

The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling

By Jeanne Safer

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What is it like to grow up with a sibling who is difficult or damaged?

Few bonds in our lives are as psychologically and emotionally significant as the ones we share with our sisters and brothers, although little has been written about this formative relationship. In this first-of-its-kind book, psychotherapist Jeanne Safer takes us into the hidden world of problem siblings and explores the far-reaching effects on the lives of those who are considered the “normal ones.”

Drawing on more than sixty interviews with normal, or intact, siblings, Safer explores the daunting challenges they face, and probes the complex feelings that can strain families and damage lives. A “normal” sibling herself, Safer chronicles her own life-shaping experiences with her troubled brother. She examines the double-edged reality of normal ones: how they both compensate for their siblings’ abnormality and feel guilty for their own health and success. With both wisdom and empathy, she delineates the “Caliban Syndrome,” a set of personality traits characteristic of higher-functioning siblings: premature maturity, compulsion to achieve, survivor guilt, and fear of contagion.

Essential reading for normal ones and those who love them, this landmark work offers readers insight, compassion, and tools to help resolve childhood pain. It is a profound and eye-opening examination of a subject that has too long been shrouded in darkness.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Adults who grew up with a disabled brother or sister may have been labeled the "normal" one. Psychotherapist Jeanne Safer addresses the premature maturity, emotional and intellectual perfectionism and deep guilt about their own health that she says many "normal" siblings experience in *The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling*. Using interviews with 60 subjects who have disabled siblings and her own experience with an emotionally ill brother, Safer sensitively documents the various challenges that siblings face and offers wise, gentle counsel for dealing with these challenges.

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From [Booklist](#)

"The chance that the homeless person I see on the street in my town could be my own brother scares the shit out of me--this is somebody I grew up with." Safer combines her own aching personal experience with her professional perspective as a family therapist to shed light on what she calls "Freud's blind spot," the role of siblings, especially disabled or troubled siblings, in family life. For most of the book, she writes with simple directness, informal and jargon-free ("the sibling of the child with special needs is not supposed to have any needs") as she explores the burden of being the normal one. Drawing on concrete examples from her own life and also from her interviews with 60 other siblings, she identifies the key symptoms that no one escapes, including premature maturity, survivor guilt, compulsion to achieve, the fear of contagion, and jealousy. She analyzes Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and there is some psychological theory, but it's the memoir and the candid talk that make the book special. A great choice for group discussion. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

"**The Normal One** provides a great service for the siblings of truly damaged individuals, those quiet, self-denying brothers and sisters who, perhaps for the first time in their lives, will recognize in Safer a passionate advocate from the world of psychotherapy, speaking out on their behalf with a deeply intelligent, fully informed, and thoroughly welcome voice."

--*The New York Times Book Review*

"Revelatory...an indelible, brave, profoundly sensitive, and deeply personal look at how the 'normal' half lives, loves, resents, reconciles, sometimes denies, sometimes transcends, aches for—but never quite trusts—the consolations of family."

--*O Magazine*

"[A] persuasive examination of the considerable effect that...impaired brothers and sisters have upon their 'normal' siblings throughout life."

--*The New York Times Book Review*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maryann Goldberg:

Reading a guide tends to be new life style in this particular era globalization. With looking at you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Having book everyone in this world may share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their reader with their story or even their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the books. But also they write about the ability about something that you need example. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some research before they write with their book. One of them is this The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling.

William Carroll:

The guide with title The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling contains a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. This kind of book exist new knowledge the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world currently. That is important to yo7u to learn how the improvement of the world. That book will bring you with new era of the globalization. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read this anywhere you want.

Federico Hayward:

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Marianne Button:

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