

There's Nothing Quite Like A Sibling Bond

Adapted from an article By Alena Hall



What is at the root of incredible sibling bonds? Here are seven possibilities that have nothing to do with genetics.

They mark our most enduring relationship.

Most people will never know another human being for as long as they know their brother or sister. Whether they fought constantly throughout adolescence, lost touch for a period of their adult lives or remained incredibly close and connected from day one, their connection to their sibling (or siblings) will always come first in this sense.

They can be our best teachers.

In a TIME article that preceded his book, *The Sibling Effect: What the Bonds Among Brothers and Sisters Reveal About Us*, Jeffrey Kluger wrote, “From the time they are born, our brothers and sisters are our collaborators and co-conspirators, our role models and cautionary tales. They are our scolds, protectors, goads, tormentors, playmates, counselors, sources of envy, objects of pride. They teach us how to resolve conflicts and how not to; how to conduct friendships and when to walk away from them. Sisters teach brothers about the mysteries of girls; brothers teach sisters about the puzzle of boys.”

Their lasting memories focus on the good times...

Some people are able to let go of negative experiences better than others. And siblings seem *especially* capable of this (at least, when it comes to each other).

... Yet, the bad times bring them even closer.

Siblings that experience traumatic events together, whether it be the divorce of their parents or the sudden loss of a loved one, maintain the ability to put their differences aside and band together for strength and support. They work through the pain, experience tough life lessons with a stable support system and often grow closer than ever.

They thrive on differences.

Past scholars who researched the sibling connection and the role of genetics often focused on the *differences* between siblings, rather than the similarities. However, how little siblings have in common actually works to their advantage from a psychological standpoint.

“We are learning that it is more than genetics that makes siblings different: parents and the siblings themselves perpetuate the differences and often celebrate them,” wrote Bank and Kahn, authors of *The Sibling Bond*. “The relationships which we have with our siblings thrive on differences — not only the ones we have had as children, but those which we continue to create as adults. Difference — like similarity — helps to make lively our connections even when these connections are upsetting or uncomfortable. Being different makes the bond work.”

They intuitively understand one another.

Whether it's because of all the time spent together while growing up or the lack of need to pass judgment on each other, there is something unique about the way siblings are able to understand each other.

They're supportive — especially later in life.

As siblings age, their unparalleled bond could actually make a difference in their well-being, particularly as they reach elderly age.

In fact, research shows that as people get older, their morale seems to be higher if their siblings are also living. In addition, research shows that elderly men with sisters seem to be more emotionally secure than those without sisters. Interestingly, the supportive benefits of this relationship were not dependent on how often the siblings interacted — it was their existence and availability that mattered most.