

PSG Sibling Connect (on 25th June 2022)

One Saturday morning in June, a few youths gathered at St. Andrew's Autism Centre. They all shared one thing in common– each having a brother or sister with autism. They were gathered for the PSG Sibling Connect event titled “*Finding my Tribe as I Navigate My Teenage Years.*”

The programme kicked off with two icebreaker games for them to know more about one another. This was followed by a time of emotional check-in. Some shared that they felt content and confident in their daily lives, while others mentioned that



they felt anxious and weighed down. Afterwards, they shared their dreams for the future. Some siblings were optimistic that their dreams would be fulfilled, while others hoped that they would gradually grow in accepting their circumstances.

After this, the participants were ready for the next step of their self-discovery journey. Each sibling spoke about the different aspects of their identity, their strong characteristics and unique traits.

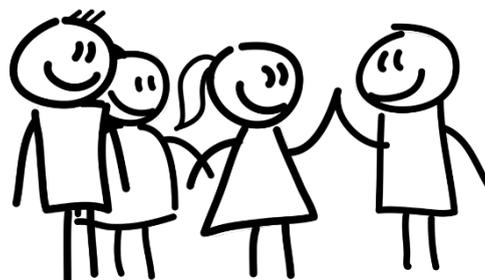
*“I am resilient and assertive. I have a strong sense of what I want and will voice out about things that I really care about,” - Diana**

Then, the group watched two interviews with family members of people with autism. Afterwards, they reflected on the unique qualities they saw in their siblings with autism and their hopes for them.

*“I wish for my brother to be more independent in daily living skills and rely less on our parents, especially with skills that he has already mastered,” - Jake**

After lunch, the group went on a brief centre tour. They caught a glimpse of how their siblings are engaged in school and at the day activity centre.

That was followed by a sharing by an adult with many valuable insights and personal memories. She shared that a successful and meaningful relationship with a sibling with autism involves a lot of patience, willpower and kindness and also great lengths of effort to make it work. Love and affection for one another is a two-way street and can be built over time with initiative and sincerity.



Finally, each participant was given an opportunity to think about a question they would like to ask their sibling with autism. Some asked, “Why do you tear every book?” Others wanted to know what their sibling was grateful for. Another wanted to know what her sibling is interested in. The organisers attempted to answer these questions by sharing some of their knowledge of autism. They drew on some anecdotes from the perspective of a person with autism, Naoki Higashida, who is the author of two books. The insights gained came as a revelation for some of the participants.

When reflecting on what they had gathered from the programme, the siblings wrote:

“I hope that when my brother has a meltdown, I will be able to set aside my personal feelings and be more empathetic towards him...”

“I learnt that sometimes my brother can't control his emotions/actions, and I must show patience. He deserves love.”

“Though it may not always seem like it, my sister appreciates my actions towards her.”

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants.

