competitor, nemesis, confidant and role model. When this relationship is affected by a sibling’s disability or difficulty, these dynamics are altered and present unique challenges. To be in a family and be in relationship with a sibling with special needs can be a trying and potentially isolating experience. It can also be one which cultivates a unique lens through which to view the world; a lens imbued with compassion, insight and acceptance.

Sibling Group at CTDS provides an opportunity for the group members to meet others who are in the same circumstance, to provide mutual support, to share information and to promote positive sibling interaction. It is our intent to give the siblings a sense that they belong to a community that is supportive of their needs, as well as the needs of the children who attend the school. We embrace them and acknowledge that they are in a unique situation, and that they have a unique perspective to share with others. It is our hope that they feel connected to this community and know that we value their role as a sibling of a child with special needs.

Sibling Group also includes a psycho educational and developmental component to its focus. As the siblings in the group grow and evolve developmentally, as the child in their family with special needs changes and dynamics shift, these siblings are given a place to discuss their joys and hardships over time. We encourage them to explore their relationship with their sibling, their relationship in the family, and their understanding of the disability itself. In this vein, Sibling Group provides a place to ask questions, impart information and steer its members toward resources that might help them gain a deeper awareness of their experience and the experience of others.

It is a great honor and privilege for both of us to lead this group and come to know the siblings as they courageously move along on their journey. These siblings have much to share and to teach those who wish to help them. Being therapists who primarily work with children with special needs, working with their siblings deepens our experience and helps to effect more change and understanding. CTDS embraces the siblings through this group. This newsletter is dedicated to its participants, and to all siblings.

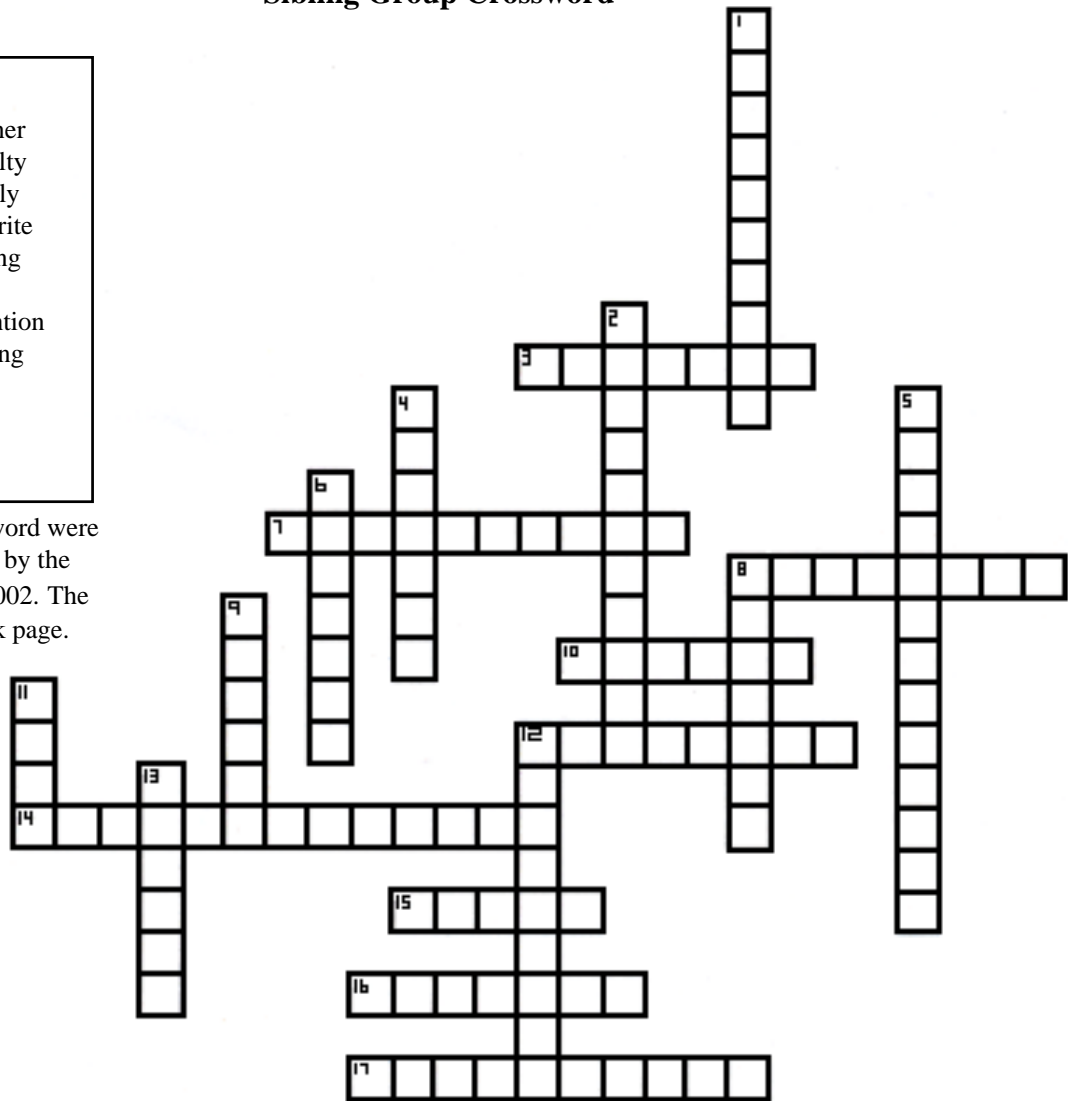


## Sibling Group Crossword

**Word list:**

Competition	Brother
Alone	Loyalty
Worried	Family
Annoying	Favorite
Unfair	Sibling
Frustrated	Love
Disability	Attention
Friendship	Feeling
Sister	
Embarrassment	
Understanding	

This word list and crossword were generated and completed by the older Sibling Group of 2002. The answer key is on the back page.



**Across**

3. Male sibling
7. A problem that affects a person's overall functioning emotionally, behaviorally or cognitively
8. One who is chosen over another; picked often; wanted most; whose needs are attended to most; liked best of all; preferred
10. Female sibling
12. Irritating; the feeling you have when your sibling keeps doing the same thing over and over regardless of your needs or whether it is appropriate to a situation; to bother or to make slightly angry
14. How you feel in a public place when your brother or sister is having a hard time
15. Solitude; when one is by oneself
16. Anxious; not knowing what will happen next or how it may unfold; concerned
17. A positive relationship between two people; a relationship fostered out of commonality and the feeling of being liked and liking

**Down**

1. How you feel when you don't get what you want; how you feel when your brother or sister gets away with everything; feeling acutely self conscious or uncomfortable
2. Engaging with another to secure a place or attention that is superior, more than or first; the act of being in a race and being first to the finish line against another; the act of competing; rivalry
4. A commitment to another that remains intact and strong despite difficulty; a strong feeling of connection that is unending or infinite; as in, faithful to one's country; faithful to one's family
5. Comprehension; empathy; compassion; to know the meaning of
6. Brother or a sister; as in, "this group is called \_\_\_\_\_ Group"
8. Mad, happy, sad, worried, scared and surprised are all examples of a \_\_\_\_\_
9. Feeling cheated; foul play; not fair; unjust
11. Affection; trust; caring; a heart is often used as a symbol to identify this feeling
12. Focus directed toward something or someone; notice; aware of
13. The first group one is a member of; related; a group that is made up of one or two parents and their child or children



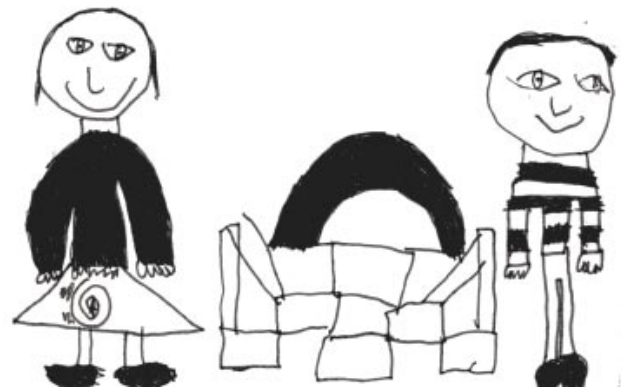
**We are Standing**

**“Sibling group helps me to share my feelings. I like to go because the people understand the way that I feel. I also feel that people appreciate me and not just my sibling.”**



**Watching a Waterfall**

**“Sibling Group means sharing your thoughts and feelings with each other and understanding what is happening to each kid in Sibling Group. Sibling Group is fun and it makes you feel like you matter, not your sibling.”**



**We're building a structure together**

**“Sibling Group means I can share what happens in other places I go. Sibling Group means that I can share my feelings about having a brother that goes to a special school.”**



**Books for and about Siblings**

**Books for Children**

**Joey and Sam** by Illana Katz & Edward Ritvo, MD. Real Life Storybooks, 1993.

**Views from Our Shoes** by Donald Meyer (Ed.), 1997.

**My Brother Matthew** by Mary Thompson. Woodblue House, 1992.

**Finding a Way: Living with Exceptional Brothers and Sisters** by Maxine Rosenberg. Lothrop, 1988.

**My Friend Leslie** by Maxine Rosenberg. Lothrop, 1985.

**My Brother Steven Is Retarded** by Harriet Langsam Sobol. Macmillian, 1977.

**My Sister Is Different** by Betty Ren Wright. Steck-Vaughn, 1992.

**Eagle Eyes** by Jeanne Gehret. Verbal Images Press, 1991.

**I'm Somebody Too** by Jeanne Gehret. Verbal Images Press, 1992.

**Living with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs** by D.J. Meyer, P.F. Vadasy & R. Fewell. University of Washington Press, 1985 (3rd printing, 1990.)

**Books for Adults**

**It Isn't Fair - Siblings of Children with Autism** by Stanley Klein (Ed.). Bergin & Garvey, 1992.

**Brothers, Sisters and Special Needs** by Debra Lobato. Paul H. Brookes, 1990.

**A Difference in the Family** by Helen Featherstone. Penguin Books, 1981.

**Children with Autism: A Parent's Guide** by Michael D. Powers (Ed.). Woodbine House, 1989.

**After the Tears** by Robin Simons. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (originally published by Children's Museum of Denver), 1985.

**The Exceptional Parent** by Maxwell J. Schleiffer & Stanley D. Klein (Eds.), "The Disabled Child and the Family: An Exceptional Parent Reader". Exceptional Parent Press, 1985.

Alumni Picnic  
May 16  
9-8 pm

<b>Crossword Answers:</b>	
<b>Down</b>	
1. Frustrated	3. Brother
2. Competition	7. Disability
4. Loyalty	8. Favorite
5. Understanding	10. Sister
6. Sibling	12. Annoying
8. Feeling	14. Embarrassment
9. Unfair	15. Alone
11. Love	16. Worried
12. Attention	17. Friendship
13. Family	

**Special Times Editors:**  
Nancy Fuller  
Lisa O'Donnell  
Selene Aguayo-Gisholt

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