

Parenting 2.0: Homework Week 4 - Special Needs

The goal of this week's homework is to help you come up with specific ideas for *your* particular situation. This means you may only need to complete the part of the homework relevant for your special needs situation. Each section is a checklist for you to go through to help you feel on track.

Part A: Health Issues

In this section we will look at some ways to cope when there are short or long-term health problems within the family. The following is your checklist to work on to make sure you have a setup that works for you.

Home-based activities:

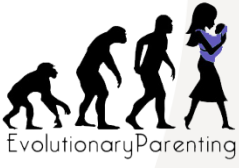
- Write out five activities that your child can do indoors on days when you may not be able to get outside either because of short-term illness or longer-term illness.
- Look at your list and write out what is needed for each.
- Go through the house and gather the items needed into one bin that you can store somewhere. If you are missing items, make the list.
- Get missing items when you are next able to (or ask someone to do it for you) and add them to the bin.

Sanitization:

- Create a sanitization area at each entrance to the house. This includes hand sanitizer, masks (if necessary), and anything else needed.
- Create an area in the house for sterilization, if needed. This would be where another child who has been at school or a program may change and leave clothing so it won't contaminate anything.
- Write a letter to your other child's school/programs about illness and the need to be notified if anyone is sick.
- Write a letter to go home to parents asking them to let you know if they will be sending a child with a minor cold. Explain in detail how you need to know and there is no judgment.

Hospitalizations:

- Make a daily video for your other child about how much you miss them and are thinking of them.
- Book a time in your calendar that you will have one-on-one time with your other child.
- If you can, facetime or call your other child daily to hear about how their day is going and make sure to make the conversation about them, not the sick child.

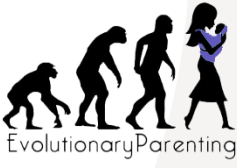


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Part B: Developmental Issues

This section covers your to-dos when you have one child with a developmental issue that can result in special needs. The following is your checklist to work on to make sure you have a setup that works for you.

- Find books that can help explain what is going on for your other child at their level and above (so they can keep reading up as needed).
- Create a list of things that you need your other child to be aware of in terms of the behaviours of their sibling. For each item, identify a way to speak to your child in a way that is age-appropriate and clear. For example, if one child has Sensory Processing Disorder and struggles with sounds, you will want to explain to your other child that noises can make their sibling really upset. Then help them identify ways they might be able to help their sibling if they face this situation.
- Create a visual list of things the sibling can do when/if there's an issue with their sibling. Taking the example above, you could draw a picture of loud sounds and a child upset with an arrow to the sibling bringing headphones over. Remember that visual reminders often help children.
- Write in your calendar all special events for your other child and make sure to start making plans as early as you need to in order to ensure they aren't missed.
- Set aside time weekly or more to have with your other child as one-on-one special time where you can do all sorts of things that your child chooses. This is *not* the time to have discussions about the other sibling, but just focus on fun activities that your child would like to do. Put this time in your calendar so it does not get missed.
- Come up with a list of activities that your child would probably like and that you can afford and present them as options so your child knows you're thinking of them as well.
- Set aside time weekly for everyone to talk about their struggles. When *everyone* opens up about them, it can help reduce that need to be perfect which can plague the siblings of those with special needs.



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Part C: Orchid Issues

This section covers your to-dos when you have one child who is an orchid given their higher-needs. The following is your checklist to work on to make sure you have a setup that works for you.

If your orchid is the oldest child and you are expecting a new child:

- Set aside special time in your calendar for your orchid child. This is paramount to them handling the transition to having a little sibling around.
- Change as little as possible as you await the arrival of your new child.
- For any change you need to make, turn it into 3-4 steps to get from where you are to where you need to be and make those transitions (each one) slowly.
- Set aside time with your orchid to talk about their big feelings and go through stories and ideas of what things will look like when the new baby arrives. This can allow them to “prepare” by imagining it ahead of time.

If your orchid is the oldest child and you have a second child already:

- Set aside special time with *both* kids, regardless of age. They will each need you independently and remember that your older orchid will likely need more time than you would expect given the age differences. Put this time in your calendar and make necessary arrangements.
- Make changes to the routine slowly. As you find out what your youngest needs, you will need to figure out how to slowly transition to the new routine through using intermediate steps.
- Set a daily or every other day reminder to check on your oldest in terms of a well check. That is, have them take a moment to see if they feel like they are feeling connected enough to you on a regular basis and if they aren't, make a plan to address it as soon as possible.
- Find something your eldest can do to be the “helper” that is a regular event. Whether it's helping with breakfast or taking care of their little sibling by watching them while you cook, these acts of caring fit well with the orchid's personality and can help them feel like they are valued, meeting some of these needs.

If your orchid is the youngest child:

- Set aside time with your oldest child for connection. When orchids are youngest, they can really dominate our time because they have both the higher needs from being younger *and* the higher needs from being orchid. This can mean our eldest gets ignored so work hard to plan special times to avoid this.
- Enlist the help of your eldest to do things with/for the youngest. They may not always want to join, but that can help them feel connection when there's so much going on with the youngest.