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- *The Place of Siblings in Psychological Development.*
- *The parent's experiences of being brothers or sisters.*
- *A child in the shadows.*
- *The twins are coming!*
- *Brothers and sisters: what parents can do to reduce rivalry and increase affection.*

### **Presentation**

Is it always inevitable that the birth of a sibling is experienced as a catastrophe and that other brothers or sisters have feelings of rivalry or jealousy? What can parents do to reinforce the positive relations between them? The aim of this book is to propose a new point of view on the world shared by siblings and on how such an intimate link then conditions successive relationships in adult life.

Many psychoanalysts have underlined the importance of the relationship between mother and child for emotional and mental development, while the crucial role played by brothers and sisters, real or imaginary, has been neglected for a long time. We are surprised however, in the therapy room, to discover the part played by siblings in patients' lives, both as an obstacle in their relationship with their parents and as support in the development of the personality. The arrival of a child is without doubt demanding for parents, but for siblings it can be a catastrophic moment. However, having got over the initial difficulties and anxieties, having a brother or sister can help and also enrich the child's emotional development.

In the first chapter of the volume great importance is given to love between siblings (which many authors put in second place compared to rivalry) and to the development of an 'I-us' that brings complicity and company, mitigating the sense of solitude that an only child can experience.

The previous experience of parents, as brothers or sisters, certainly conditions the relationship with their children: feelings, very often not conscious but buried in the unconscious, of hate and love for brothers and sisters are very intense in childhood and sometimes remain the same in adulthood. This will be dealt with in the second chapter. The third focuses on the subject of perinatal death and the painful impact that it has on parents and consequently on a child born afterwards, in the shadow of the dead child. Parents' feelings are highly complex because their joy from the birth coexists with the loss of the previous child which is still strongly present in their minds. All of these things affect not only the child born after the loss, but also any brothers and sisters who were present before.

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## SIBLINGS AND TWINS



The fourth chapter deals with twins, the siblings with the 'strongest ties'. Through interviews with some of them, as well as with their parents and brothers and sisters, the complicated emotions caused by the simultaneous arrival of two children are outlined, linked above all by the necessity to build their own individuality.

Finally the practical approach of the last chapter addresses the difficulties of parents in moments of greater tension, proposing strategies to manage the sometimes explosive dynamics between siblings. Those who have only one child will find ideas and reasons for interest in all the chapters, where the figure of the only child is always present.