

Can Being A Sibling Teach You To Have A Good Relationship?

By Steven Zangrillo

My sister and I grew up in Suburbia, which affords bored, middle-class children multiple opportunities for creative mayhem. My sister, therefore, functioned as a guinea pig of sorts. For instance, picture a 10-year-old and his friends chasing you around with Super Soakers filled to the hilt with pickle juice. You'd have hated me, too. When we both hit adolescence, we grew up a little bit. We went to high school and started to test the dating waters. As if being a 14-year-old, pimple-faced fat kid wasn't enough, I had to come home to the chiding laughter of my older, hotter, more dating-tested sister whenever I failed. Good news of failed romance spreads fast in Suburbia. My immaturity blinded me from taking in the romance lessons that are now so clear to me. Let's break them down:

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1. People will always aggravate you, but how you react is dependent on how you want this situation to end.

On Easter we would have an Easter egg hunt, followed by a trip to the Sunday car show downtown. My sister would wake up extra early and find out where the eggs were, leave them there and go back to bed. When our parents woke us up a little later, Samantha would rifle through the house and snag every egg. Me? I was left in bitter tears and tuxedo pajamas (they were sweet, don't judge). She won the battle, and I didn't complain. I won the war later when I, not she, got to sit in the cars first at the show. Karma comes back around.

The lesson here is that your significant other will

purposefully or unintentionally do aggravating things, just like your sibling. Whatever habits, issues, or situations you're faced with, remember that you can either continue to stamp your feet and cry while everyone goes to the car show, or you can calm down and hop your little tush into the front seat of a '72 Corvette.

2. Everyone is equally accountable under the same roof.

I had a Sega Genesis; she had a boom box. Montel Jordan was particularly popular at the time. You're already singing it in your head, "*Thiiiiis is how we doooo itttttt...*"

I was busy freezing people and knocking their heads off in *Mortal Kombat* when Samantha came bounding down the stairs, asking if she could play. I shrugged and, since I was bored anyway, surrendered the game console to her. I began to aimlessly prance around the house as quickly as my 7-year-old body would allow me to move. I stumbled upon her glistening, gorgeous new Sony boom box. Somewhere between the chorus and the second stanza I managed to scramble up the tape deck. I was left with a mangled mess of what once was a cassette. Needless to say, my sister and I brawled that day.

The lesson here, of course, is to communicate. Want to borrow his toothbrush? Fine, just say so. The idea that "What's yours is mine, and mine is yours," is great up until that last drop of orange juice is gone and someone is forced to adjust their routine because you didn't say anything. It seems mundane, but little things add up. Give yourself few chances to be accused of things.

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3. Be a softie- it's okay, seriously. If you don't know how to be one, open yourself to learning about it.

My sister and I have spent 24 years being absolutely obnoxious towards each other. Between the passive-aggressive verbal

assaults, physical encounters, finger pointing, name-gaming nonsense, we've seen some real and palpable tough times. There have been days where I've been called on to be her little brother. That's a role that I relish and will always take seriously.

The same thing goes for relationships. It's easy to be a fun, happy boyfriend or girlfriend. Life is great when you're out on the town having drinks and dinner, going to your favorite club, seeing a movie, or whatever the case may be. The next day that person may be in need of something more concrete. You might be called on to be there for support and you better be ready for it. If you aren't, then just listen to everything they have to say to you. Be a softie. Listen, understand and appreciate. That's your job as a sibling, significant other and a person in the world.

Do you think being a sibling has helped shape your relationship? Share your comments below.