

# SIBLING GRIEF



**LION  
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CAMP FOR KIDS

## SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS ARE UNIQUE

Siblings are the people children grow up with. They are playmates, rivals, confidants. When a sibling dies, it disrupts that everyday relationship and changes a child's world profoundly.

## COMMON REACTIONS

- Guilt, jealousy or regret
- Fear for their own safety or that of other family members
- Confusion about why someone their age could die
- A need to protect or make things better for their grieving parents
- A desire to be extra good
- Increased clinginess or irritability
- Withdrawal or shutting down
- Changes in sleep, eating or school behaviour

## WHEN CHILDREN BLAME THEMSELVES

It's common for children to think their actions or feelings caused the death. This can happen especially if there were feelings of jealousy or sibling conflict before the death.

What can help:

- Clear explanations that no one caused the death
- Space to talk about the thoughts they may have had
- Normalising complex emotions like jealousy or anger

## GRIEF GROWS AND CHANGES

As children grow, their understanding of their sibling's death deepens. They may re-grieve at different stages, particularly during important milestones. Times when grief may feel stronger include birthdays, school milestones or holidays, when other people talk about their own siblings or when they are asked how many siblings they have. Let them revisit their grief story over time. Support them in asking new questions as their understanding evolves.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF TWIN GRIEF

When a twin dies, the surviving sibling may feel like a part of them is missing.

They may struggle with:

- Identity. "Who am I without them?"
- Intense loneliness
- Feeling incomplete or invisible

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP VALIDATE AND ACKNOWLEDGE

- Let them know all feelings are okay, even anger or jealousy
- Remind them that their grief might feel different to yours, and that's okay
- Reassure them they are not to blame, even if there were arguments or feelings of jealousy

## STAY CONNECTED

- Encourage conversations about their sibling. Talk about memories and everyday moments
- Keep the sibling present in your family's stories, routines or rituals
- Being around other children who have also experienced the death of a sibling can help grief feel less lonely

## OFFER COMFORT AND SAFETY

- Reassure them that they are safe and cared for
- Let them know they don't need to be the "good" child or take on grown-up roles
- Help them feel secure by keeping routines consistent when possible