



ORGANIZATION FOR
AUTISM RESEARCH

Autism,

my sibling, and me



Brothers and sisters come in all shapes and sizes.

They have a lot in common, and they can be really different from each other. Some kids even have a brother or sister with autism.

This activity book is all about you and your sibling with autism! It's your guide to the ups and downs of being a sibling. You can use it any time you want tips, need help, or have questions.



Lots of kids have a brother or sister with **autism**.
Let's meet some other siblings like you!



Meet Billy and Katie!

They also have siblings with autism.

My name is Billy!
I like basketball and video
games. I don't like rainy days
or broccoli.

This is my little sister Olivia.
She has **autism**. She likes finger
painting, but she doesn't like
loud music.

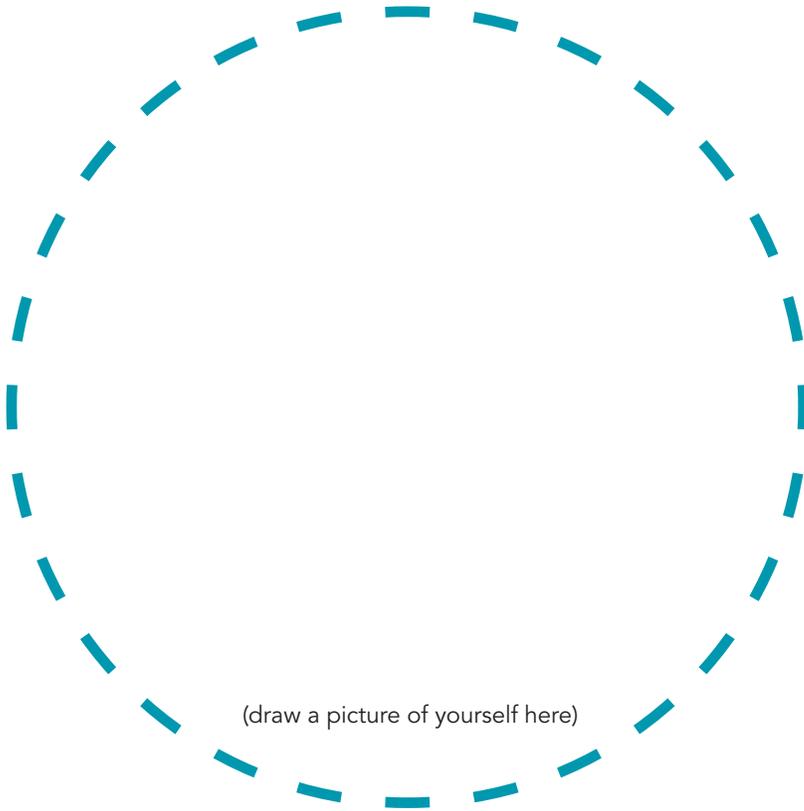


My name is Katie!
I like singing and drawing.
I don't like spiders or
cleaning my room.

This is my big brother
Andrew. He has **autism**.
He likes stuff about space
and aliens, but he doesn't
like being around lots
of people.

Let's meet you and your sibling!

Write a little about you and your brother or sister with autism.



(draw a picture of yourself here)

My name is

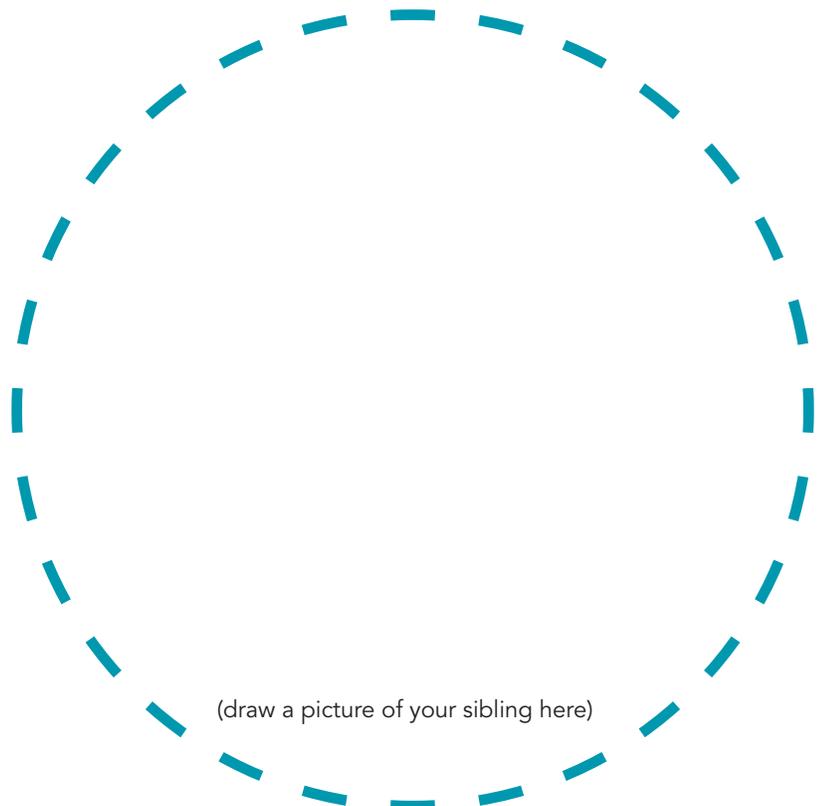
My favorite thing is

Something I don't like is

My sibling's name is

His/her favorite thing is

Something he/she doesn't like is



(draw a picture of your sibling here)

All about autism



Did you know...

Autism means that your sibling learns or acts differently than you and your friends do

Lots of people all over the world have autism

Kids are born with autism, and no one has figured out what causes it

Autism is nobody's fault

You can't "catch" autism like a cold or the flu

Autism is different for each person who has it! Your sibling's autism will be different than someone else's. They're unique – just like you!

For Andrew, autism means that it's hard for him to be around lots of people. He really likes outer space, and talks about planets all the time.

For Olivia, autism means that she doesn't like loud noises, like at the movies. She also has trouble talking, but she tells me things in other ways.



Autism and your sibling



I didn't understand why Olivia would scream sometimes, so I asked my mom. She said Olivia's just doesn't like bright lights, but doesn't know how to show it any other way.

Your sibling with autism might do things you don't understand.

Fill in the blanks below to help you figure out why:

What's something your sibling does that you don't understand?

I think he/she does this because

Now, ask your parents! They can help you figure it out.

People with autism might do things that seem "weird" if...

- Something is exciting
- They're nervous or scared
- There's a lot going on
- It helps them relax

Do you have other autism questions?

Write them below, then show them to your parents and ask them for help finding an answer

1. _____

2. _____

Are you an autism expert?

Take this quiz and find out!

1 Can you “catch” autism like a cold or the flu?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2 What’s true about kids with autism?

- a. Kids with autism all act the same way
- b. All kids with autism talk a lot
- c. Autism is different in everyone who has it

3 Autism is caused by...

- a. You
- b. Your parents
- c. No one knows

4 Lots of people all over the world have autism.

- a. True
- b. False

5 Kids with autism...

- a. Don’t feel the same way you do
- b. Might show their feelings in a different way
- c. Behave in “weird” ways for no reason
- d. All act the same way

The answers to these questions are on the top of page 16!



It's not fair!

Sometimes your sibling with autism gets more attention than you. Your parents may have to give your sibling extra help or take them to a lot of appointments. These things are important, but it's okay to want your parents to yourself sometimes, too.



On a special day, my dad and I go to my favorite park



Some days, my parents don't have a lot of time. But even when things get busy, I can do stuff like:

- Wake up early and make breakfast with Dad
- Help Mom shop for groceries
- Walk the dog with my parents
- Tag along on car rides

How-to make time with your parents

Ask your parents if you can plan a special day together. Make a list of things to do with Mom, Dad, or even both!

Things I want to do on a special day:

1

2

3

Rules at home might be different for your sibling with autism. They might have different chores. Your parents might reward and punish you differently, too.



This can seem unfair. You might feel:

- **Mad** that you have more chores than your sibling
- **Sad** that your sibling can't do everything you can
- **Jealous** that your sibling seems to have it easier
- **Guilty** for feeling bad things about your sibling



It didn't seem fair that my parents got excited whenever Andrew got a "B" on a test, but they just expected me to do well all the time.

My dad helped me understand that it's a lot harder for Andrew to get a "B", so that's why it's such a big deal.

It's okay to have these feelings, just remember that some things are harder for your sibling with autism. Your parents are trying to be fair to both of you.



When you're mad

Your sibling's autism might mean he or she messes with your stuff, has a hard time playing with you, or does other things that bug you. Even though they don't mean to, it can still make you mad.

Make a plan

for next time you're having a hard time with your sibling! Think about some of the things you can do to feel better if you get upset, then write them down below.

Next time I get mad at my sibling, I can

When I get mad at Olivia, I go to my room and listen to music until I'm calm again.



When you're scared

If you ever feel worried or scared around your brother or sister with autism, tell your parents. If your sibling hurts you, even if it's not on purpose, your parents can help keep you safe.

Draw your "happy place": somewhere you go (it can be real or imaginary) to feel better when you're upset.



My happy place

Talking about your sibling

Not everybody has met someone with autism before. Your classmates and friends might not know about autism like you do.

Here are some ways Billy and Katie tell their friends about their siblings with autism!



Andrew just has autism. It means his brain works a little differently than mine or yours.

Olivia rocks back and forth when she's stressed out. It just helps her calm down.

Repeating stuff helps my brother understand what people are saying.

My sister has trouble talking, but she still likes to play. Try playing like this...

Andrew might not look you in the eye, but he's still listening. Try asking him about spaceships. They're his favorite thing.



How would you...

Explain to someone the way your sibling is acting?

Help someone you know be a friend to your brother or sister?

Out and about

It's fun to go out as a family, but it can be kind of crazy! Sometimes, you might not be able to do certain things because they're too hard for your brother or sister with autism. They might not be able to handle things like big crowds, certain kinds of foods, or noisy places.

If your sibling does weird things in front of your friends (or even strangers), you might feel **embarrassed**.

Embarrassment doesn't feel good. Next time you're embarrassed, remember these things to feel better:

- 1 A lot of **people don't notice** the things that seem like a big deal to you.
- 2 Some people **don't even mind** the stuff you find embarrassing. It just doesn't bother them very much.
- 3 Remember that **your sibling can't help the way they feel or act** sometimes.
- 4 **Laugh about it.** Something embarrassing might turn into a funny family story later.
- 5 **Real friends will be nice to your sibling.** If someone makes you feel bad about having a sibling with autism, they're probably not a very good friend.



**I remember
the first time my friend
Jayden came out for dinner
with me and my family...**

I was really embarrassed that Jayden could hear Olivia making noises in the restaurant, and see my mom taking her to the bathroom. He didn't mind at all, though. After dinner, we walked to the ice cream shop. Olivia likes to make noises when she's excited, so people always stare. But Jayden just laughed along with her, and told her that he was looking forward to having ice cream, too. That's how I knew he and I were going to be best friends; he's always been great with me and Olivia.

**Andrew's autism
means sometimes he
doesn't always say the right
thing at the right time...**

Andrew goes to school with me, so I see him at lunchtime. One day, he told the lunch lady that the food she cooked was gross. I was so embarrassed! Then I realized that Andrew didn't mean to be rude; it was just his autism. Nobody heard what he said, and the lunch lady was really nice about it. I had no reason to be embarrassed, and now I laugh about it with my family.



You and your sibling

Being a sibling can be a lot of fun! You have someone to play with, share with, and grow up with. All siblings have trouble getting along sometimes, but having a sibling with autism can come with special challenges. It may be hard to...

- 1 Find things to do that are fun for both of you
- 2 Talk or understand each other easily
- 3 Tell if your sibling loves you

Olivia has trouble talking, but we still have lots of fun together. We have our own way of saying things to each other through signs and sounds, which is kind of cool – like our own secret language!

Remember...

Your sibling loves you, even if they don't show it all of the time. If your sibling has trouble talking or showing what they mean, try making up a little sign that shows them that you care. It could be a high five, a secret handshake, or even a silly face.



Time together

Your brother or sister might have a few favorite things and not like to do much else. It can be annoying for you to have to do the same things all the time! You might want to try finding something you'll **both** like doing together.

When we're bored, Andrew and I...

- Dance to fun music
- Bake and decorate cookies
- Make up a new game or sport
- See who can make the goofiest face
- Play a board game

Think about what each of you likes to do, then put them together to make something you'll both have fun doing.

Here's an example:

I like running around outside, and my sibling likes space aliens. We can try playing laser tag.

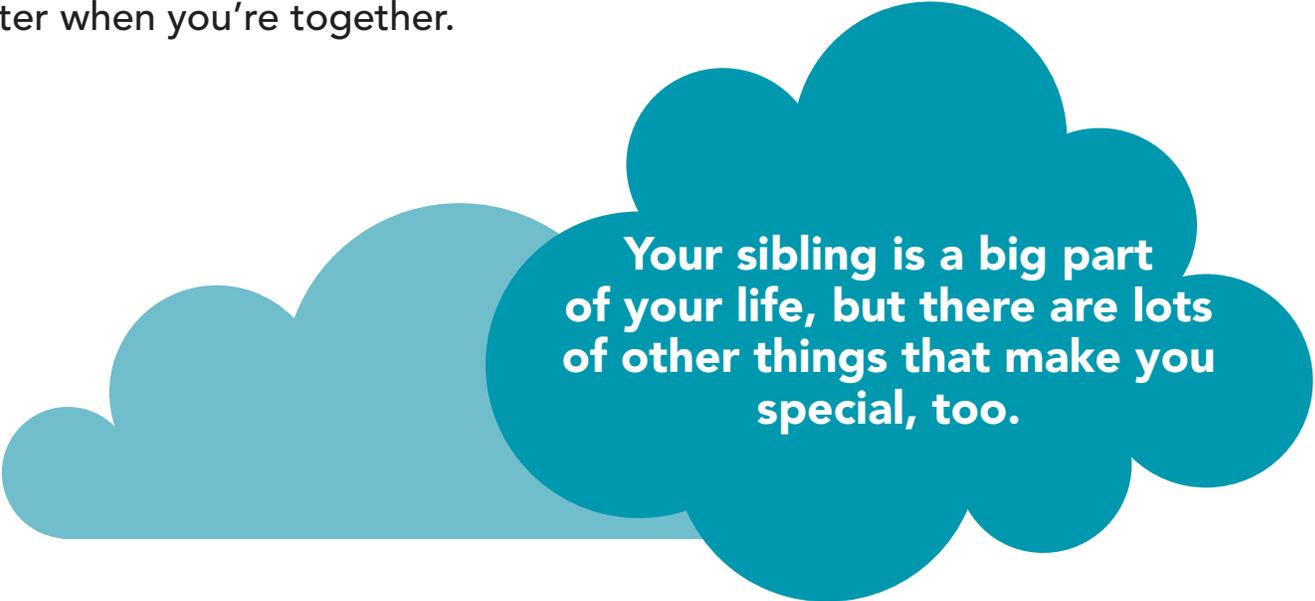
I like _____, and my sibling likes _____.

We can try _____



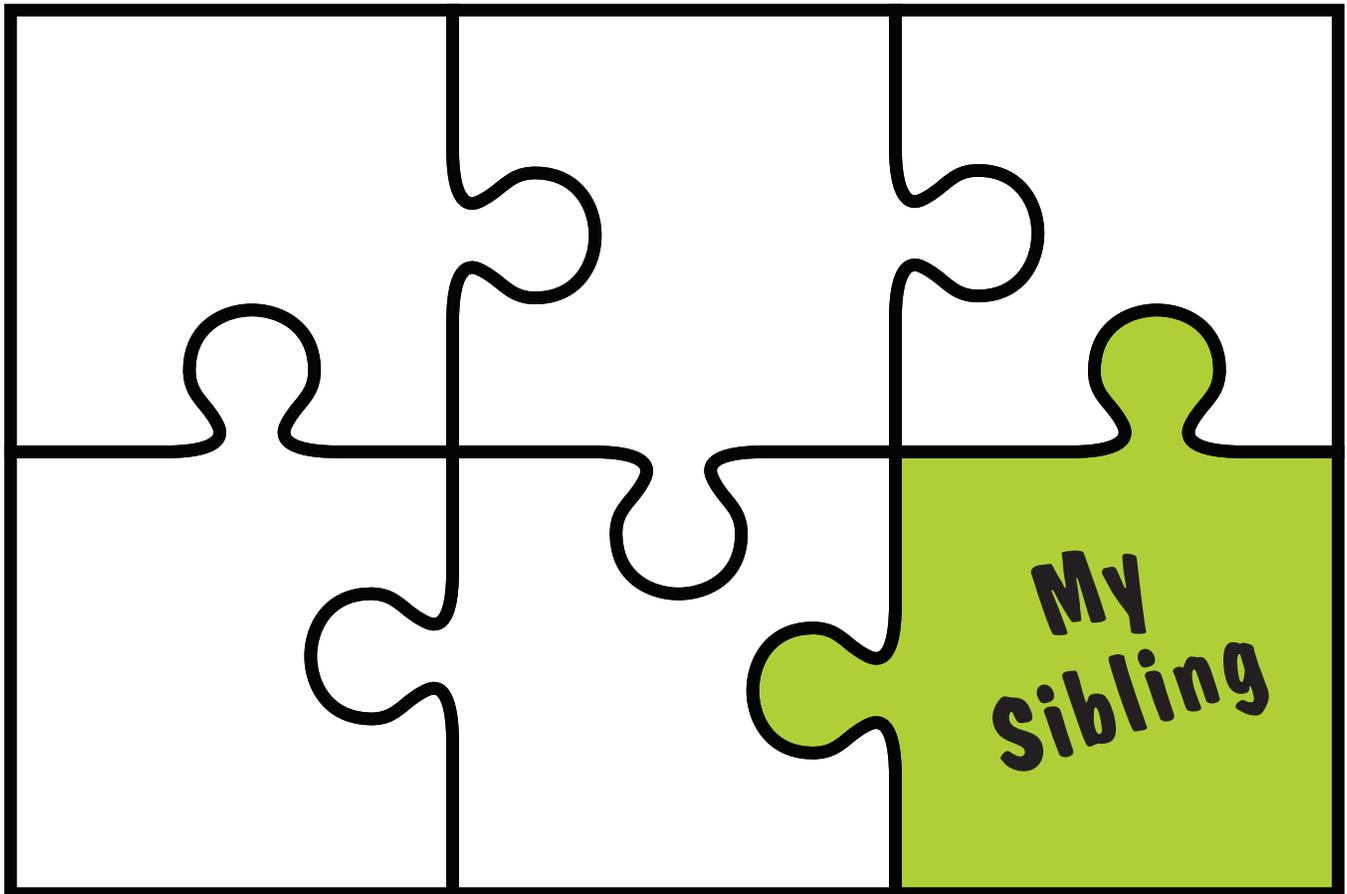
Time apart

It's okay to have time apart, too! All siblings need a break from each other now and then. Taking breaks can help both of you to get along better when you're together.



Your sibling is a big part of your life, but there are lots of other things that make you special, too.

The puzzle below represents all the different things that make you special. Draw pictures or write little descriptions of things that are important to you in the other pieces.



Now you know a little more about autism and how to be the best sibling that you can be!

Keep this booklet around and read it whenever you're having trouble, or just want to go back to the plans you made. They might be a big help!

Answers from page 5
1 b 2 c 3 c 4 a 5 b



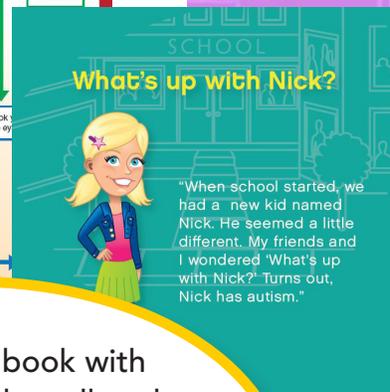
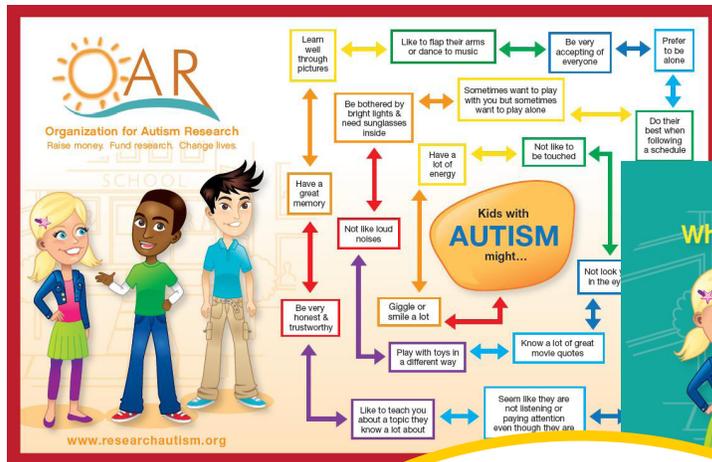
Me and my sibling

(draw a picture of the two of you below)

My favorite thing about us is

What's next?

You can help kids in your school learn more about autism, too! The more they know, the better they will be able to understand your brother or sister. "What's up with Nick?" is a story and short video about a boy with autism, named Nick. His classmates discover that even though Nick does some things that may seem weird at first, it wasn't a big deal once they got to know him.



I shared the book with Olivia's class and they all took turns reading it out loud. By the end, they understood that like Nick, she just needs a little bit more help sometimes.

We watched the video during an assembly and then talked about autism in our class. My friends realized that kids like Andrew are not all that different from everyone else!



Want to get "What's up with Nick?" for your classroom or school? Have your parents call the Organization for Autism Research at (703) 243-9170 or send an e-mail to programs@researchautism.org



Organization for Autism Research

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