

# Helping Siblings Cope

## What you can do to help...

- Spend quality, **individual time** with each child (family/friends sit with heart child while you spend time with your other children)
- Try to keep a normal **routine** (school, after-school activities)
- **Communicate** with your child's school and parents of other children as appropriate (if other people know, they can support and look out for signs of poor coping)
- **Share information** with sibling according to how much she/he wants to know (all kids have different personalities/coping styles. Be sure to reassess and check in over time)
- **Ask questions.** Find out if your child is treated differently by friends, neighbors, teachers. Help him learn to talk to others about your heart child. (see resources below that provided accurate, age appropriate information)
- **Acknowledge** sacrifices siblings make
- Help siblings identify a summer **camp** or special hobby
- Help children **express feelings** or concerns – art, play, friends (kids may try to protect you. Acknowledge that this is difficult and new for you and seek assistance as needed)
- **Let siblings decide** how much they want to be involved in caring for the heart child – also allow them time to just be a kid (find the balance. While still

acknowledging the special bond that siblings have and how siblings may be able to motivate/encourage heart child best)

## Resources for you ...

- Encourage your child to attend **SIBLING GROUP** at Egleston (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm)
- Books
  - *What About Me? When Brothers and Sisters Get Sick* (Peterkin, 1992)
  - *My Brother Needs An Operation* (Jaworski, 1998)
  - *A Place to Grow* (Bloom, 2002)
  - *It's Okay to Be Different* (Parr, 2001)
  - *Magnificent, Marvelous Me!* a workbook for siblings ([www.artwithheart.org](http://www.artwithheart.org))
  - *I Know I Made It Happen: A gentle book about feelings* (Blackburn, 1990)
- [www.childrensheartinstitute.org](http://www.childrensheartinstitute.org) and <http://kidshealth.org> —kid-friendly information about the heart
- Talk to a Child Life Specialist or a counselor for additional ideas