

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Brother or Sister Bereavement

Brothers and sisters often have strong and ambivalent feelings for one another. Sibling relationships tend to be complex, characterized by a mixture of anger, jealousy, and a fierce closeness and love. **What was our relationship with the sibling who died?** Siblings are both friends and enemies, teammates and competitors. We play with our siblings, and we fight with them. Sometimes we carry our childhood rivalries and differences into adulthood, and our ambivalent feelings toward our brothers and sisters remain. Sometimes we separate from our siblings completely as adults. And sometimes we become very close friends with our grown-up brothers and sisters. Yet no matter what our present-day relationship with our sibling was, we shared a history. Our stories began together and are intimately intertwined even beyond death. They are eternal.

When an adult dies the myth goes, it is the parents, spouse, and children of the person who died who suffer the greatest loss. We seem to think that siblings are affected less. Siblings—even when we have not spent much time together as adults—have profoundly strong attachments to one another. **We all mourn differently.** While we might have anticipated some of our sibling's responses, other responses may surprise us. Accept there will be BIG differences. If our parents are still alive, they, too, will have their own unique responses. Feelings will naturally run high in our family in the weeks, months and maybe even years after the death. **TALK, FEEL & TRUST without blaming.** Practice makes progress.

Embrace the healing power of linking objects. Photographs, videos, CDs, ticket stubs, clothing, gifts we received connect us to the sibling who died. Some items may bring sadness, some happiness or joy, some sappiness (i.e., *when we are happy and sad at the same time*). While linking objects may evoke painful feelings, they keep us attached. They help us embrace the pain of our loss and move us into a different relationship with our siblings. They give us real connection, comfort and solace. If we need to box some of them up for a time, do so. If unsure do nothing, wait and see.

Maybe set up a **memorial** contribution to a specified charity. **Consider your sibling's loves and passions.** What would make them proud to have their name associated with? Maybe a scholarship fund or sporting award; donate a book to a library or school; or park bench/picnic table inscribed with an appropriate plaque; plant a garden. Carry on with something our sibling loved to do or left unfinished. **Finding ways to continue their PRESENCE spiritually in our lives, both expresses our grief keeps them alive.**

We don't recover from grief – we are forever changed by it. **This does not mean a life of misery.** We adapt and learn to live with grief. Our lives can potentially be deeper and more meaningful after the death of someone close. Find someone who will listen without judging. Cry. Journal. Make art. Find things to do that help express grief, and keep doing them. Choose to live and love fully through the experiences of mourning, grief and lament. They are as essential to our human flourishing as is breathing.

To be **'bereaved'** literally means **'to be torn apart'** and **'to have special needs.'** When a sibling dies, it is like a deep hole implodes inside; penetrates us and leaves us gasping for air. We mourn significant losses from the inside out. When we are nurtured (inside and outside) we discover the courage to grieve openly and honestly. *Our relationship does not end with the death of our brother or sister it can GROW.*

If you are a twin, seek extra support. Twins often report a sense of being halved after their twin has died. Without their twin, they simply do not feel whole. Our grief may be particularly arduous. Seek the support of an experienced grief counsellor if we are struggling. The website www.twinlestwins.org and the resources may help.

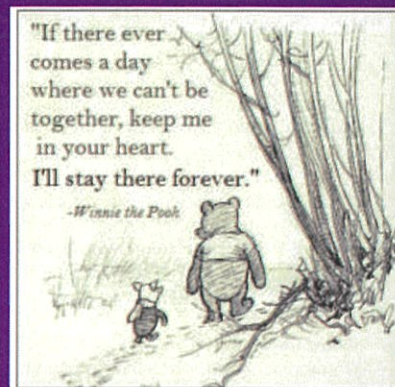
Dr Alan Wolfelt, Director of the Centre for Loss and Life <https://www.centerforloss.com/>
Adapted from: http://griefwords.com/index.cgi?action=page&page=articles%2Fadult_sibling.html&site_id=2

For urgent help or information call [Lifeline](tel:131114) on 13 11 14 or [Beyondblue](tel:1300224636) on 1300 22 4636.

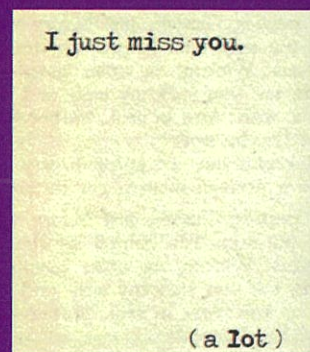


For further information, please contact Bereavement Support on (02) 9646 6908 or email: bereavementsupport@catholiccemeteries.com.au or visit www.catholiccemeteries.com.au
Facebook: [LivingBereavement](https://www.facebook.com/LivingBereavement)

*Life is changed
not ended*



*"I will not hide my grief,
as I did not hide my love"*



*Death does not end
our story...*

*Death does not end
our relationships*