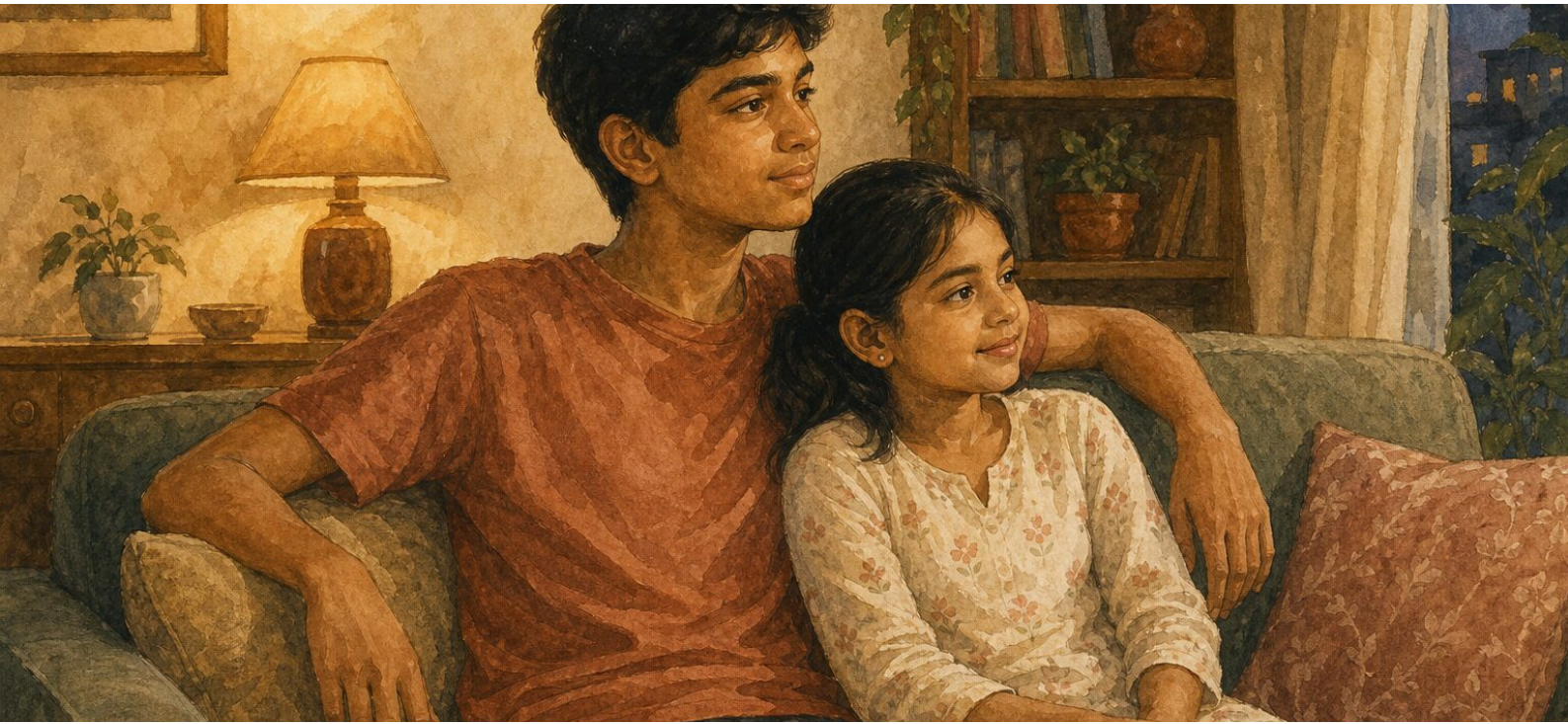




The Sibling's Guide

🌸 TRAUMA

Your sibling and trauma

A warm, plain guide for the brother or sister of someone who has lived through something very frightening: why the house rearranged itself around them, why the reactions are the injury and not your sibling, and how to be there for them without losing yourself.

Who this is for: the brother or sister of someone who has been through a very frightening or overwhelming experience.

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 steady

✿ IN SHORT

Something hard happened to your brother or sister, and now the whole family seems to move around it. If your home feels quietly organised around one person, you are noticing something real, and it is not your fault.

Something frightening or overwhelming happened to your sibling, and afterward the house changed shape. Meal times bend. Plans get shorter or dropped. The mood in a room can shift in a second to keep them from getting upset. You may not have noticed the day it began. You just know the family started moving differently.

Somewhere in that, you may have picked up a role nobody ever named out loud.

The calm one. The helper. The one who does not add problems. Many siblings do exactly this, quietly, the way steadier brothers and sisters often do. It can feel like your own needs slid to the back of the line.

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

The whole house

rearranges, not just one person

After a frightening event, plans, routines and moods across the home slowly bend to work around the person who is hurting.

This booklet cannot tell you what your sibling has. Only a doctor can say that, after meeting them, and it will not put a label on anyone here. What it can do is help you understand what you are living with, and what actually helps.

You did not cause what happened to them, and you cannot undo it by yourself. Understanding that is the first weight off your shoulders.



Two siblings, close and quiet, one of them long used to keeping things steady.

Think of the ordinary moments: the sibling who flinches at a sudden sound, who goes far away and shuts down, who cannot sleep or gets angry fast, who avoids the places and topics that remind them of what happened. 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 are true at once.

● 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 "steady one"? You are not fixing anything. You are learning the shape of your own family's cycle.

2

✿ IT IS THE INJURY TALKING, NOT YOUR SIBLING

Not weak, not difficult, not on purpose

✿ IN SHORT

After something terrifying, the brain's alarm system can get stuck in the on position. Your sibling's jumpiness, numbness and avoiding are the injury, not a message about how much they love you. Because it is a real change in the body, they cannot just decide to stop.

After a very frightening or overwhelming event, the brain's alarm system can get stuck switched on. The part that scans for danger stays turned up, so the body reacts as if the threat is still here, even when the room is safe. This is a real change in how the nervous system is working, not weakness and not a choice.

That is why your sibling may startle easily, snap, go numb, or avoid reminders of what happened. The reaction is the injury, the way a limp comes from a hurt leg. It is not a message about how much they love you or the family. Telling someone to move on or forget it does not switch the alarm off, and it can leave them feeling more alone.

Because this is a health condition and not a character flaw, it can be treated and it can get better with the right help. This is not a life sentence for them, or for you.



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

Meera, 19

Separating the person from the injury is one of the kindest things you can do, for both of you. The snapping, the shutting down, the avoiding, that is the injury talking. It is not who your sibling truly is underneath it.

The injury, not them.

The jumpiness and the avoiding come from what happened, not from who your sibling really is.

Not a message about love.

A hurt nervous system reacts on its own; it is not them pulling away from you.

Not fixable by willpower.

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

Real means treatable.

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

You are allowed to be frustrated with the behaviour and still love your sibling. Both are allowed at the same time. Staying on their side does not mean pretending the hard moments are easy.

● TRY THIS

Next time your sibling snaps or avoids something out of fear, try saying to yourself, quietly, "that is the injury, 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

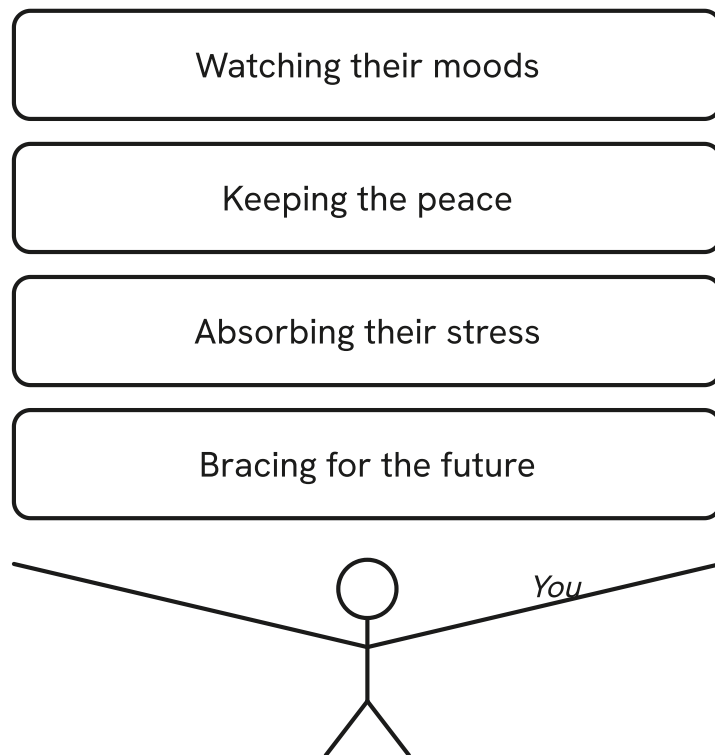
The weight nobody named

✿ IN SHORT

Living alongside someone who has been through trauma changes the family. Siblings often end up watching moods, keeping the peace, and quietly absorbing the stress. Research on families shows this load is real, and very easy for everyone, including you, to miss.

Living alongside someone who has been through trauma changes the family. Roles shift, and brothers and sisters often end up carrying more: watching moods, keeping the peace, looking after younger ones. Researchers who study families call this changed roles and added burden, and it is common.

You may find yourself absorbing some of their stress: feeling tense, having bad dreams, replaying what you know of what happened. Family members can carry a kind of second-hand strain from being close to someone in pain. If this is happening to you, it is a recognised thing, not you being dramatic.



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

Watching their moods for the next wave.

Keeping the peace so nothing sets them off.

Absorbing their stress, tense and sleepless.

Bracing for a future you did not sign up for.

Comparison and a quiet resentment can creep in. When most of the attention flows toward your sibling, it is easy to feel unseen, even while you understand exactly why. You might also brace for the years ahead, worrying about who will look after them later.

In many Indian families, we are taught that family manages its own, and that speaking up looks selfish. That teaching is loving, but it can leave siblings silently overloaded. Naming the load is not disloyalty. It is honesty.

 REMEMBER

Putting words to what you carry does not make it heavier. It makes it something you can actually set down and share, instead of a weight you cannot see. You cannot ask for help with a load you keep pretending is not there.

4

✿ YOUR FEELINGS COUNT TOO

Guilt, grief, and the mess in between

✿ IN SHORT

Guilt, resentment and grief are all normal here. You can love your sibling deeply and still feel tired, angry, or cheated of a normal home. Two opposite feelings can sit together, and both can be real.

Guilt is common. Guilt that you are okay when they are not. Guilt for wanting your own life. Guilt for the times you lost patience and snapped. But **feeling guilty does not mean you did anything wrong.** It shows up because you care.

Resentment is normal too. You can love your sibling and still feel tired, angry, or cheated of the ordinary home you thought you would have. And there is often grief here, for the easy relationship you used to share, or the one you hoped for. Grieving what changed does not mean you have given up on them.

You do not have to earn the right to your feelings by being the strong one. Bottled up, they tend to leak out later as a short temper, a low mood, or a numb kind of distance. Let out, to a trusted person or onto paper, they soften.

Here is the ground to stand on when the feelings get loud. Feelings are information, not commands. You can feel resentment and still choose kindness. Naming what you feel, without shame, is what keeps you steady over the long run.

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

Your calm presence has real weight, and it works best when you are not running on empty. You are the sibling, not the therapist or the carer of last resort. Boundaries are not abandonment, and keeping your own life going is not a betrayal.

Support helps, and it is real. When people close to someone feel steady and supported, that person tends to cope better, and family support in particular is linked with fewer trauma symptoms over time. Your calm presence carries weight. It just works best when you are not running on empty.

You are the sibling, not the therapist and not the carer of last resort. You can listen, sit with them, and help them reach real help, without becoming the person responsible for fixing them. That job belongs to trained people. You are allowed to be a person beside them, not a service to them.

Boundaries are allowed. You can say, "I want to be here for you, and I also need to sleep, study, and have my own life." A boundary is not abandonment. It is what lets you keep showing up, month after month, instead of burning out and disappearing.

Keep your own world alive: friends, studies, sport, faith, rest. In Indian homes the whole load often lands on family, and support is exactly what keeps that load from crushing the person carrying it. Protecting your own life protects your ability to help. **You cannot pour from an empty cup.**

Small, steady acts beat grand rescues. Being reliably kind and honest over months does more than trying to carry everything at once and burning out. 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

6

✿ GETTING HELP, FOR THEM AND FOR YOU

Real help exists, for both of you

✿ IN SHORT

Trauma is treatable, and talking therapies that focus on the trauma help many people recover. There is a free helpline, any time, for your sibling or for you. And if they may not be safe, there is a number to call right now.

Trauma is treatable. Talking therapies that focus on the trauma help many people recover, and support from family makes a real difference alongside professional care. Encouraging your sibling toward a doctor or counsellor is one of the most useful things you can do. Your job is to encourage, not to force, and not to carry the whole treatment on your own shoulders.

Watch, gently, for signs that need quicker action: talk of not wanting to be alive or of ending things, giving away belongings, a sudden calm after deep distress, heavy drinking or substance use, or withdrawing completely. Take any talk of suicide seriously. Asking about it plainly does not put the idea in their head.

If your sibling may not be safe, or is talking about ending their life, you can call **Tele-MANAS at 14416**. It is free, confidential, and available any time of the day or night across India, in many languages. In an emergency where someone could be harmed right now, call **112**.

You are allowed to get help for yourself too, not only for them. A counsellor, a school or college support service, or Tele-MANAS on 14416 can support you as the sibling. Helping yourself is not taking help away from them.

Encourage, do not force.

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

Know the warning signs.

Talk of dying, giving things away, sudden calm after distress, heavy drinking, full withdrawal.

Ask plainly, act same day.

Asking about suicide does not plant the idea; Tele-MANAS 14416, or 112 in an emergency.

Get support for yourself too.

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

You did not choose this load, and you do not have to carry it alone. Reaching out, for them or for you, is strength, not failure.



The sibling who needs the extra care today can still be the person who knows you best, once what happened 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

Ressler KJ. Post-traumatic stress disorder: clinical and translational neuroscience from cells to circuits. *Nat Rev Neurol*, 2022. doi.org/10.1038/s41582-022-00635-8

Xiong T. The influence of social support on posttraumatic stress symptoms among children and adolescents: a scoping review and meta-analysis. *Eur J Psychotraumatol*, 2022. doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.2011601

May K. Experiences and perceptions of family members of emergency first responders with post-traumatic stress disorder: a qualitative systematic review. *JB I Evid Synth*, 2023. doi.org/10.11124/JBIES-21-00433

Hoppen TH. The efficacy and acceptability of psychological interventions for adult PTSD: A network and pairwise meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *J Consult Clin Psychol*, 2023. doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000809

Jagannathan A. Predictors of family caregiver burden in schizophrenia: Study from an in-patient tertiary care hospital in India. *Asian J Psychiatr*, 2014. doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2013.12.018

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Post-traumatic stress disorder (NG116). 2018. nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116

Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare / NIMHANS. Tele-MANAS: national tele mental health programme, helpline 14416. 2022. telemanas.mohfw.gov.in

FURTHER READING

- NICE: Post-traumatic stress disorder (NG116), information for the public

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

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