

SIBLINGS SPEAK OUT

Having a brother or sister die creates a family crisis. Some of us have extreme reactions while other react as if we've never heard the news. Many things affect the way we behave, what we think, and how we feel. Some of us may know all the facts of what caused our sibling's death, while some of us may be confused by what we overheard. We may believe we were not included in what happened, or feel overlooked by the adults. We may wonder why this had to happen. We may even think we are to blame, even when others say we were not. All of us have thoughts and feelings we are afraid to share.

Other siblings have probably felt very much the same way we do at times. Reading the thoughts below of other siblings may encourage us to talk with adults we trust, to attend a sibling support group meeting or write our feelings in a diary. Siblings see if you relate to any of the statements below.

- Children grieve too, in our own way, in our own time. We grieve differently from adults. Sometimes we appear not to be grieving at all.
- We do not want to be forgotten while our parents grieve. Parents often seem to emphasize the child that died instead of those of us who are living.
- We need to know we are loved as much as our brother or sister who died. Sometimes we wonder if we would be missed as much.
- We are afraid someone else will die. We want to be reassured but don't know what questions to ask.
- Our relationship with our dead brother or sister was different from the relationship we had with our parents. We will not grieve the same as our parents will.
- We know our sibling was not perfect. We know that he/she did things that were wrong. Please do not make an "angel" out of her or place him on a pedestal.
- Just because siblings are not grieving or speaking openly doesn't mean that they aren't grieving in private. Often we talk with our friends or other adults.
- We will grieve when we are ready. Please do not rush us or tell us we aren't doing it right. When we are not willing to talk about our dead brother or sister, it may be because we are trying to protect our parents. We do not want to make our parents cry or hurt more.

- We are different people since our sibling died. Our parents are different people now too. We may think and act in new ways. Our personalities and values may not be the same as before they died.
- People may have told us to “be strong” for our parents. We may resent this or find this too difficult, so we may feel even worse.
- We may be overprotective of our parents after our sibling dies. Often, our parents are overprotective of us. We just want to be treated as “normal” kids.
- We are not the same person as our sibling who died. Please do not compare us to them. Comparing children harms our self-esteem.
- We are concerned when our parents bottle their grief inside and refuse to talk with us about it. It makes things more frightening.
- Some siblings like to visit the cemetery, some do not. Avoid forcing us to go if we don’t want to.
- We may not be ready to attend support group meetings. Listen to our answers when we are asked about going.
- Even though we had fights with them, we did love them and miss them. There is a big hole in the family now.
- Sometimes we believe we are to blame for their death. Maybe we could talk about it with an adult we trust. Perhaps someone can help us sort out what our responsibilities are.
- It is okay for our parents and us to talk about them together. It’s also okay for us to cry together.
- We know our family will never be the same again. We wonder what it will be like in the future.
- Birthdays, anniversary, and holidays are especially hard to bear. Sometimes we act as though these days are not special. Sometime we pretend our family is the same way as before our sibling’s death.