

How Your Siblings Shaped You

Brigitte Hugh

06/29/2020

How Your Siblings Shaped You, with Dr. Shawn Whiteman

<iframe src="https://open.spotify.com/embed-podcast/episode/3ciclci1YxqiHHbjai2Kv" width="100%" height="232" frameborder="0" allowtransparency="true" allow="encrypted-media"></iframe>

In the United States, 80 percent of people have one or more siblings. In fact, kids are more likely to have a sibling in the household than a father. And, in terms of relationships, your relationship with your siblings is likely to be the longest one in your life. Longer than your parents or your partner. For twins, that relationship is literally womb to tomb. Yet there is a distinct dearth of research on these formative relationships. Dr. Shawn Whiteman, professor of Human Development and Family Studies, is working to fill the gap.

In this episode, Dr. Whiteman discusses sibling influence on health and success, including sharing how his sister impacted his path to professorship. Among his insights:

- Most research on birth order does not support the popular opinions of birth order dynamics
- Fighting between siblings can have both positives—it teaches how to negotiate, compromise, persuade or resolve conflict—and negatives—physical fighting can have the same psychological impact as bullying by peers at school.
- There is a theory that siblings should be different to avoid rivalry or conflict. Research shows us that real life is actually opposite: Siblings who are more different actually engage in more conflict with one another.

Learn from other Human Development and Family Studies department including [Dr. Beth Fauth on late-life caregivers](#) and [Dr. Brian Higginbotham on step-family relationships](#). And hear from Dr. Whiteman at the Blue Plate Research event on April 20, 2021. Learn more and [RSVP here](#).

