

Student Research Conference Abstract

Growing up with a Sibling with Special Needs: *Reflections of Young Adults on the Diagnosis of Their Sibling*

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When a child is diagnosed with a disabling condition, the family system must change in order to adapt to the newly addressed special needs of that child. However, much of the literature concerning how families cope with such a diagnosis leaves out important information about what this time is like for the siblings of the child with special needs. This research seeks to illustrate the experiences, reactions, and emotions related to the disabling diagnosis of a sibling through case studies of four young adults. In-depth interviews written into portraiture tell the stories of these siblings, and common threads highlight themes consistent with current literature. In addition, protective factors for sibling resiliency are identified in order to suggest specific ways to support siblings during the time of diagnosis.