

What about Me?

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Have you ever felt that, as a surviving sister or brother, that we are often forgotten? I have felt this way quite often in the last six years. Over time, the feeling becomes less and less. When a parent loses a child, they are the ones that immediately come to mind. I am not trying to slight the pain they feel by any means, but we, as siblings, are often swept to the side.

Our parents' grief is so much different than ours is. No more or less hurtful than ours, but different. They lost their child. I hope that in my lifetime, I never have to know how that feels. I know how painful it was for me when Sean died; I don't want to know the pains of having a child die. But often at times, we are the "Forgotten Mourners". I love my brother very much and miss him just as much. I think that people sometimes forget that we are hurting also. My parents were offenders of that too. I know that they knew my sister and I were hurting, but they were so wrapped up in what they were feeling, that they didn't have time to worry about what my sister and I were feeling. I tried so hard to make my parents well again that I neglected my grief. Pretty much denied it. We really want to make our families "normal" again.

I have had some awful things said to me over the last six years. Two weeks after Sean died, someone said to me, "Well, you do still have a sister." Well yes, I do still have a sister, but that still doesn't lessen the pain of my brother's death and my sister can't possibly replace my brother. Probably the worst thing anyone has said to me is "Why aren't you over this? Sean's been dead six months." Well, it's not something you just "get over!" I have learned a lot of things over the years and if I hadn't been in such a state of shock, maybe I would have had some of those responses. When I think back on it, I wish I had.

I have decided that from what I have learned, I need to educate people and make them understand that siblings and friends have the right to grieve, too. As surviving siblings and friends we also have to realize that we need to find a new "normal". We also need to know that it's okay to feel all of the things that we feel, be it anger, sadness, guilt, or any other emotion that we may have. Just know that you're not crazy or wrong to grieve. Know also that it is alright to think and talk about them when you're ready. Not when someone else says or thinks you should be ready. Death and grieving is, unfortunately, a part of life.