

When a Sibling Dies

Looking back upon my teenage years, I find the experience which altered my life more markedly than any other was the death of my sister. She was a suicide victim at the age of sixteen. I was thirteen at the time. Something that only happens to other people, and in other families, happened to me. To this day memories haunt me; in my search for answers, I find none.

Unless one has lived through this type of personal tragedy, it is impossible to understand the tremendous difficulties in not only coping with what has happened, but in facing the future. If one asks how did I manage, I would have to say that I am not exactly sure. I remember the struggles I encountered then, and still have to overcome today.

Certainly, the tragic death of someone so close forced me to grow up very quickly. Self-preservation demanded this. But by doing so, my problems were increased, not decreased. I became much more serious-minded than my peers. This, in turn, deprived me of what I needed most- the association with my friends and classmates. However, they were afraid and unsure of how to handle a relationship with one who had suffered such a loss.

During my freshman and sophomore years, I was consumed with the need to find that special friend, someone to confide in, and to be socially accepted. My accomplishments in those two years were few. Now I wish I had been able to concentrate more on my studies which would have earned me better grades. But it was not possible.

My parents, who have been continually supportive, had to set an example of facing the future forever different, but with one in which life must go on. At some point I realized that I should adopt a more positive attitude. With a new outlook, my junior year was a wonderful and fulfilling one. The accomplishments of my junior year encouraged me to look optimistically toward my senior year, entrance to college and the future. I managed to continue the progress.

My experience has made me sensitive to human suffering. I have learned that in order to interact well with others, I must think well about myself. No one can change the past, but God gives us the opportunity to change the future, for ourselves and for those we respect and love. I hope to help others, for I know only too well how much help I needed along the way. I desire to have my life count for something worthwhile. Not only for myself and my parents, but most importantly for my sister, who did not have that opportunity.

~ Anonymous; reprinted with permission from "Hope for Bereaved"