

# Managing a Family Illness

When your brother or sister is unwell, it can be really difficult to know what to do. Sometimes, you might feel like you don't understand what is happening to them. You might feel that you aren't in control of anything anymore or you might feel lonely and left out.

All of these feelings are normal and understandable.

People manage family illnesses differently and how you feel can change from one moment to another. One moment you might feel really happy and the next you might feel like crying. Please don't feel this is wrong. Whatever you are feeling is understandable. Ask for help if you are feeling really sad or you are struggling to manage with how you are feeling.

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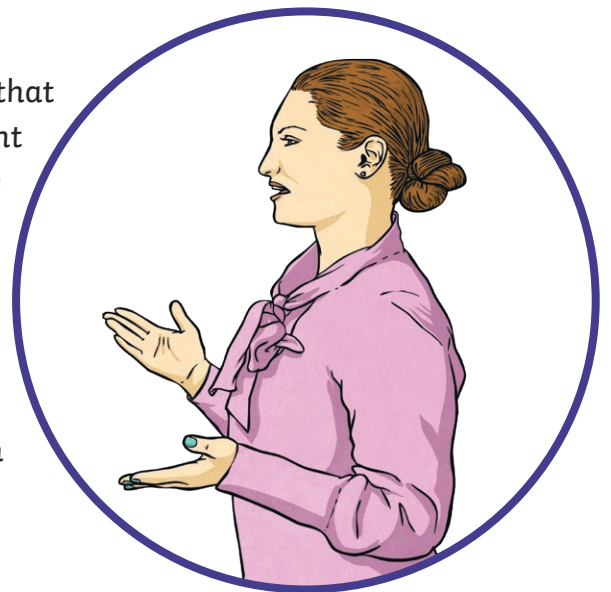
## Talk

When your brother or sister is ill, it is really important that you make sure you talk to that person. It is important that you understand what is going on and how you are both feeling.

Ask them how they are feeling and if there is anything they need or that you can do for them.

Often, when people are ill, other people do not know what to say. This can cause more problems as they then don't want to ask for help from others.

Be the first to offer them support and love!



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## Say and Show How You Feel

It is really important to tell people how much they mean to you. For some people, this can be really easy and for others it can be difficult. If it's easy for you then show them through hugs, affection and telling them first hand.

However, if it is difficult to do this then try and write a note, card or a letter. It doesn't have to be long – just one word or a brief sentence is enough to make someone feel very special and loved.

## Keep Memories

Try taking lots of photographs of you and your brother or sister. Take photos of all the people that come to see them and spend time with them.

Take photographs of their favourite doctors and nurses. You could put them together in a photograph book or album. You could either buy one of these or make one yourself. If you choose to make one yourself, try getting a plain notebook and then stick pictures or drawings on the cover to make it personalised.

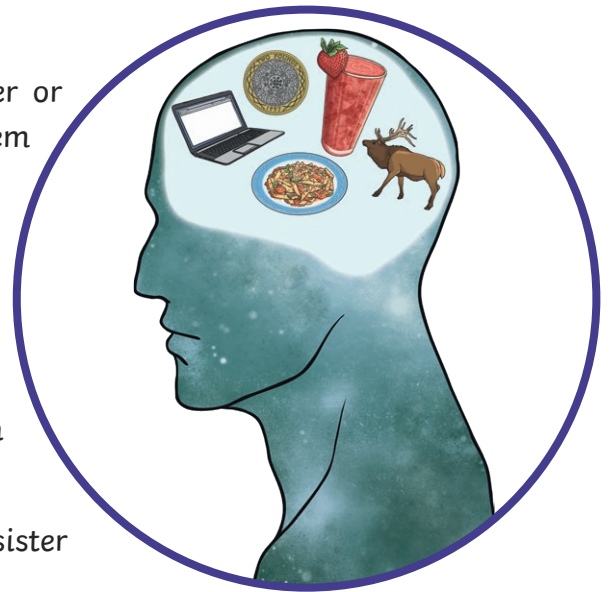
Think about all the things you like and your brother or sister likes and use them as ideas for the cover.

Think about all the wonderful times you have had with your brother or sister and start to write them down or draw them. They don't just have to be ones from the past. They can be ones that are happening now.

- **When did you both really laugh together?**
- **Did you play a funny trick on your parents/carers?**
- **Did you play a funny game?**

Put all these memories inside a jar or box to create a memory jar or a box.

Make this jar/box special by making it your own. Use stickers, craft materials or glass paints. There is no right or wrong way of doing this.



## Remember to Laugh

When your sister or brother is very ill, it can be difficult to have fun. There may be many times when you don't feel like laughing and want to cry instead. This is OK and an important part of coping with what is happening. It is really important that you talk to your sister or brother and your parents/carers.

They will want to know how you are feeling so they can support you as much as they can.

Be open and honest and tell them how you feel.

If there is something that is worrying you in particular, then say what it is – don't worry about upsetting them – it would be more upsetting for them not to know and see you upset without understanding the reasons.

It is important to try and have fun and laugh with your friends and family. Don't feel guilty about having fun and doing the things you enjoy; your brother or sister would want you to be happy.

Try and do things for your brother or sister that will make them laugh too. Choose to watch a film together that you know they love and will make them laugh. Buy them a comic that they enjoy reading or play their favourite game.



## Remember to:

- Talk and keep talking.
- Tell them how you feel and ask how they feel. You can support each other.
- Take photographs and put them in a personalised album.
- Make a memory jar or box.
- Remember to continue to enjoy yourself and have fun. Try wherever possible to have fun together and make each other laugh. The more you laugh the better!
- Tell people if you are finding things difficult to manage and be honest about how you feel.
- Be there for each other.

