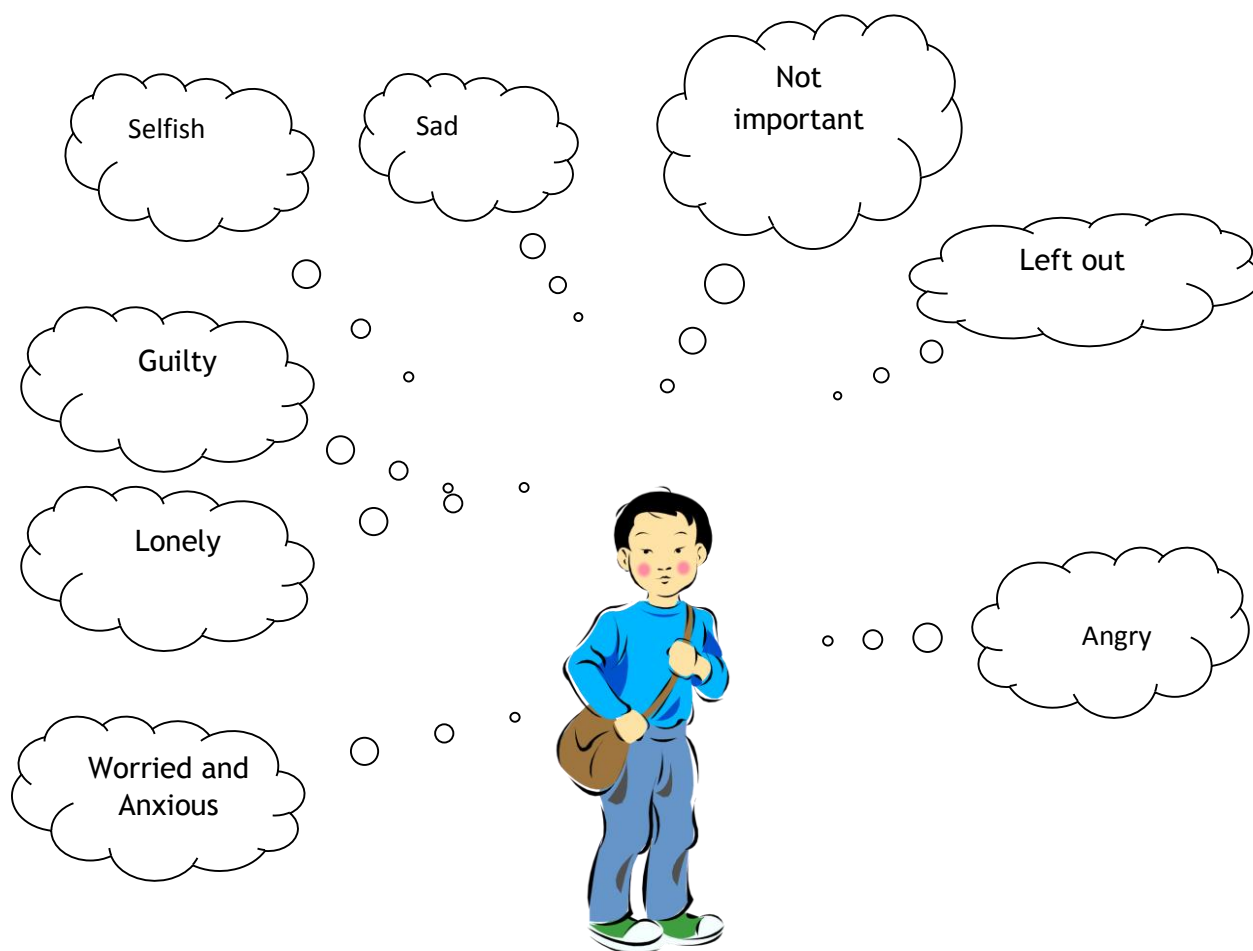


# Information and Support - Brothers and Sisters

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our **Helpline 0303 3032248** or email [helpline@cbituk.org](mailto:helpline@cbituk.org) where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and offer support.

## Information and Support - Brothers and Sisters

It can be really tough when your brother or sister gets a brain injury. You might be feeling....



It might be hard to know what to feel and whether it is even right to feel anything at all because this did not happen to you. It is important to remember a brain injury does not only affect the person who got hurt/who is unwell; it affects the whole family so it would be unlikely for you to feel nothing.

Brothers and sisters are often forgotten when a brain injury occurs since parents naturally focus on the child that has been hurt and devote most, if not all, of their time to making things better for him or her. Below is an account from a mother in this situation:

*“I went into practical mode at hospital. I told my daughter she should stay at home and we would find someone to be with her. Fobbed her off, that’s what I think now. I shoved her to one side so I didn’t have to worry about her. I hope it didn’t feel like that for her. It was never meant to be that way. I couldn’t reach out to hold my precious girl to let her know that I loved her even though it seemed that I didn’t. I wanted to hold my daughter but I wanted to know what was wrong with my son and that took priority then.”*

This not unusual and it can be difficult for a sibling to deal with.

Brothers and sisters may feel:

- Mum and Dad have forgotten about them
- Everything has changed, and not in a good way
- People are not explaining things so they do not understand what is happening
- Enormous guilt that they were not there on that day, or for thinking of themselves at such an awful time
- Worried about the future for themselves, their sibling and/or the family as a whole

When a child with a brain injury returns home from hospital it can be difficult for siblings to make sense of why their brother or sister is getting more attention or is acting differently, particularly if they look much the same as they did before. It does not help that we all tend to think that leaving hospital means that the person is better when in fact leaving hospital can be the starting point for a whole host of new concerns and problems.

Siblings in these situations highlight the following areas when discussing how life has changed

- Schoolwork
- Friendships
- Missed experiences
- New rules

It can sometimes be much harder for a young person to express how they feel. How children react will largely depend on their age and understanding of the situation, as well as the kind of support that is available to them. Having the chance to talk to a parent, relative, family friend or another person that they feel comfortable with can make a huge difference and ease the burden for them.

Everyone deals with things in different ways, and it is normal to have mixed feelings. There are lots of brothers and sisters who have been through similar situations as you. Here are some useful tips they have used:

- If you want to know more about what is happening, ask.
- Try talking to Mum and Dad and explaining how you feel.
- If this is too difficult, think of someone else that you get on well with and try talking to them about how you are feeling. It might be a friend, relative, teacher or even a neighbour.
- If you cannot work out exactly what you want to say, try writing it down. It might be a letter, poem, song or a diary. You don't even have to show anyone what you have written, but it might help you to figure out how you are feeling.
- Spend some time with friends just having fun.

### **Things that parents can do to help**

It is useful for school to be aware of what has happened. Your son or daughter will be dealing with a lot of emotions and if teaching staff are aware of this they might be able to identify ways in which the school or friends can provide support.

The Child Brain Injury Trust provides a one-off grant of up to £100 to children with an acquired brain injury and/or their brothers and sisters to use towards something they might enjoy – *Give a Child a Chance Grant*. Ask for our Grants and Funding Leaflet for more information or speak to your Regional Child and Family Support Coordinator. The charity is able to provide a list of useful publications and information about events that brothers and sisters might be interested in.

The Child Brain Injury Trust also produces a booklet called “You’re not the only one”. This can be obtained from the Trust on 0303 303 2248 or downloaded from our website

[www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk](http://www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk)

[Contact-a-Family](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) ( [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk), telephone 0808 8083555), a UK-wide charity also offering support to families, has a number of useful factsheets

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