

For Siblings



Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all, I have been given the gift of time – time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister's life.

By Cathy Schanbergerr

Reprinted from *This Healing Journey*



Q: My brother died on Christmas Day 2006 and it was the hardest thing in my life because we were best friends. He struggled with an addiction to prescription drugs and finally it took his life. It hurts me every day that I didn't do something more. My question is, with living everyday without my brother, how am I supposed to deal with the regrets of the last days he was here? And also, is the saying, "time heals the pain" really true?

A: Losing a brother is so difficult; our siblings share a history with us and we expect them to be with us throughout our lives. After a loss it is normal to feel that we should have or could have done more; however, the reality is that oftentimes we did the best we could given the situation. Addiction is a disease and often those addicted become very good at hiding the severity of the situation. Try not to be too hard on yourself, embrace all the good memories you had together and take comfort in knowing that you were not only siblings but best friends. I don't know that time heals the pain but it can lessen it and as the pain becomes less intense, the grief no longer gets in the way of all our wonderful childhood memories.

By Dr. Heidi Horsley, a bereaved sibling as well as a psychologist and is doing the column for TCF We Need Not Walk Alone
Autumn 2010

Life After My Younger Brother's Death

~excerpts

Back in 2002, I was a sophomore in college enjoying the freedom and joys that college can bring. The summer was starting off great, then on June 28th I received news that no one can ever be prepared to hear. My younger brother, Andy, was involved in a car accident that killed him. He was just 18 and I was 20. The week following the accident, my parents' divorce papers went through. It was not solely because of Andy's death, but it still meant that my family as I had known it had disintegrated, all within the virtual blink of an eye.

I went numb. Numb to where I felt like I was watching somebody else do what I was doing. I don't remember a whole lot from that time period in my life. I kept thinking, *my brother, my brother, my brother*. I distinctly remember the crushing feeling that Andy was dead. During the first few weeks I felt like I was the only person who had ever experienced this pain and sadness and that I was alone in a sea of people having a great time.

I knew I had to talk to somebody, but people did not understand and much more often, I felt I did not want to. I tried one-on-one counseling with the psychologist, psychiatrist and a grief counselor. It did not help. The antidepressants were depressing to take and knowing that I was paying someone to listen to my problems was somehow embarrassing.

I do not remember who first mentioned TCF, but somehow I found out about the meetings. I think I got out, "My name is Tony and ..." and then it was all over. Tears ran down my face and I shook and trembled with grief. I looked around and realized I was not alone. Suddenly, I felt that people who understood me and knew what I was going through. It was so nice to talk about what you feel, see how others feel and know that you are not, in fact, going crazy. I attended meetings and went to candle lighting ceremonies for two years.

Not a day goes by that I don't think of my brother. How much different things would have been. I have to thank good friends and TCF for showing me how to continue this amazing life journey. I am so grateful and inspired by the tear-soaked shoulders I was allowed to cry on when I needed it so badly. I am heartbroken and hopeful for those who need that shoulder now. I am thankful and humbled by TCF who have played such a good role in my life. From the deepest part of my heart, I think you.

By Tony Lee