



Coping with the Loss of a Sibling

Dr. Heidi Horsley, PsyD, LMSW, MS

*Executive Director, Open to Hope Foundation
TAPS Advisory Board Member
Columbia University Adjunct Professor
Scott's sister*

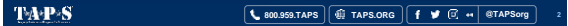
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Presented by Boeing



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In memory of my brother Scott and my cousin Matthew



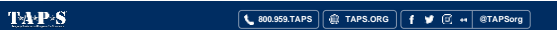
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Sibling Loss



*When you lose a parent
You lose part of your past
When you lose a child
You lose part of your future
When you lose a sibling
You lose both*

Author unknown



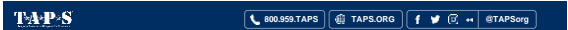
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What Makes a Sibling Relationship Unique? (Issues Related to Sibling Loss)



Most siblings in the U.S. will spend 80-100% of their life spans with each other

(Davies, 1999; Packman, Horsley, Davies, & Kramer 2006)



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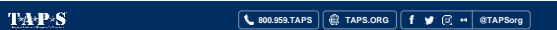
Importance of Sibling Relationships

Siblings are role models, protectors, confidants, playmates, rivals

(Horsley 2003; Packman et al., 2006)

As children we devote 33% of our free time to our siblings, more time than we spend with friends, parents, or teachers

(Penn State University study, 1996)



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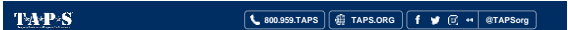
Importance of Sibling Relationships

Siblings are parallel travelers in life

(Devita-Raeburn, 2004)

Siblings grieve not only the death, but loss of future hope and plans; the opportunity to grow old with someone who knew you at every developmental stage of life

(Horsley, 2003; Marshall, 2013)



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The Forgotten Grievors



Sibling death has been referred to as a *disenfranchised loss*

- It's often overshadowed, and viewed as secondary to, the death of a child, spouse, or parent

(Doka, 2002)

- Siblings feel like the forgotten ones; too often their pain is overlooked, unacknowledged, or minimized

(Horsley & Horsley, 2007; Rosen, 1991)

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The Forgotten Ones

- The "grief hierarchy" has never been more apparent than among those who lost siblings on September 11, 2001
- Sibling survivors were not asked to read the names at the World Trade Center Memorial Commemoration until 2005



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Issues Related to Sibling Loss



Sibling survivors commonly hear:

- *That must have been really hard on your parents*
- *Remain strong for your parents*

These messages diminish, or ignore, sibling grief

(Devita-Raeburn, 2004; Horsley & Patterson, 2006; Rosen, 1985)

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Impact on Family

Sibling death results in major readjustments

- One's place in the family may change (i.e., birth order)
- New responsibilities and roles
(Horsley & Patterson, 2006; Marshall & Davies, 2011)
- Double loss: You lose not only your sibling, but the emotional availability of your parents
(Charles & Charles, 2006)



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Techniques and Strategies to Help Cope With and Work Through Sibling Loss



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Talk About the Loss



- Validate and acknowledge the significance and enormity of your loss
- Retell your story multiple times as a way of working through thoughts and feelings surrounding the death
(Devita-Raeburn, 2004; Gill White, 2006)
- Be present and actively listen, to other bereaved siblings talk about loss, this will facilitate integration & meaning making
(Niemeyer, 2004)

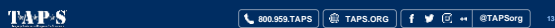
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Cultural and Spiritual Beliefs



Explore how your culture, ethnicity and spiritual belief system might impact how you are grieving

Utilize rituals and beliefs to facilitate hope and healing



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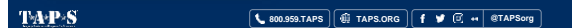
Creating a New Relationship



We want them here with us!

Plan B:

- Continuing bonds were found to continue to change **over** time, providing comfort
- A 2012 study found that we are motivated by the death to make positive changes in our lives
- Siblings reported a stronger desire for a continuing bond than their parents had (Foster et al., 2012)



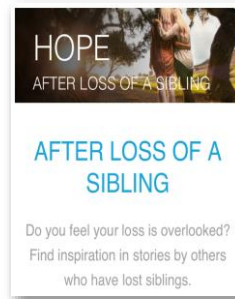
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Instilling Hope in Bereaved Siblings



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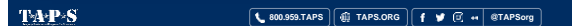
Instilling Hope



A sibling death often leaves surviving siblings feeling disempowered and vulnerable

As siblings move toward an active style of coping, they feel empowered and begin to heal

Activities that honor and pay tribute to their brother or sister are important (Devita-Raebum, 2004)



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Connecting with Others



Explore internet sites and social media

- The internet can offer a virtual online grief support community 24/7
- Listen to *Open to Hope* archived radio shows or view cable shows on sibling loss (at www.opentohope.com)
- Join The Compassionate Friends' *Sounds of the Siblings* Facebook page (Horsley & Horsley, 2011a)



Bereavement groups can be very effective and help to normalize grief responses



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Instilling Hope after Sibling Loss

- Develop rituals coinciding with important events such as birthdays or anniversary dates
- Keep a memory box, scrapbook, or picture book
- Write about feelings in a private journal or online blog
- Listen to significant & meaningful music (Horsley & Horsley, 2011)
- Seek comfort in aspects of food (i.e., recipes, restaurants) that remind you of your deceased sibling (Noppe, 2008)
- Engage in activities that increase positive emotions, such as keeping a gratitude journal, doing random acts of kindness, etc. (Moskowitz, Hult, Duncan, Cohn, Maurer, Bussolari, & Acree, 2012)



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Our Siblings are Our Guiding Lights!



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Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

- July 27** **Grieving While You Work, Working While You are Grieving**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
L. Mark Hensley, MTS, DMin, PT-Csp,
 Bereavement Services Manager, VITAS Healthcare
- August 17** **Asking for Help When You are Grieving**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
Kenneth J. Doka, PhD, MDiv, Sr. Vice President, Grief Programs, Hospice Foundation of America and TAPS Advisory Board Member
- September 21** **From Grief to Peace: Journaling for Life After Loss**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT, Founder, Mindfulness & Grief Institute

Visit taps.org/institute to learn more and RSVP!

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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



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