

## The Top Ten Ways to Create Problems in Your Adult Sibling Relationships

By Courtney Miner, BS, Therapist Intern



In the marriage and family therapy field, I come across several different kinds of family relationships, but the sibling relationship is the most interesting to me. Your sibling is the best friend you were born with, yet it is fairly easy to cause problems in said relationship.

If you are looking to add some drama to your sibling relationship or you feel there is not enough distance in your relationship, do not fret. While there are countless ways to cause problems in the relationship, I have narrowed it down to the top ten (*note: these do not rank in any particular order*).

**1. Do not reach out to the sibling.** Technology has created so many different avenues for people to contact each other without having to meet face to face. Unfortunately, this also means that the 'not having any time' excuse goes out the window! Sending texts, a quick FaceTime or a Facebook

message are all quick and easy ways to reach out, but you must resist. Not reaching out, especially when there are so many ways to do so is the best way to create distance in the relationship.

**2. Be unforgiving, hold grudges, and/or resentment with trivial matters.** Remember that time your twin sister stole your boyfriend in the sixth grade? You are totally justified in still being upset over that one. So what if the boyfriend turned out to be a really crummy person? It is about the principle and you never got an apology. Keep holding that anger in and there will definitely be a rift with that sibling.

**3. Glorify your own accomplishments whenever you get the chance, but be sure to also diminish your sibling's accomplishments.** This can be tricky. If you want your sibling to be happy for your accomplishments, then expressing them in a joyful and informative manner is just the way to do that. But, if you truly want to inspire jealousy, you must boast about your accomplishments. If your sibling says, "I got a promotion at work," you should definitely respond by stating that your promotion is with a better-known company and it only took you six months whereas it took him or her seven.

**4. Be completely disrespectful, or even better, be condescending.** R-E-S-P-E-C-T is boring and a critical component to functional sibling relationships. Therefore, I vote D-I-S-R-E-S-P-E-C-T. For clarity on how to be condescending, see the example above.

**5. When your sibling tries to address the issues in your relationship, be defensive.** This is where you must hold strong. There is no chance that you have any responsibility in the problems your sibling is trying to address. The best way to make sure your sibling understands where the blame lies is by refusing to see their view of the situation.

**6. Blame your sibling for parental favoritism or other successes in their lives.** Jan had it right on *The Brady Bunch* – "Marsha, Marsha, Marsha" really did have it all and was the clear favorite. Your sibling should be the one to make him or herself less accomplished, or attractive – it is only fair.

**7. Discredit your sibling's reactions.** "You are overreacting!" "You are blowing this way out of proportion!" "It was a huge deal, how could you be stupid enough not to realize that?" "Are you seriously crying right now?" (The last one is my

personal favorite in causing arguments).

**8. Never offer to help out or be involved in your sibling's life.** Or when you do, be sure to nitpick and micromanage (bonus points if you are telling them how to parent).

**9. Do not put any effort into something that is important to them if it is unimportant for you.** Sure, they helped you with your résumé when you graduated from college, but there is no way you are watching his dog for a weekend while he goes to some conference. For all you know that conference is fake and you should not have to limit your free time.

**10. Complain about their significant others.** Or, better yet, tell your sibling that their taste in men/women/other is just really bad. Also, if the relationship dissolves, do not be there for your sibling(s), instead use the opportunity to tell them "told you so."

If you practice at least two or three of these tips, you will definitely cause a substantial amount of problems in your sibling relationship! But seriously, if you feel you have gone too far (maybe

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## Our Mission

**New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.**

# The Mind Reading Game

by Angie Cerniglia, Associate Marriage & Therapist

**We are constantly changing and growing. We learn new things everyday whether from ourselves or from the relationships and families we are involved in. We can become stronger, healthier and happier by the way we treat others, view ourselves and experience the world around us.**

**This new column by Associate Therapist Angie Cerniglia explores the fascinating world of relationships and the multiple parts of ourselves. We are beautifully and wonderfully made and since God is never really finished molding us, we are therefore, always, *Under Construction*.**

When we are children, we some time dream of having super powers—super strength, the ability to fly, invisibility, and (of course) the power to read minds. When we become adults in a relationship, mind reading is no longer a mystical superpower, it is a “requirement.” No matter how long you’ve been dating or married, after a period of time learning each other takes a back seat to the expectation that our partner know exactly what we are thinking or feeling. We become a contestant on, *the mind reading game*.

*The mind reading game* is played in multiple ways, the most frequent of which is the

classic phrase, “you should just know.” When first dating we cannot learn enough about our partner and share enough about ourselves. Finishing each others sentences is nothing less than adorable, every new fact is intriguing, and every new commonality is just confirmation of how much you belong together.

After a period of time, the new facts run out, the stories begin to be told a second or third time, and we finish sentences only because we think we know what’s coming. By default, this must mean that we know everything there is to know about our partner, and they must know everything there is to know about us. So, if we are upset, our partner should just know what is wrong with us, and we should just know what is wrong with them! If only that were true.

While we may know our partners’ favorite foods, their allergies, and how they take their coffee we cannot necessarily know exactly how they are feeling—not without some help from them. Allowing our partner to share how they feel (without assuming we know) is one of the most loving things we can do. It not only means we care, but that we care enough to really listen, and shows we understand our partner is growing and changing as an individual. In reverse, sharing with our partner how we are feeling, or why we are upset, can do



nothing but lead to a more productive discussion, and avoid a frustrating game of 20 questions.

While we may have become talented at *the mind reading game*, when we realize there is no real winner and we withdraw ourselves from the competition, we open ourselves up to a new way of showing our partner we care, and a quicker way of having our relationship needs met. So while we may not have super strength, be able to fly, or even read minds, we can love our partner in a way no one else can, and that is a pretty great super power.

## Top Ten Ways

(Continued from page 1)

you are an overachiever and went for all ten!) you can always call us at New Leaf Resources and speak to a therapist about your relationship.

Siblings are an integral part of the family system, but can be difficult to maintain in adulthood. This is completely normal, but when the relationship is completely problem-saturated or abusive, therapy is a safe place to discuss all the issues you’ve worked so hard to create.

## Managing Life in a Healthier Way

**A** client recently shared how her experience at New Leaf Resources has given her hope, help and healing.

"When our oldest daughter went through an unwanted divorce, it was a major crisis. Stressful. I've dealt with depression before and I felt myself starting to suffer that

same realm again. My own marriage had its trials as well, and I needed to gain some clarity of and in myself so that I could better cope and learn how to manage my life in a healthier way.

(I appreciate) having someone to vent to that was a neutral person. New Leaf was a safe place to unload and sort

out stuff. What was mine and what was not. After going through counseling, I feel like I'm able to make headway instead of feeling like life is a dead-end.

Learning how to speak and express my thoughts and feelings has been a new area for me in my marriage. To know that my feelings and thoughts are valid and no one can take them from me. They are real and they're valid."

- A client, 49  
in therapy for  
depression, coping skills



**"New Leaf  
was a safe  
place to  
unload and  
sort out stuff."**  
- a client

## What's "New" at New Leaf

**W**e are excited to announce **Donna Hamstra's** appointment to the Board of Directors. A resident of Wheatfield, Indiana, Donna was instrumental in assisting our ministry with the purchase of the land for our new Wheatfield location and with the fundraising to finance the building.

A realtor with Century 21 Affiliated in DeMotte, Donna is a mom to two grown sons and has five grandchildren. She is a member of First Church in DeMotte and is leading a DivorceCare group which meets at New Leaf's office. In her spare time, she takes dance lessons, loves to read and attends all of her grandkids' activities.

We also welcome our newest therapist, **Angie Cerniglia**. A graduate of Calvin College and Western Michigan University, Angie is an Associate Marriage & Family Therapist. She will be seeing clients in the Crown Point office and her

specialties include marital, couple, parenting, communication and life transitions issues among others.

Angie grew up in Michigan, but currently lives in downtown Chicago with her husband, Sam. In her free time, she enjoys dance, reading, good Italian food and spending time outdoors.

Our Student Therapist Intern this year is **Courtney Miner**. Currently enrolled in the Purdue University Calumet Child Development and Family Studies Masters Program, Courtney's specialization will be in Marriage and Family Therapy.

Courtney will be seeing clients in the Lansing office under the supervision of Therapist **Norm LeClercq**. Her interests include family, couple and relationship concerns, life transitions and sibling relationships. Originally from the East Coast, Courtney currently resides in Chicago. She enjoys dancing, yoga and running.

## A Very Special Thanks to...

**N**ew Leaf continues to be blessed with a generous, giving and supportive constituency who through their gifts make a daily impact on those we serve. We are truly grateful for all the blessings we have received this past year and give special thanks to:

- Our **Church partners**, who faithfully take offerings for those in need of services and trust in our work by referring their members for counseling.
- The generous **Banquet, Newsletter, Annual Fund, Christmas Card and "just because" donors!** Because of your gifts, clients in need can receive the needed financial support and peace of mind through the Marty Doot Client Assistance Program.

- Our dedicated and selfless **Board of Directors** who give of their time and talents to further the mission of New Leaf.
- Our **courageous clients** who anonymously share their personal stories to encourage and uplift others who are hurting. If you are interested in sharing a testimonial, please contact the office or take a brief survey on our website at [www.newleafresources.org](http://www.newleafresources.org).
- Finally, thanks to our **friends and supporters!** Whether you prayed for our ministry, referred a friend, volunteered your time or gave a gift, it's because of your unending dedication New Leaf can continue to provide hope, help and healing. For that we are truly grateful!



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**"You don't  
have to  
attend every  
argument  
you're  
invited to."**

**- Anonymous**



## Kass' Quotes

A compilation of Therapist  
Kass Cooper's favorite quips & quotes,  
humorous & inspirational.

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Spring 2015

## We've Saved you a Seat ~ Save the Dates!

**Celebration Banquet - Thursday, April 30, 2015**

*"When Life Happens"*

**Featuring Comedienne Tracy DeGraaf**

Center for Visual & Performing Arts, Munster



**We'll be keeping it simple at**

*A barbeque dinner to support*

*New Leaf Resources*

**Thursday, July 9, 2015**

Sandy Pines Golf Course, DeMotte



The dinners will be underwritten.  
An opportunity to support the  
ministry will take place at the events.

Please RSVP  
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A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling and consultation services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.



*Celebrating*   
**35 years of**  
*hope, help & healing*