



Elder siblings: The inherent third parent

It goes without saying that the elder sibling plays a special role in every family. It remains unsaid, but an elder sibling often takes upon the character of a third parent. Among the various personas they cater to, there are some essential roles they play.

The relationship shared by siblings is distinguished — on one hand, they fight until they get to the verge of ripping each other's hair off and on the other, they are ready to take a bullet to save the other without a second thought.

The bridge

Parents usually do not have a favourite child, but there might be one they are closer to. This is especially the case when two siblings have a large age gap, perhaps about a decade. Often times, this age difference creates a boundary and communication gap, making it harder for parents to understand their children's perspective.

This is where the elder sibling acts as a bridge and helps to bring the different perspectives of two generations under a consolidated view.

"My younger brother and parents have a gap of two generations, which is why they often have arguments over various matters. At times like these, I intervene to explain their differing views and reach a plausible conclusion," said Abir Hossain.



The best friend

'Friends come and go but family is forever' might just be true in some cases. Lucky are those who always have their best friend right inside their house! Being the elder sibling, it is only natural that they give enough space and freedom to the younger ones so that they can talk about any topic without hesitation.

In a community where parents often find it difficult to educate their children about taboo topics, the eldest in the house often takes care of this aspect.

"Since childhood, I have ensured that my sister can come to me for any problem without the fear of being judged. I make sure that she does not feel guilty after expressing her opinions, which is sometimes the case with parents," remarked Nowsheen Tabassum, the older of two siblings.



The counsellor

During times of despair or confusion, it dawns upon us how badly we yearn for a mentor in life who can show us direction, and to be able to grow up with such a person is a blessing. Even if we do not get a solution, we can stay safe with the knowledge that at least we will receive some solace.

"My elder sister is like my guardian angel. Whenever I need advice, be it about



education, relationship, or career, I know she will be happy to share her opinion and give me guidance. This is something I find hard to discuss with parents," shared Alif Ahmed.

The role model

Reminiscing my childhood, I recall how hard I tried to be like my elder sister. From my selection of attire to my choice of words, everything was influenced by her, and many can relate to this. Unknowingly, the elder sibling leaves a profound impact over the younger ones and this brings about some additional responsibilities.

"I understand that I am a great source of learning for my younger sisters and thus, I try to set the best example for them. I am aware that my behaviour and attitude towards others moulds theirs and so if I am being a role model, I should be the best one," expressed Faiza Ibnat, who has two younger sisters.

The emotional powerhouse

No matter how much siblings argue, they also possess a strong and unrivalled emotional attachment. In case of the eldest one, knowing someone from their first day on earth, being there for them during every celebration, and living every moment together creates a bond unlike any other.

"I become overjoyed for any milestone, be it big or small my younger sister achieves. From seeing her lose her first tooth to witnessing her graduate from high school, I have always been more excited than her, much like a parent would," shared Arshi Alam.

The provider

While a lot of us are lucky enough to be under the care and shelter of our parents, this is a privilege not everyone enjoys. The demise of a parent brings upon the additional burden on the eldest sibling to earn for the family. This involves a lot of sacrifices in terms of life decisions to say the least.

In situations like these, like a father figure, the eldest sibling takes upon the duty of providing the best for family. "From buying chocolates for my little brother to spending for his undergraduate degree, we grew up. As I was compelled to take upon responsibilities earlier than I had envisaged, I try to anchor me and my family through life," remarked Atif Shams.

An elder sibling is more than just a sibling. By fulfilling several responsibilities and taking upon various roles, the elder sibling can be deemed as the unequivocal third parent. They are the ones to shower their younger ones with unconditional love next to their parents, and for this they deserve utmost respect.

By Fariha Amber
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