

For Siblings

Ask Dr. Paulson

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appears in the quarterly TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

Q: My 8 year-old sister died almost 8 years ago. I think that I have worked through my grief quite well, but I still can't stop thinking about her. Her birthday is coming up shortly and I feel the need to celebrate it just as if she were with us. I'd like to have a party, cake and candles. My parents have never suggested anything like this before, so I don't know what their feelings would be. It's just that I want to do something to show that she has not been forgotten. Should I suggest this to my parents or forget the whole thing?

A: *Celebrating your sister—her life, your relationship, the terrific person she was—sounds like a great idea. It's difficult to let her birthday go unnoticed. It might be a good idea to talk to the rest of your family and ask them how (and when) they might want to celebrate. We celebrate my brother's birthday every year by having RTTFG Day on that day--Refuse to Take For Granted Day. This is a day we not only celebrate him, but also each other. We take this day to remind each other how special we think they are and how much we love each other. We give each other gifts that are especially meaningful - favorite books, favorite activities, wishes, etc. I whole-heartedly recommend choosing a special day to remember her and celebrate her!*



Q: I'm getting ready to face the first holidays since my older brother died. As his only sister, I adored him and he felt the same about me. I don't want to see the new year come. How can I handle going into a new year where I know my brother can never give me a jug and I can never tell him how much he means to me? I'm seeing a counselor who tells me I will survive this holiday and each one after that will be easier. How can this ever get easier? I just seem to be getting more and more depressed the closer January 1st comes.

A: *One of the hardest things that we go through after a loved one dies is "picking up and going on."*

How are we supposed to create a life that does not include them? The answer ends up being – that we don't. We realize that we will always carry them with us – their love, their hugs, their laughter, their pride, their strengths and our relationship. You're right – it is hard to start a new year that he won't know about, that won't include his hugs, his time and the ability to tell each other how much you care. I won't kid you, the first holidays

are the hardest!! After my brother's death we didn't celebrate Christmas for a long time. What I finally came to realize is that part of him would always live on inside of me. Then I looked for ways I could include him (remember him), and celebrate his life at each of the holidays and other major events of my life. As you celebrate your brother's life and remember him, you carry him forward with you into the new life you create. Consequently it does get easier.



Death's Cavern

Death is a man
In a long black coat.
His face is grim
And shows no emotion,
For he sees
What no one else dares to see.
He looms above you
With grief and sorrow at his side.
The sickening scent of lilies
Fills the putrid air
For this is Death's Cavern.
Behind those walls of crying
Are walls of grief.
And behind those walls of grief
Are walls of agony.
But behind those many walls
Are more walls,
But of laughter and love.
And when you get to those walls
of love,
You cry no more.
For now you blame no one
But Death himself.
You remember happy times
Of laughter and happiness
Before you knew those walls
Of grief and sorrow.
You remember sunshine,
The warmth of it.
And you try to forget
The coldness of Death.
And as the years go by
You tend to put Death himself away.
But although you have love and laughter,
You will never completely forget
Death's Cavern.



By Anna Kichorowsky, Age 12 in 1996
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