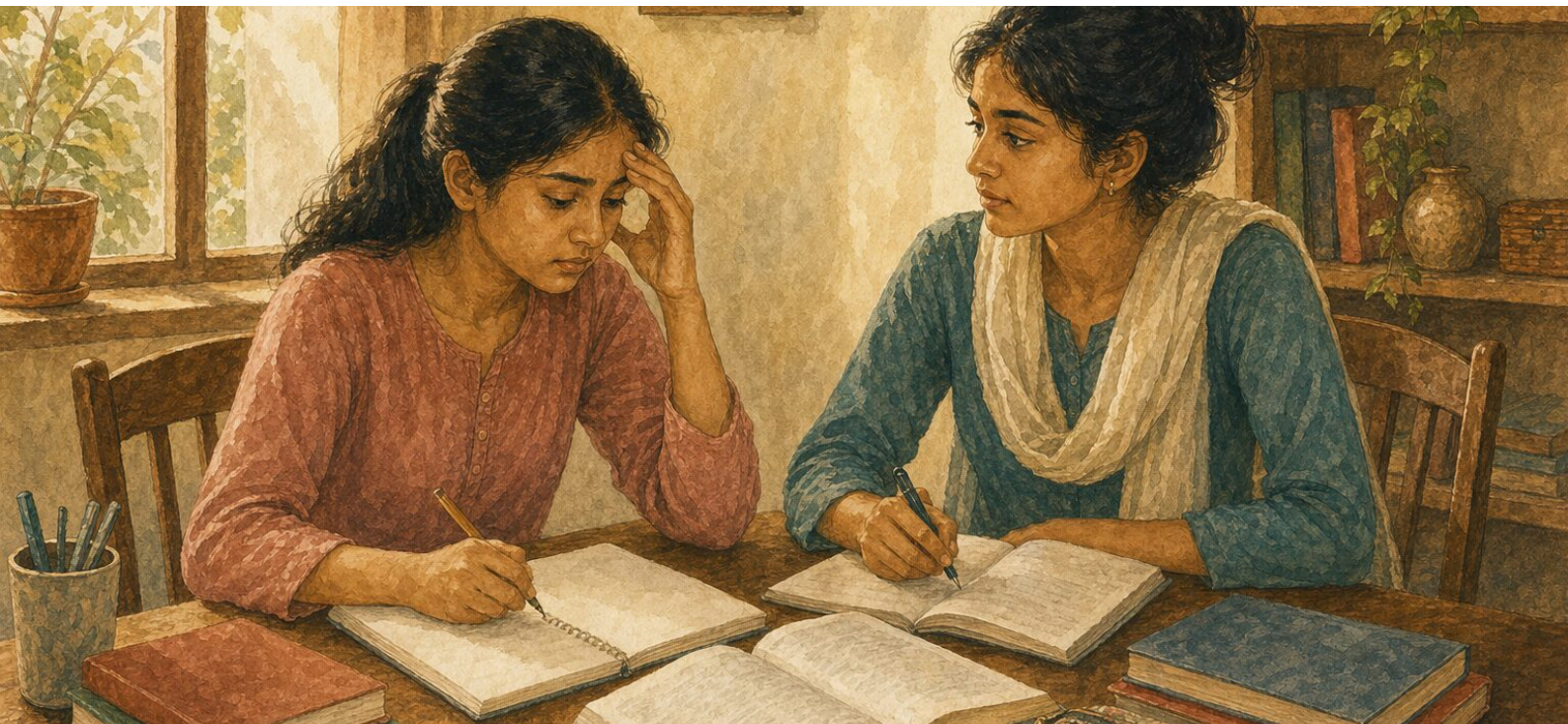




The Sibling's Guide

 ANXIETY

Your sibling and anxiety

A warm, plain guide for the brother or sister of someone who lives with heavy, ongoing worry: why the house tilted the way it did, the load you quietly carry, and how to be there for them without losing yourself.

Who this is for: the brother or sister of someone who lives with heavy worry, or who may.

Cited: peer-reviewed research and India's national mental health helpline.

Languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada.

Read it free at weave.clinic/family

1

✿ WHEN THE HOUSE TILTS AROUND IT

The room everyone learned to keep calm

✿ IN SHORT

When one person at home lives with heavy, ongoing worry, the whole family quietly rearranges itself around it. If you have become the calm one, the easy one, the one who does not ask for much, you are not imagining it, and it is not your fault.

When one person in the home carries a big, constant worry, plans start to bend around it. Trips get shorter or cancelled. Rooms go quiet at certain hours. Everyone starts watching, a little, for the next wave of it. You may not have noticed the day it began. You just know the shape of the house changed.

Somewhere in that, you may have slipped into a role you never actually chose.

The calm one. The one who does not add to the trouble. The one who keeps things smooth so nothing sets off the fear. Nobody sat you down and handed you the job. You just picked it up, the way older or steadier siblings often do.

In a lot of Indian homes this stays unspoken. Your parents pour their energy into the sibling who is visibly struggling, and you learn, quietly, to manage on your own. Not because anyone stopped caring about you, but because you seemed fine, and there was only so much worry to go around.

The whole house

rearranges, not just one person

When one family member lives with heavy worry, plans, routines and moods across the home slowly bend to work around it.

This booklet cannot tell you what your sibling has. Only a doctor can say that, and it will not put a label on anyone here. What it can do is help you understand the pattern you have been living inside, so it feels less confusing and less lonely.

Noticing the tilt is not disloyalty. Seeing it clearly is the first honest step toward standing on steadier ground, for them and for you.



Two siblings, close and quiet, one of them long used to keeping the calm.

Think of the ordinary moments: the sibling who checks the door twice before you both leave, who needs one more reassurance before a trip, who cannot let a small worry go. And beside them, you, learning to read the weather in the room before anyone speaks. That closeness is real. So is the tiredness underneath it. Both can be true at the same time.

● TRY THIS

For the next few days, just notice, without saying anything yet. When does the house feel tense, and around what? When do you feel most like the "calm one"? You are not fixing anything. You are learning the shape of your own family's cycle.

2

✿ IT IS WIRING AND ILLNESS, NOT A CHOICE

Not dramatic, not weak, not on purpose

✿ IN SHORT

Heavy, out-of-proportion worry is not your sibling being dramatic, weak, or attention-seeking. It is how their brain and body handle fear signals right now. Because it is partly wiring, they cannot simply switch it off by trying harder.

Heavy, out-of-proportion worry is not your sibling being dramatic, or weak, or hungry for attention. It is how their brain and body are handling fear signals at the moment. The alarm that is meant to protect us has gotten stuck on high for them, and it fires even when there is nothing dangerous in the room.

This kind of worry runs in families more than most people realise. Having a close relative who lives with it raises the chance a little for others in the family. Read that carefully: a raised chance, not a certainty, and not a curse. It does not mean the same thing will happen to you.

Because it is partly wiring, your sibling cannot simply switch it off by deciding to try harder, any more than they could will away a fever. This is why "just relax" or "stop overthinking" almost never helps, and often makes them feel more alone with it.



The day I understood her brain was stuck on alarm, not choosing to panic, I stopped being annoyed and started being on her side.

Meera, 19

Separating the illness from the person is one of the kindest things you can do, for both of you. The snapping, the avoiding, the endless checking and re-checking, that is the worry talking. It is not who your sibling truly is underneath it.

The worry, not them.

The irritation and the avoiding come from the illness, not from who your sibling really is.

A raised chance, not a fate.

It running in families means the odds tick up a little, not that anyone is doomed.

Not fixable by willpower.

They cannot try their way out of it, so "just relax" lands as blame, not help.

Real means treatable.

Something this common and this understood is something doctors genuinely know how to help with.

And here is the hopeful half of the same fact. Because this is real, and biological, and common, it is also treatable. Something this well understood is something doctors know how to help with, which is exactly why this is worth naming instead of hiding.

● TRY THIS

Next time your sibling snaps or avoids something out of fear, try saying to yourself, quietly, "that is the worry, not them." Notice whether your own shoulders drop, even a little. A calmer you changes the moment more than an argument ever could.

3

✿ THE LOAD YOU CARRY

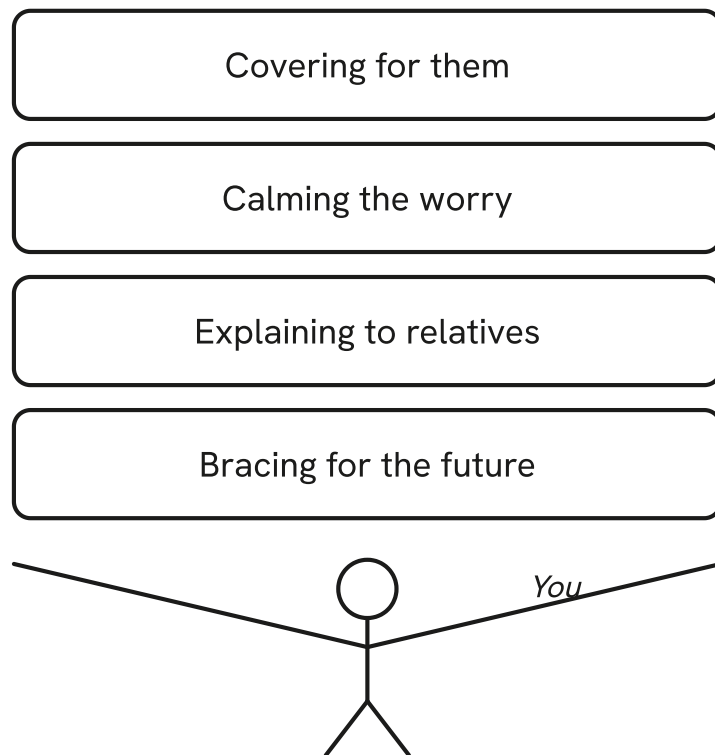
The weight nobody named

✿ IN SHORT

Siblings often carry a hidden load: covering for them, calming them down, explaining them to relatives, bracing for the future. Research on siblings shows this weight is real, and very easy for everyone, including you, to miss.

Siblings of someone living with a mental-health condition often carry a hidden load. You cover for them. You talk them down. You explain them to relatives who do not understand. You brace, quietly, for what the years ahead might hold. Research that gathered the experiences of thousands of siblings found this weight is real, and it is easy for everyone to miss, including the sibling carrying it.

You may notice yourself over-helping, changing your own plans, giving constant reassurance, or tiptoeing so that nothing triggers the fear. This is a natural, loving response. But there is a catch worth knowing: when this becomes the whole pattern, it can quietly grow the worry rather than shrink it, because the fear never gets the chance to learn that things are actually okay.



The load a brother or sister often carries, stacked one on another, usually without anyone naming it out loud.

Covering for them when they cannot cope.

Calming the worry, again and again.

Explaining them to relatives who do not get it.

Bracing for a future you did not sign up for.

Comparison stings both ways in a house like this. Some days you feel you must be the easy one, the child who never causes trouble. Other days you feel unseen, because so much of the attention and worry flows toward your sibling and so little seems left over for you.

Studies from India show that siblings often become the steady, behind-the-scenes support: the one who keeps the follow-ups going, who holds daily life together, whose own strain goes unnoticed because they never make a fuss. If that is you, it is worth saying plainly: what you do matters, and it costs you something real.

 REMEMBER

Naming the load does not make you selfish or disloyal. You cannot carry what you refuse to look at, and you cannot ask for help with a weight you keep pretending is not there. Seeing it is the start of setting some of it down.

4

✿ YOUR FEELINGS COUNT TOO

Guilt, grief, and the mess in between

✿ IN SHORT

Love, guilt, worry, resentment and grief can all live in you at once. Feeling angry at your sibling one moment and fiercely protective the next does not make you a bad person. It makes you a person.

Love, guilt, worry, resentment and grief can all live inside you at the same time. Feeling angry at your sibling one moment and fiercely protective the next does not make you a bad brother or sister. It makes you human. Nobody stays only tender through years of this.

Guilt is one of the most common feelings siblings carry. Guilt for being the one who is doing okay. Guilt for wanting your own life, your own plans, your own space. Guilt for the times your patience ran out and you snapped. But **guilt is a feeling, not a verdict on your character.** It shows up because you care, not because you have done something wrong.

There can also be a quiet grief here, and it deserves a name. Grief for the ordinary sibling relationship you thought you would have. Grief for the version of family life you imagined before worry took up so much room. That grief is allowed. You are not being dramatic by feeling it.

Here is the ground to stand on when the feelings get loud. You did not cause your sibling's anxiety, and you cannot cure it. What you feel in response to a genuinely hard situation is information about how heavy things have been, not a flaw in you.

The feelings themselves are not the danger. Having nowhere to put them is. Bottled up and unspoken, they curdle into resentment or numbness. Given somewhere to go, they soften.

Both at once

love and resentment can share one heart

Feeling two opposite things about your sibling is normal, not proof that something is wrong with you.

Not a verdict

guilt is a feeling, not a fact

It shows up because you care, not because you have done something wrong.

● TRY THIS

Find one place to put these feelings this week: a trusted friend, a journal, a counsellor, a cousin who gets it. Say or write the honest, unpretty version, the anger and the love together. Notice that letting it out does not make you disloyal. It makes you able to keep showing up.

5

✿ BEING THERE WITHOUT LOSING YOURSELF

You are the sibling, not the last line

✿ IN SHORT

You are the sibling, not the carer of last resort. Being loving does not mean becoming their full-time manager or their therapist. Boundaries are not rejection, and keeping your own life going is not a betrayal.

You are the sibling. You are not the carer of last resort, and you are not their therapist. Loving someone with heavy worry does not mean becoming their full-time manager, their on-call reassurance, and their emergency service all at once. You are allowed to be a person beside them, not a service to them.

Boundaries are not rejection. You can care deeply and still say, "I can sit with you for a while, and I cannot drop my whole day every time." A steady, kind limit holds up far longer than burning yourself out and then vanishing when you crash. A boundary is what lets you keep showing up.

There is also a gentler truth about helping. Constant reassurance and rushing in to rescue can, over time, feed the worry rather than calm it, because the fear never learns it can be survived. Calm presence, and gently letting your sibling face small, manageable steps, often helps more than fixing everything for them.

Keeping your own life going is not a luxury you can cut. Your studies, your friends, your sleep, the things you enjoy for no reason other than that you enjoy them, these are what keep you steady enough to be any use at all. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and your wellbeing and your sibling's are quietly linked.

You are also allowed to need support of your own. Protecting your life is part of how the whole family stays afloat, not a selfish escape from it. A sibling who is rested and has their own footing is worth far more to the family than one who has quietly run themselves into the ground.

IN YOUR CORNER

If it ever tips into "I cannot keep doing this," that feeling is common and reachable, not a sign you have failed anyone. The crisis card linked below has people you can talk to, any time, for you as much as for them.



*Setting a limit felt like abandoning him.
It was the opposite. It is the only reason I
am still here, still steady, still his brother.*

Arjun, 22

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✿ GETTING HELP, FOR THEM AND FOR YOU

Real help exists, for both of you

✿ IN SHORT

Real help exists, and it works. Talking therapies that gently teach people to face fear instead of avoiding it help this kind of worry, in both younger people and adults. And there is a free helpline, any time, for your sibling or for you.

Real help exists, and it is not a last resort. Talking therapies that gently coach people to face what they fear, in small steps, instead of avoiding it, work well for this kind of worry, in both younger people and adults, and a doctor can guide what fits your sibling. This is not vague comfort. It is one of the better-understood, better-evidenced kinds of help there is.

Your job is to encourage, not to force. You can help your sibling take the first step, seeing a doctor or a counsellor, without carrying the entire treatment on your own shoulders. Planting the idea, offering to go along, helping book the appointment, that is real help. Becoming their therapist is not your job, and you would not want it to be.

Watch, gently, for signs that this is bigger than a bad week. If your sibling stops eating or sleeping, withdraws almost completely, cannot manage day-to-day life, or talks about not wanting to be here, take it seriously. Any talk of self-harm is worth acting on, not waiting out.

If your sibling, or you, ever feels unsafe or overwhelmed, you can call **Tele-MANAS at 14416**, any time of the day or night, for free mental-health support across India. You do not need a crisis to call, and you do not need to know the right words. You just have to reach out.

Encourage, do not force.

Help with the first step, a doctor or counsellor, without owning the whole treatment.

Know the bigger signs.

Not eating or sleeping, full withdrawal, cannot function, or talk of not wanting to be here.

Take self-harm talk seriously.

Do not wait it out. Reach out for help the same day.

Get support for yourself too.

A counsellor, a helpline, or one honest friend gives you somewhere to set the load down.

Get support for yourself, too. This is not an afterthought. A counsellor, a helpline, or even one honest friend gives you a place to set the load down for a while. Helping your sibling and looking after yourself are not opposites. Done right, they are the same project.



The sibling who needs the extra calm today can still be the person who knows you best, once the worry has real help and you are no longer carrying it alone.

● TRY THIS

Two small moves this week, one toward them and one toward you. Note down one thing you could gently say to encourage your sibling toward a doctor or counsellor, and keep it on your phone. Then choose one person or place where you will let some of your own load down. The long road starts with exactly two steps like these.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

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FURTHER READING

- **Tele-MANAS: India's free national tele mental health helpline (14416)**

This guide helps you recognise and understand. It is not a diagnosis. For that, see a professional.

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- Feeling like it is all too much? **Read the crisis card.** Help is one page away.