



## Family-to-Family

[En Espanol](#)

It's no secret that a sibling of a child with disabilities or a chronic illness faces unique challenges. Their brother or sister naturally receives a bigger share of the attention, and the sibling may have feelings of resentment, jealousy, anger, worry and other negative emotions. However, their unique situation also allows them to develop positive qualities. Family Voices Indiana sat down with an adult

sibling, Lanea Bonney, for a chat about her experience as a sibling to a brother with multiple medical and developmental challenges.

**Note:** When parents tune in the needs of each child, they can help ease difficulties. We've offered some resources for families at the end of this article.

**FVIN: What were some things you disliked about being the sibling of a child with a disability while growing up?**

Lanea: My brother's needs were significant, and many times I felt like an only child. The sibling bond wasn't reciprocated. I had a brother, but I really didn't have a "brother."

I also felt like my parents missed a lot of my activities. They did trade off (took turns attending my events), but we couldn't do most stuff as a family unit.

**FVIN: How did that make you feel?**

Lanea: At times I definitely hated it. But now that I'm older I realize that my parents did the best they could, and it just was what it was.

**FVIN: Were there benefits you feel that you received by being the sibling of a child of a disability?**

Lanea: Having a brother with a disability opened me up to a whole other world - a community of people I probably wouldn't have known or had the opportunity to interact with. I've made some lifelong friends.

And I'm sure it had a role in choosing a "helping profession." As an educator I feel I am more sensitive and aware of certain areas, such as accessibility and tolerance. I also feel it had a role in helping foster my interest in public service and community mindfulness.

**FVIN: What would share with other siblings who might be feeling some of the same things you felt?**

Lanea: We have in our minds what we think a relationship should be like, but having a brother with disabilities taught me that relationships can be redefined. Don't be discouraged that your family might not seem "normal."

To others with exceptional siblings: You are not alone! There are others who deal with the same types of challenges.

And lastly, take pride in your sibling, and be their voice and advocate for them when needed.

<https://siblingsupport.org/sibshops>

<https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/patients/care/stories/patient-stories>

<http://www.autism-society.org/living-with-autism/autism-and-your-family/siblings/>

<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/chronic.htm>



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