

## Being a Sibling vs. Being a Carer

- Caring can look a lot of different ways**, depending on our circumstances. We might provide day-to-day support in a hands-on manner, find ourselves in lots of meetings to advocate for our brothers and sisters, or coordinate care and provide emotional support from a distance. Each of these can have their own challenges.
  - Physical distance can help some people set boundaries, while others may find it frustrating not to be right there and able to address things hands-on.
  - For more information about “Caring from a distance”, [check out the resources from the Confident Caring session on the topic here](#).
- We navigate our roles as sibling carers within our wider families.** This can mean having challenging conversations with our parents about the roles we want to take on (both now and in the future) and/or helping them to see how their choices might impact us as siblings, both now and down the line.
  - You can download the [Sibs Guide on ‘Talking to parents’ here](#).

Many of us also find ourselves juggling multiple care responsibilities – not only for our brothers and sisters, but also for our parents and/or our own children.

  - If you’re struggling to meet someone’s care needs, consider asking for more support through a Care Needs Assessment ([download the Sibs Guide here](#)) or a [Carer’s Assessment](#) for yourself.
- As siblings of autistic people**, we may find that we have difficulty getting others to recognise our brothers’ and sisters’ unmet support needs. Those unfamiliar with autism may not understand the ways that someone can be skilled in one area and need lots of support in another. (This is sometimes referred to as a “spiky profile”.) It can also be frustrating, as advocates, to bounce between disability and mental health services, and feel that no one is taking in the full picture of our sisters or brothers and their needs.
- “I’m a sibling when it’s fun and I’m a carer when I can’t say no.”** We may feel that we don’t get to be “just siblings” when support and advocacy tasks dominate our interactions with our brothers and sisters. We might also feel frustrated that we don’t get to feel supported in turn.
  - Our sisters and brothers might also feel frustrated when we are “being carers” instead of “just siblings”. If they are unpleasant or lashing out in ways they wouldn’t with parents or support workers, this can be an important sign that we should take a step back. It is not our responsibility to accept verbal abuse.
- We can support ourselves by setting boundaries**, even small ones to begin with. Physical distance can be helpful (so you’re not right there to do “just this one thing”) or setting aside an evening for yourself, when you won’t answer the phone. If you have access to counselling or therapy, that can be a big help. You can check out the [Self-Care Guide for Siblings](#) or see [information on Finding a Counsellor](#) on the Sibs website. There’s also [advice from other siblings on boundary setting here](#).