

**Advanced 3**  
**Unit 6 Reading**  
**Presented by Mohammad Rajabpur**

## **Beyond Rivalry**

### **A**

During childhood, sisters and brothers are a major part of each other's lives, for better or for worse. As adults they may drift apart as they become involved in their own careers, marriage, and families. But in later life, with retirement, an empty nest, and parents and sometimes spouses gone, brothers and sisters often turn back to each other for a special affinity and link to the past. "In the stressful, fast-paced world we live in, the sibling relationship becomes for many the only intimate connection that seems to last," says psychologist Michael Kahn of the University of Hartford. Friends and neighbors may move away, former co-workers are forgotten, marriages break up, but no matter what, our sisters and brothers remain our sisters and brothers.

**spouse** = /spaʊs/ husband or wife

**sibling** = sister or brother

**intimate** = close

**affinity** = link, bond, close relationship

**empty nest** = a family in which the children have grown up and no longer live with parents

**empty nester** noun [ C ] informal = someone whose children have grown up and no longer live at home

### **B**

This late-life bond may be especially important to the "Baby Boom" generation now in adulthood, who average about two or three siblings apiece. High divorce rates and the decision by many couples to have only one or no children will force members of this generation to look to their brothers and sisters for support in old age. And, as psychologist Deborah Gold of the Duke Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development points out, "Since people are living longer and are healthier longer, they will be more capable of giving help." Critical events can bring siblings together or deepen an existing rift, according to a study by psychologists Helgola Ross and Joel Milgram of the University of Cincinnati.

Parental sickness or death is a prime example. Ross and Milgram found that siblings immersed in rivalry and conflict were even more torn apart by the death or sickness of a parent. Those siblings who had been close since childhood became closer.

**baby boom** = a large increase in the number of babies born among a particular group of people during a particular time:

*There was a baby boom in the UK and the US after the Second World War.*

**apiece** = each

*In good condition, dolls from this period sell for £500 apiece.*

**point out** = indicate

**rift** = a large crack in the ground or in rock:

*The stream had cut a deep rift in the rock.*

**rift** = a serious disagreement that separates two people who have been friends and stops their friendship continuing:

*The marriage caused a rift between the brothers and they didn't speak to each other for ten years.*

**immerse** = to become completely involved in something:

*She got some books out of the library and immersed herself in Jewish history and culture.*

## C

In a study of older people with sisters and brothers, Gold found about 20 percent said they were either hostile or indifferent toward their siblings. Reasons for the rifts ranged from inheritance disputes to animosity between spouses. But many of those who had poor relationships felt guilt and remorse. A man who hadn't spoken with his sister in 20 years described their estrangement as a "festering sore." Although most people in Ross and Milgram's study admitted to some lingering rivalry, it was rarely strong enough to end the relationship. Only 4 out of the 55 people they interviewed had completely broken with their siblings and only 1 of the 4 felt comfortable with the break, leaving the researchers to ask, "Is it psychologically impossible to disassociate oneself from one's siblings in the way one can forget old friends or even former mates?"

**hostile** adjective UK /'hɒs.taɪl/ US /'hɑː.stəl/ unfriendly and not liking something:

*a hostile crowd*

*The president had a hostile reception in Ohio this morning.*

**animosity** noun [ C or U ] UK /,æ.n.i'mɒs.ə.ti/ US /,æ.n.ə'mɑː.sə.ti/ strong dislike, opposition, or anger:

*Of course we're competitive, but there's no personal animosity between us.*

*In spite of his injuries, he bears no animosity towards his attackers.*

*The European Community helped France and Germany forget the old animosities between them.*

**remorse** noun = regret

**remorseful** adjective = regretful

**estrangement** noun formal UK /ɪ'streɪndʒ.mənt/ US /ɪ'streɪndʒ.mənt/ [ C or U ] a period when you are estranged from someone (= no longer friendly with them), or the fact of no longer being friendly:

*Their reunion followed a long estrangement.*

*He talked about his estrangement from his family.*

**fester** verb [ I ] UK /'fes.tər/ US /'fes.tə/ If a cut or other injury festers, it becomes infected and produces pus:

*a festering sore*

**sore** noun [ C ] UK /sɔːr/ US /sɔːr/ a painful area on the surface of a body, especially an infected area:

*The poor dog's back was covered with sores.*

**lingering** adjective [ before noun ] UK /'lɪŋ.gər.ɪŋ/ US /'lɪŋ.gə.ɪŋ/ lasting a long time:

*She gave him a long, lingering kiss.*

*She says she stopped seeing him, but I still have lingering doubts.*

*The defeat ends any lingering hopes she might have had of winning the championship.*

**disassociate yourself/somebody from somebody/something** /,dɪsə'səʊsiət/, /,dɪsə'səʊʃiət/ to say or do something to show that you are not connected with or do not support somebody/something; to make it clear that something is not connected with a particular plan, action, etc.

## D

As brothers and sisters advance into old age, "closeness increases and rivalry diminishes," explains Victor Cicirelli, a psychologist at Purdue University. Most of the elderly people he interviewed said they had supportive and amicable dealings and got along well or very well with their brothers and sisters. Only 4 percent got along poorly. Gold found that as people age, they often become more involved with and interested in their siblings. Fifty-three percent of those she interviewed said that contact with their sisters and brothers increased in late adulthood. With family and career obligations reduced, many said they had more time for each other. Others said they felt it was "time to heal wounds." A man who had recently reconciled with his brother told Gold, "There's something that lets older people put aside the bad deeds of the past and focus a little on what we need now...especially when it's brothers and sisters."

**amicable** /'æm.ɪ.kə.bəl/ = friendly

**diminish** = decrease

**age** = grow older

**reconcile** = become friendly with someone after an argument

## E

Another reason for increased contact was anxiety about a sister's or brother's declining health. Many would call more often to "check in" and see how the other was doing. Men especially reported feeling increased responsibility for a sibling; women were more likely to cite emotional motivations such as feelings of empathy and security.

**cite** = mention

**empathy** noun [ U ] UK /'em.pə.θi/ US /'em.pə.θi/ the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation

## F

Siblings also assume special importance as other sources of contact and support dwindle. "Each of us moves through life with a 'convoy' of people who supply comfort and nurturance," says psychologist Toni C. Antonucci of the University of Michigan. As we age, the size of the convoy gradually declines because of death, sickness, or moving. "Brothers and sisters who may not have been important convoy members earlier in life can become so in old age," Gold says.

And they do more than fill in gaps. Many people told Gold that the loneliness they felt could not be satisfied by just anyone. They wanted a specific type of relationship, one that only someone who had shared their past could provide.

**dwindle** = decrease

**convoy** noun UK /'kɒn.vɔɪ/ US /'kɑ:n.vɔɪ/ [ C ] a group of vehicles or ships that travel together, especially for protection:

*A convoy of trucks containing supplies was sent to the famine area.*

**nurturance** = emotional and physical nourishment and care given to someone

## G

This far-reaching link to the past is a powerful bond between siblings in later life. "There's a review process we all go through in old age to resolve whether we are pleased with our lives," Gold explains. "A sibling can help retrieve a memory and validate our experiences. People have said to me, 'I can remember some with my spouse or with friends. But the only person who goes all the way back is my sister or brother.— Cicirelli agrees that reviewing the past together is a rewarding activity. "Siblings have a very important role in maintaining a connection to early life," he says. "Discussing the past evokes the warmth of early family life. It validates and clarifies events of the early years." Furthermore, he has found that encouraging depressed older people to reminisce with a sister or brother can improve their morale.

**retrieve** = get back

**evoke** = bring something to mind

**reminisce** verb [ I ] formal UK /,rem.r'nɪs/ US /,rem.ə'nɪs/ to talk or write about past experiences that you remember with pleasure:

*My grandfather used to reminisce about his years in the navy.*

**morale** = spirits, mood

## H

Some of the factors that affect how much contact siblings will have, such as how near they live, are obvious. Others are more unexpected—for example, whether there is a sister in the clan. Cicirelli found that elderly people most often feel closest to a sister and are more likely to keep in touch through her. According to Gold, sisters, by tradition, often assume a caretaking and kin-keeping role,

especially after the death of their mother. "In many situations you see two brothers who don't talk to each other that much but keep track of each other through their sisters," she says. Researchers have found that the bond between sisters is the strongest, followed by the one between sisters and brothers, and, last, between brothers.

**clan** = tribe, a big family

**kin** = family member or relative

**bond** = close relationship, affinity

**keep track (of someone/something)** (idiom) to continue to be informed or know about someone or something:

*My sister's had so many jobs, I can't keep track anymore.*

## I

Sisters and brothers who live near each other will, as a matter of course, see more of each other. But Cicirelli says that proximity is not crucial to a strong relationship later in life. "Because of multiple chronic illnesses, people in their 80s and 90s can't get together that easily. Even so, the sibling seems to evoke positive feelings based on the images or feelings inside." Gold's findings support this assertion. During a two-year period, contact among her respondents decreased slightly, but positive feelings increased. "Just the idea that the sibling is alive, that 'there is someone I can call,' is comforting."

**as a matter of course** (idiom) If something is done as a matter of course, it is a usual part of the way in which things are done and is not special:

*Safety precautions are observed as a matter of course.*

**proximity** = closeness

**crucial** = important

## J

Although older people may find solace in the thought that their siblings are there if they need them, rarely do they call each other for help or offer each other instrumental support, such as loaning money, running errands or performing favors. "Even though you find siblings saying that they'd be glad to help each other and saying they would ask for help if necessary, rarely do they ask," Cicirelli points out.

**solace** = comfort

**instrumental** = important

## K

Gold believes that there are several reasons siblings don't turn to each other more for instrumental help. First, since they are usually about the same age, they may be equally needy or frail. Another reason is that many people consider their siblings safety nets who will save them after every-thing else has failed. A son or daughter will almost always be turned to first. It's more acceptable in our society to look up or down the family ladder for help than sideways. Finally, siblings may not turn to each other for help because of latent rivalry. They may believe that if they need to call on a brother or sister, they are admitting that the other person is a success and "I am a failure." Almost all of the people in Gold's study said they would rather continue on their own than ask their sister or brother for help. But she found that a crisis beyond control would inspire "a 'rallying' of some or all siblings around the brother or sister in need."

**frail** = weak

**latent** = hidden, not manifest

**rally** = to bring or come together in order to provide support or make a shared effort:

*African-American groups rallied around the president when he was under attack.*

**safety net** = an arrangement that helps to prevent disaster if something goes wrong

a financial safety net

people who have fallen through the safety net and ended up homeless on the streets

**safety net** = a net placed below acrobats, etc. to catch them if they fall

## L

Despite the quarreling and competition many people associate with the mere mention of their sisters and brothers, most of us, Gold says, will find "unexpected strengths in this relationship in later life."

**mere** = used to emphasize how strongly someone feels about something or how extreme a situation is:

*The mere thought of it (= just thinking about it) makes me feel sick.*

*People became excited at the mere mention of his name.*

*the mere idea/possibility/prospect of something*

### **The Text in Simple English:**

A

When we are kids, we spend a lot of time with our sisters and brothers. Sometimes we get along, sometimes we don't. When we grow up, we may not see them as much because we have our own jobs, partners, and children. But when we get old, we may lose our parents, partners, or children. Then we may want to be close to our sisters and brothers again. They understand us and share our memories. Psychologist Michael Kahn says that in this busy and hard world, many people only have their sisters and brothers as their true friends. Other people may leave us, but our sisters and brothers will always be our sisters and brothers.

B

When we are old, we may need our sisters and brothers more than ever. This is especially true for the "Baby Boom" generation, who are adults now and have about two or three sisters and brothers each. Many of them are divorced or have no children, so they will depend on their sisters and brothers for help when they are old. Psychologist Deborah Gold says that people are living longer and healthier, so they can help each other more. Sometimes, good or bad things happen that make sisters and brothers closer or farther apart. Psychologists Helgola Ross and Joel Milgram did a study about this. They found that when a parent got sick or died, sisters and brothers who fought a lot became even more distant. But sisters and brothers who were friends since they were kids became even closer.

C

Gold did a study on old people who had sisters or brothers. He found that about 1 out of 5 people did not like or care about their siblings. They had different reasons for not getting along, such as fighting over money or not liking each other's partners. But many of them felt bad and sorry about their bad relationships. One man who had not talked to his sister for 20 years said it was like having a wound that never healed. Ross and Milgram also did a study on people and their siblings. Most of them said they still had some competition with their siblings, but it was not enough to make them stop talking. Only 4 out of the 55 people they talked to had cut off contact with their siblings and only 1 of them was okay with it. This made the researchers wonder, "Is it very hard to stop thinking about one's siblings like one can stop thinking about old friends or ex-partners?"

## D

Victor Cicirelli is a person who studies how people think and feel. He works at Purdue University. He talked to many old people who had sisters or brothers. Most of them said they had good and friendly relationships and liked their siblings a lot. Only a few of them did not like their siblings. Gold also did a study on old people and their siblings. He found that many old people became more interested in their sisters and brothers as they got older. More than half of the people he talked to said they talked to their siblings more often when they were old. They said they had less work and family things to do, so they had more time for each other. Some of them said they wanted to make up for the bad things that happened before. One man who had made peace with his brother told Gold, "Old people can forget the bad things they did and think more about what they need now...especially with their sisters and brothers."

## E

People talked to their sisters or brothers more when they were worried about their health. They called a lot to ask how they were. Men felt more like they had to take care of their siblings; women said they did it because they cared and felt safe with them.

## F

Sisters and brothers become more important when we have less people to talk to and help us. "We all have a 'group' of people who make us feel good and take care of us," says a scientist named Toni C. Antonucci from a big school in Michigan. When we get older, the group gets smaller because some people die, get sick, or move away. "Sisters and brothers who may not have been close to us before can become close to us when we are old," Gold says. And they do more than just be there for us. Many people told Gold that they felt lonely and only a sister or brother who knew their past could make them feel better.

## G

Having a sister or brother who remembers the same things from a long time ago makes you feel closer to them when you are old. Gold says that when we are old, we think about our lives and see if we are happy. A sister or brother can help us remember things and make us feel that we are not alone. Some people have told me, 'I can remember some things with my partner or my friends. But the only one who knows everything about me is my sister or brother.' Cicirelli also thinks that talking about the past with a sister or brother is good for us. He says that sisters and brothers help us stay in touch with our childhood. Talking about the past

makes us feel the love of our family. It also helps us understand and remember what happened when we were young. He also says that talking to a sister or brother can make sad old people feel better.

H

Some things make it easier or harder for sisters and brothers to talk to each other, like how far they live. But some things are surprising, like having a sister in the family. Cicirelli learned that old people usually like their sisters the most and stay in touch with them. Gold says that sisters often take care of their family and keep them together, especially when their mom dies. She says that sometimes two brothers don't talk much but know about each other from their sisters. Researchers have learned that sisters love each other the most, then sisters and brothers, and then brothers.

I

Sisters and brothers who live close by will see each other more often. But Cicirelli says that living close by is not very important for having a good relationship when you are old. "People who are very old have many health problems, so they can't meet each other easily. But they still feel good when they think about their sister or brother." Gold's research agrees with this. For two years, she studied some people and saw that they talked to their sisters and brothers less, but they felt more happy. "They feel better just knowing that their sister or brother is alive, and that they can call them if they want."

J

Older people may feel better when they think that their sisters and brothers are there for them, but they don't ask each other for help very often or do things for each other, like giving money, doing chores or helping out. "You may hear sisters and brothers say that they are happy to help each other and that they would ask for help if they need it, but they hardly ever do," Cicirelli says.

K

Gold thinks that brothers and sisters have many reasons for not helping each other more. One reason is that they are usually the same age, so they may both need help or be weak. Another reason is that many people think their brothers and sisters will help them only when no one else can. They will ask their children or parents for help first. In our society, it is more normal to ask for help from older or younger family members than from brothers and sisters. The last reason is that brothers and sisters may not want to help each other because of hidden competition. They may feel that if they ask for help from a brother or sister, they

are saying that the other person is better and “I am worse.” Almost everyone in Gold’s study said they would rather do things by themselves than ask their brother or sister for help. But she saw that a big problem that they could not handle would make “a ‘group’ of some or all brothers and sisters around the brother or sister who needs help.”

L

Gold says that many people think of their brothers and sisters as people who fight and compete with them. But most of us will see that this relationship has “surprising good things” when we are older.

Source:

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