

For Siblings Who Survive

We have been the neglected ones
Who through the weeks & months & years
Have had to cope and dry our tears
And try to be good daughters, sons.

We are the children who have lost
Our brother or our sister, too.
Our troubles may be only few,
And yet we know that we've been tossed

From Aunt to Uncle, then to a friend.
We've had to find our way to school
And try so hard not to look a fool
With tears held back as we defend

The things our Mothers have forgotten,
The way we look all cross and sad,
And other kids can make you mad...
They may not know you're feeling rotten.

For we never did say we're sorry
And felt so jealous of all those toys.
We had mean thoughts like lots of boys,
We couldn't quite understand the worry.

We never said, "I love you, Sis,"
We sometimes felt that Dad was kind
And had her always on his mind,
But as for us, we'd not be missed.

So, we're the children who've survived
Through all the days & nights & hours,
Have learnt to rebuild up our towers
And not admit, we TOO are tired.

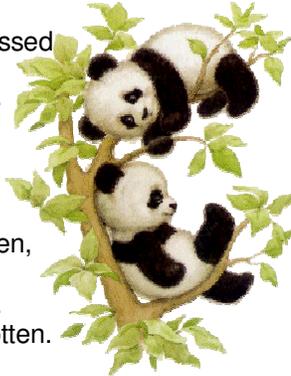
Yet, we have been the losing ones
Who've done without our Dads, our Mums,
Learnt our homework, done our sums...
Still, we're your daughters and your sons.

So now you mourn the one who's dead
Please feel for us, who too are sad;
We've tried so hard not to be bad,
Wanted to tell you, but have not said...

"Mummy, we are here, beside you,
"Daddy, look you need us, too,
There are so many things to do,
There still is love for us and you."

We are the siblings who are here,
We will not forget our brother.
We need our Dad and Mother
So try to love us without fear.

We will survive and love and learn.
We've found our way in life to be
Our own selves and you will see
That now it really is OUR turn.



Suggestions for Discussing Death With a Surviving Sibling ~excerpts



Spend time in play with the younger child who may not have adequate communication skills to talk about his feelings.

Help your child express his feelings by being willing to express yours. Ask your child questions. If he is reluctant, phrase questions as if they were someone else's, "What would you say to Jimmy if he asked you what happened to your brother?"

Remember that most children grieve intermittently rather than chronically. Therefore, do not be upset because your child has periods when the death of his brother or sister seems unimportant.

Children may find it easier than parents to discard personal possessions of the deceased. They may also find it easier to "put their grief aside" and find normalcy in school or play. Remember that your deceased child's friends may be pleased to be given something that belonged to your child.

Protect young children from witnessing an emotional collapse, but otherwise share as much of the grieving as possible.

Siblings aged six, seven or older should be given all the facts about their brother or sister's death as they become known. Not being told the truth only enhances a growing sense of being unimportant in the family.

Share your grief with your surviving children but do not depend on them to take care of you in your grieving. Understand that adolescent children may not want to grieve with you.

Do not ask surviving siblings to "be strong" for you or for anyone else. That is too great a burden to carry.

Try not to feel threatened if adolescent siblings seek out other adults or peers for support. That is normal for their developmental level.

As an adult sibling, spend some time focusing on the role of your brother and sister in the family and how you can enable a meaningful transition to the family now. Be gentle with yourself and with your parents.

By Janice Harris Lord

"New Fifth Edition – No Time for Goodbyes"

Reprinted from TCF (Burlington) Champlain Valley, VT

Newsletter, July 2001