

**TEEN SIBLING LOSS**

*from GriefworksBC.com*

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You can't imagine life without your brother or sister. Your whole world has changed and you don't know what to do. It seems like you have no control over your life anymore. Things have changed and you just want things to go back to the way they were before.

It's not fair! Your brother or sister was a wonderful person. They were young and had their whole lives ahead of them. Why did they have to die? Why?

A very important thing to do when coping with the death of a brother or sister is to talk about the death with someone you trust. It's hard to talk to friends about sibling grief because many of them are uncomfortable because they don't know what to say to you. And your parents are hurting so much that you don't want to add to their burden. Please try to find another relative like an aunt or uncle or a neighbor or teacher who will take the time to listen. It's very important that the thoughts and feelings inside of you come out.

At first, it may seem impossible to believe that your brother or sister is really dead. Somewhere, deep down, you know that they have died but you just can't bring yourself to admit it because then it really will be true. You may not even feel sad, you may just feel numb.

Or you may be feeling deeply saddened by this sibling death. You have never known such sadness. You look around and everyone in your family is sad too. You are surrounded by it. Sometimes people who should be sad don't seem to be. That makes you mad. Feelings are not always obvious when dealing with death. Those people may be sad but they may be dealing with their sadness in a way that is different from your way.

It's easy to be scared of everything right now. Scared of something happening to another brother or sister or your parents or friends. The whole family has changed since your brother or sister's death. People aren't getting along as well or talking like they used to. It is good to sit down as a family and talk about the person who died and to tell about your fears and worries. It may mean that people cry and are sad but it is healthy to share that sadness and grief. Looking at photographs together and sharing stories about the person are helpful and healthy ways to grieve.

If the feelings of grief are not shared and expressed, they will come out in other ways. Sometimes it's physical ways like headaches, backaches, sore throats, and restlessness. Other times it's irritability and a short temper. It's important to look at the reasons for these physical responses and find ways to express your grief.

When someone you love dies, it's natural to want to blame someone or something for the death. Maybe the hospital staff should have done more; maybe your parents could have tried harder to prevent the death. Maybe the politicians should have put more money into the health care system. Someone should be held responsible for the death.

If you find yourself being angry at the smallest things or getting into arguments or fights with people, it may mean that you are keeping the anger at your brother or sister's death inside. If it seems that you can't control your temper, it is time to start talking about the anger that keeps building up inside you. Find someone that you trust who you know will listen and share your sibling grief. Talking about this guilt is very important when dealing with a brother or sister's death.

There may have been times before your brother or sister's death that you felt like you were in competition with them for your parents' attention or affection. You may have wished that something would happen to them so that you would be in front. You may have even told them that you wished they were dead. Now, it's all you can think about and it is very hard to tell your parents about it because it was such an awful thing to do, so you can't share your grief with them. Many other teens have felt this way too.

Just as you know that your thoughts cannot bring the person back to life, your thoughts did not cause them to die. It is a natural part of being a brother or sister to compete with each other. It is called sibling rivalry and it is part of growing up.

Talking about this guilt is very important. Sometimes these thoughts we have don't seem so powerful when they are spoken out loud. Parents may understand more than it seems like they will.

There may have been times since your brother or sister died when you have felt guilt at being the one who lived on, and you question why. There is an emptiness in your life and a deep yearning that things go back to the way they were. Again, other kids have felt this way too. Your life will be different from now on, but these feelings will lessen.

If you were responsible for taking care of or babysitting your brother or sister when they died, you may feel an additional burden of guilt. It is very important for you to talk with parents, other family members, a teacher or spiritual advisor about these guilt feelings. First of all, you did not intentionally make this accident happen. Second, no one is perfect. We all make mistakes from time to time, sometimes tragically. Third, it is important that you work toward forgiving yourself. If you do not talk this out and work it out, the results can hurt you and your family throughout your life.