

Building Strong Sibling Bonds

Stephanie: “So we have eight children and four of them are adopted, merging them together as brothers and sisters was kind of difficult because we really had to say, now these children will be your brothers and sisters. You will be responsible for them like you're responsible for each other and forever bonding them together is really what it came down to. We would pair them together in groups to do like different chores around the house, or if two of them got in trouble, we would do a buddy shirt.”

Jermaine: “It was one of my larger t-shirts, like my comfort t-shirt. I just throw it on when I'm just like lounging around the house, I took it and kind of cut the neck a little bit so it was a little more comfortable for them to put on together and they have to stand together.”

Stephanie: “And you can only have one arm. So you have the other arm is behind and they have to literally work together and they would be upset. And I say, ‘well, until you're happy, until you guys are back together, you're going to stay in the t-shirt.’ We all have dealt with their behaviors, it wasn't just, you know, Jermaine and I. It was our children as well. Our kids have seen their sister and brothers go through some of the worst times of their lives, but also bounce back from that. And I have to say, our kids were really, really great in being big brothers and sisters to them.

“You know, they took them and said, ‘OK, let me teach you how to do you know this. Let me teach you how to do that. Well, you know, Mom might not be happy if we make this decision,’ and really taking that ownership piece in and saying, ‘that is my brother. Those are my sisters.’”

Jermaine: “I think it has definitely made our children better people. They actually look out for others more. So now, too, you can see, especially with our oldest son growing up, always wanting that little brother. Now, when he comes back from college, he's looking for his little brothers like, hey, come on, we can go do this. We're gonna little play laser tag. You know, just being able to do the things he wants to do with a little brother. Things he wasn't capable of doing because he was the only boy.”

Stephanie: “So we purposefully blended them together and did everything that we could to make them realize that, you know, they needed to lean on each other and

become a family. So it was an interesting time. But they are truly siblings. Truly siblings.”