

Giving siblings a voice

A storytelling tool for special needs families to create a special bond between the siblings and their parents.

Research findings

This project focused on the personal experiences of siblings at a young age (6-12 years) growing up alongside a child with special needs. From the conducted research following underlying core values of siblings have been identified:

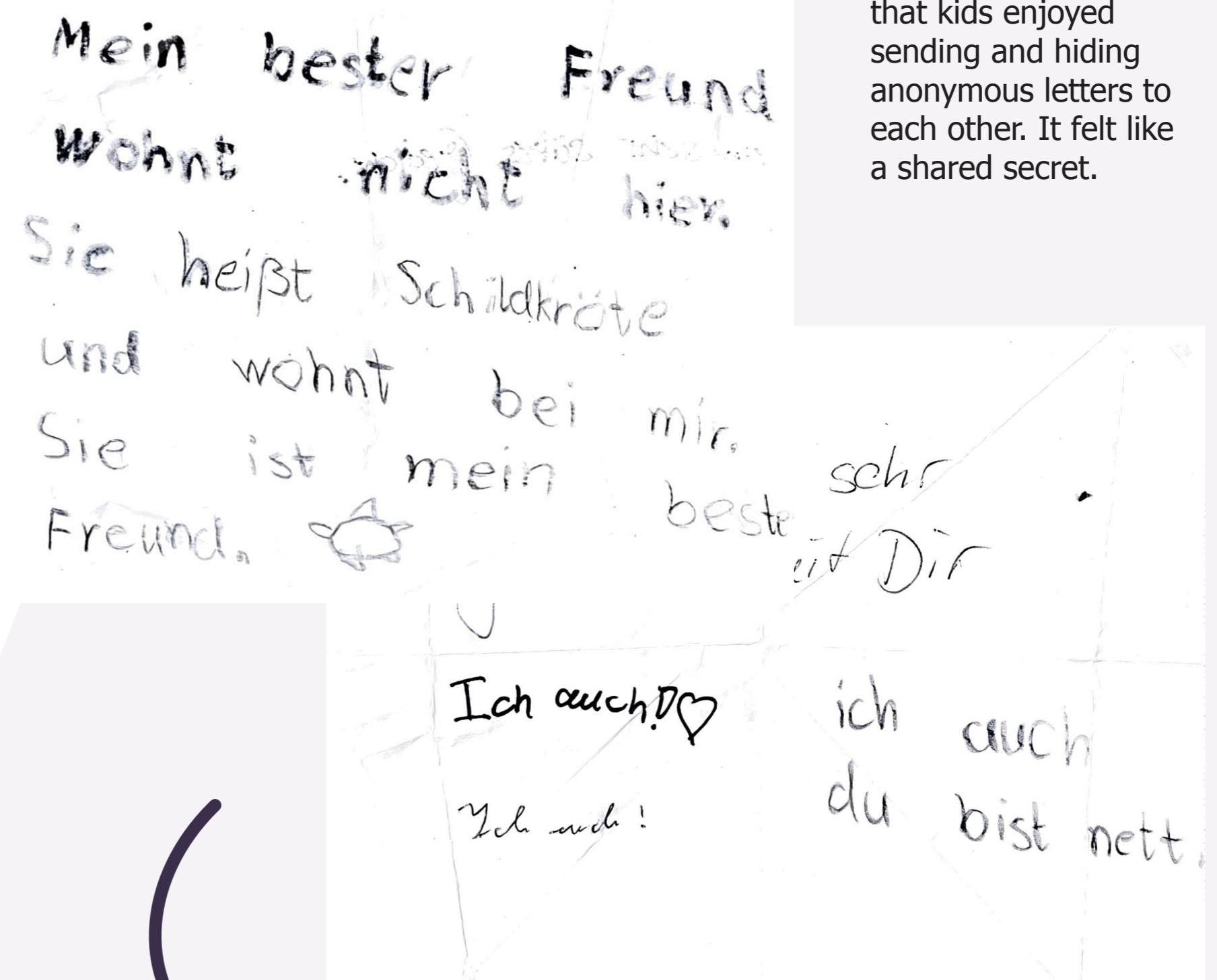
- » Feeling understood by others
- » The need for adults' attention and care
- » Just being themselves.

Briefly, growing up with a special needs sibling comes along with the challenge of truly feeling and acting like a child.

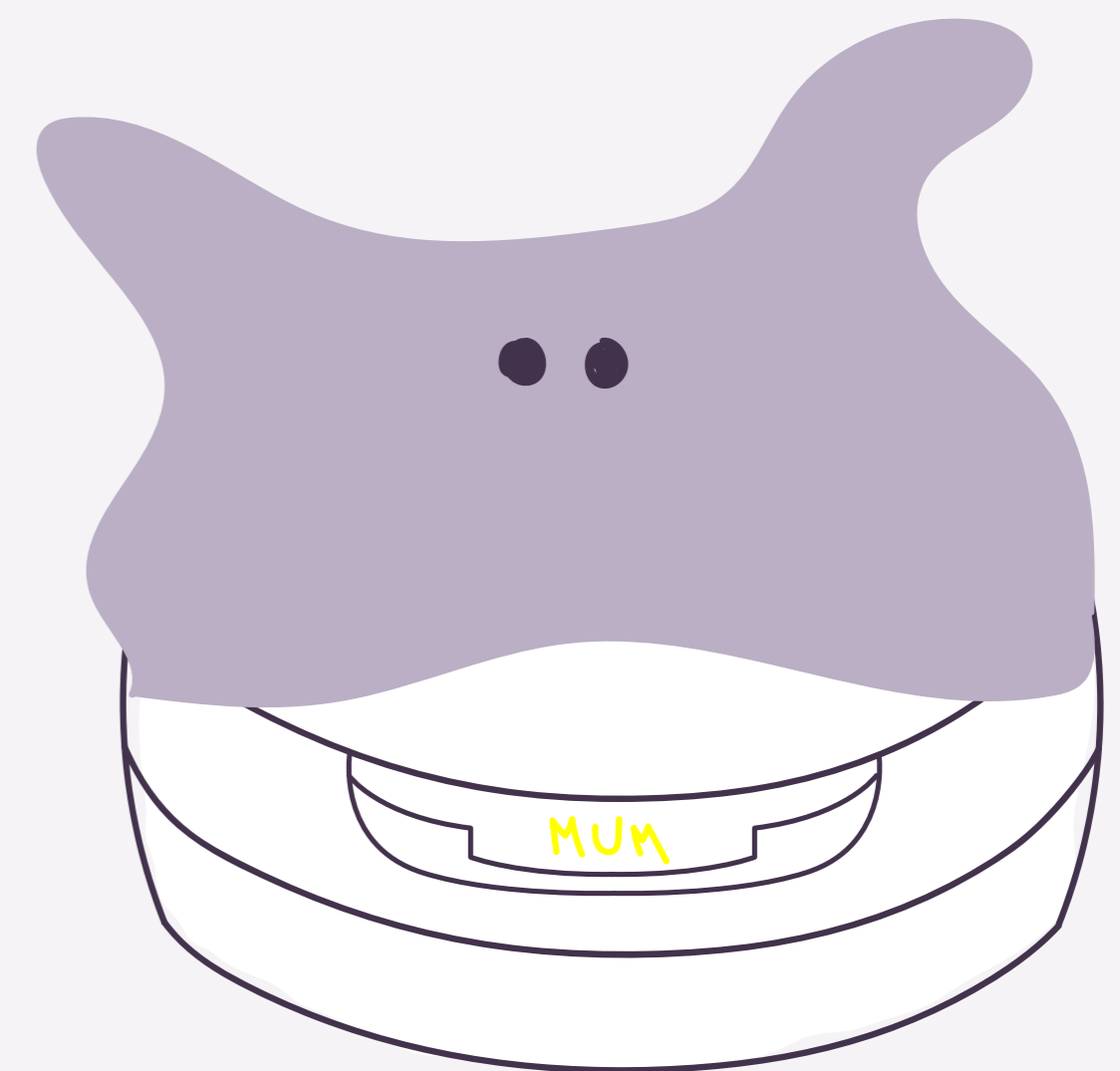
Design proposal

Through a research-through-design approach (Stappers & Giccardi, 2017) the essential interactions of playfully sharing secrets in the form of affirmations and personal wishes with each other, were identified. The final design proposal resulted in the storytelling tool "Robin" to create a special bond between siblings and their parents. The playful tool enables children and their parents to create secret and surprising stories together that may involve personal needs or dreams of the child covered in the personality of Robin. The storylines are built upon research insights and the final story aims to serve as a conversation starter to understand the child's perception and wellbeing of the current situation. The container for the story cards is partially designed by the children themselves to give more meaning to the stories.

Insights from research have shown that kids enjoyed sending and hiding anonymous letters to each other. It felt like a shared secret.



The found interactions are translated into the final design: Story parts are hidden inside Robin. The player never knows what the previous person wrote.



When all story parts are completed the result is a personal story booklet, which can serve as a conversation starter between the parents and the children.

