A Booklet

for

All Grieving Siblings

a collection of letters, poems, and pictures from grieving siblings to you

"Our days together may have been numbered, but our love - our love is timeless."

-Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

Letters, art, and poems collected and edited by Zeve Zilberstein, Gidi's biggest brother

~A letter from Ashton's Sister~

Hello friend,

My name is Senneca. I lost my sweet sister, Ashton, four years ago. She died suddenly on a cold day in December. I miss every little thing about her. She was outrageously smart, super witty, and unfairly beautiful. She had tiny feet and a huge heart. Her sense of style was impeccable. I have been forever changed by her passing. I will always have a huge hole in my heart but through her death I have learned to live my life to the fullest. I believe that is a gift from her. One of the most important things that I have also learned through my grief journey is that *LOVE NEVER DIES*. I promise. Your brother or sister will be with you forever. It's a beautiful and painful concept. While I don't have my sister physically here with me, I can feel her love just like I did when she was here. We have a connection that surpasses what I could possibly try to understand in this life. My hope is that you are able to feel the same comfort, in time. Please know that it's okay to show your parents and other family members your grief. You will be strong for them and they will be strong for you. From one grieving sibling to another...be kind to yourself and know that my heart is with you!

With Love,
Senneca

~A letter from Isaac's Brother~

I was 6 when my brother Isaac died. Normally when I tell people, they apologize for the loss, and I am able to brush it off with a simple, I was young at least. In reality, the pain of losing a sibling never goes away as we would like. We can never bring them back. What has kept me encouraged and given me hope, has been my faith. Faith in a God I cannot comprehend.

Losing a sibling is never okay. It's not supposed to be. Don't suppress emotions or simply try and validate the loss as somehow acceptable. God gave you those emotions. One of my favorite examples of this in my faith, is David's plea in Psalm 22, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me." We do not worship a God who has no connection to us, rather we worship a God who formed us in our mother's womb, who knew us before we were made.

Sometimes I think about all the things Isaac never got to experience with me. The memories, milestones, and lessons. The times when I never got to be a big brother. I know the hurt, and I have often felt a twinge of guilt. Guilt that my pain and grief will somehow never amount to that of my parents. After all, I was only 6. Guilt that I should remember more, and guilt that I feel sadness for a loss that I was barely old enough to recall. That type of guilt is unhealthy. Know that despite the sadness, despite the absence, despite the partial memories, your pain is valid, and your grief warranted. You are loved, and I pray that God's love for you will be exemplified and shown through your time at the Carefarm.

Blessings from one grieving sibling to another,
Tyler Davis

~A letter from Brian's Sister~

Dear grieving sibling,

My name is Terri. I am both a grieving mother and a grieving sibling. I lost my brother, Brian in 2006 when he was 27 and I was 22. He died when some doctors who were caring for him did not consider all of his needs and made life ending decisions.

As a little girl, Brian was my hero. When I was 5 and he was 10, he was seemingly the knower of all knowledge and the slayer of all dragons. He made me laugh. A lot. He had an imagination that transported us both to places we could never truly visit. He cleaned up my bloody lip when I fell off my bike riding home from school. He let me watch ET and Beetlejuice before I should have seen them. He taught me to skid my big wheel tires. He covered for me when I was the one who broke something in the house. Our rooms were positioned just right that we used to push our beds together in the hallway at night like a letter 'L' so we could talk and laugh ourselves to sleep. He was truly and exactly what a big brother is supposed to be. I miss him in an inexplicable way. He was a light in my life that can never be replicated.

I am so sorry to know that you also know what it's like to live without a sibling that you love so dearly. I am deeply hopeful that the Carefarm gives you a safe and loving place to be with your grief and feel held. I truly wish it were different for us all and I am grateful you have found the Carefarm. Say hello to Athena for my family.

With kindness in memory of our siblings,
Terri

~A letter from Gidi's Brother~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

My name is Zeve. I lost a sibling too. His name was Gideon, but everybody called him Gidi. He died in a boating accident. He was very friendly, and absolutely adored glitter, fairies, fashion, and skirts and dresses. After he died I was beyond myself. I constantly remembered the day he died, and I missed him - and still miss him - more than I have ever missed anything. After some time, my family found out about the Carefarm and visited. It was life-changing. All the animals were comforting, my living brother, Oren, and I could do work on the farm when we wanted to take our minds off our grief, and Joanne was always willing to talk to me, Oren, or my parents. We were all sad when we had to leave, but were lucky enough to have the chance to visit again. Sometimes, nothing can be better than petting Aspen and Athena, or cleaning out the horses' stables, or following the sheep around, or kayaking, or just watching Finn follow Dr. Jo around everywhere she goes.

I truly hope you enjoy the Carefarm as much as I did,
Zeve

~A poem written by Andrew's Brother~

My brother Andy is 22, he will always be 22 now. As the rest of us grow older, marry and have children, change jobs and move, age and grey and stoop, he will be in there in the background, incongruously young, capering about. But always in the background now.

Somehow I feel I hardly knew my brother with the stories of the past few days. I knew he loved his nephew William, but not that he came over every Thursday to spend hours with Aubrey and him. I knew he loved my granny, but not that everyday they would write notes to each other about their days, pen pals in the same house, keeping in touch.

He loved Lady Gaga and took Skye and I with him to a concert, happy to share his love with his old brother and brother-in-law. He flew my Mom to see Cher with him in Las Vegas.

Andy sat with people that needed sitting with. He's smiling in every picture. He drove so fast when he got his driver's license. The last time I drove with him, he'd slowed down, already a little older, a little more grown up.

I see Andy clearer now, thrown into sharp relief. Such a wild kid until he hit 14 or 15 and learned to focus his energy. He worked so much, loved seeing people at Luci's coffee shop, so in charge when I would see him there, proud to introduce me to the people he worked with. He studied sociology, wanted to be a social worker, one semester to go.

I could write and write and write about my Andy. My little baldy boy, Andy Man Jan, who called me an actuarian and would yell "Skylar" whenever

he saw my husband Skye. So many, many plans and the drive to do them. In the background now.

Now I'll call his bank and cancel his classes, happy to do the last things I can do for him. At night I'll whisper, "Andy, Andy, Andy" and hope to dream of him. The only place I'll see him now. Always young, always 22 now.

Thank you,
Scott Fry

~A letter from Andrew's Sister~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

My name is Sierra and I lost my twin brother, Andrew, in August of 2018 to murder. We were 22 years old. Andrew was an amazing person! He was kind to everyone he met and was always laughing and smiling. He lived his life to the fullest everyday and enjoyed being with people. We had a really great bond and relationship and loved being together. I miss my brother terribly; this year has been very trying for me. My whole world shattered the night my brother died and I have been slowly picking up the pieces ever since. I remember the first few months I felt like a zombie just going through the motions of life, if I had any time to think I was crying. So I kept myself distracted constantly. Mostly I used TV as my distraction, it was on all the time. As soon as I woke up and until I went to bed I had it on in the background because it allowed me to focus on a different story and different people instead of realizing what my life became. The first few months of my grief journey felt very scary and lonely. The idea of living the rest of my life without my brother felt impossible. I was dreading the rest of my life and gave up on being happy or getting through the pain. When I questioned how to live my life without Andrew, I found it helpful to find a purpose. I feel like I carry Andy with me, so he is here because I am here and that helps me continue on. My mom and I are also going to be creating a nonprofit in Andrew's name to help educate people about domestic violence, because he was killed by his husband. My first birthday without Andrew was in October and I get so sad and angry when I think about not being able to share our day with him. I get so angry at the man who murdered my brother; he took everything away from so many people. In January of 2019, 5 months after Andrew died, I visited the carefarm for the first time. By the end of my visit, my outlook on this journey changed completely. For the first time, I was hopeful that I could be happy again and that I could stay connected with Andrew as I live this life without him. I also realized how much of my energy in the first few months was spent taking care of my mom. I did not spend enough time taking care of my needs. I realize now that it is just as important for me to take care of myself. This journey is painful and scary and unpredictable, but it is made easier if you find people to help you through it. I am so lucky to live in Arizona and to visit the carefarm and my counselor regularly and it has been such an important part of my journey. Having someone to talk to and feeling heard and respected and understood is such an amazing gift during this time. If you need someone to talk to I would be honored to be that person. My email address is Sierra_aranda95@yahoo.com. Sending hope and love to you as you move through this journey.

Fellow Bereaved Sibling,
Sierra

~A letter from Cassie's Sister~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

Yesterday was the worst day of my life. I got a phone call I was dreading for the last 5 years. My sister was found dead. She was my best friend and I loved her unconditionally. Most of my favorite memories were with her. Every time I was with her I made sure to really pay attention and remember everything because I feared this day would come. We spent a lot of our lives together, even as adults. We lived together on and off for the last 18 years and of course when we were little. We lived together when she was pregnant with my nephew, and I got to see her at her best, as a mother. The last 4 and a half years she stayed with me and my family, as I helped her navigate through her struggles. I'm so thankful for those memories. It has been a rough few years with her, however, I am so grateful for the time we all had with her the last 9 months. She was sober and they were happy memories. My sister lost her battle with addiction on January 23, 2019. Through watching her struggle the last 4 and a half years, she taught me not to judge anyone, have compassion for those who have chosen a different path. She taught me Addiction is a horrible disease. My sister was a good person with a heart of gold. She was funny and beautiful. She had the most stunning eyes and she was my person through thick and thin. My sister was a beautiful, but broken soul and I know she touched many lives and our world will never be the same.

With love, Mellissa Hall - Cassie's sister.

Afterthought...it's been 6 months since the worst day of my life. I can say the pain is still there and it hits me like a ton of bricks unexpectedly some days. But it has been a little easier. I can say her name now without crying. I find peace by honoring her memory. Sharing stories on her Facebook page, sharing her story and mine, the good the bad and the ugly. By doing this, I want people to know she was more than her disease and I hope I can save a life or stop the stigma surrounding addiction. I just came across the information about the Carefarm and I hope to visit some day soon. Maybe on her death anniversary. It seems like a very comforting place. Take care and much love.

~A letter from Ed's Sister~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

I am sorry you are reading this letter. My name is Sarah and I lost a sibling too. My brother's name is Edward, but everyone called him Ed. He was known for his big, ready smile. We grew up in a military family and went all over the world when we were young. Military children are sometimes affectionately called "Brats" and the symbol of the BRAT is a dandelion because it can plant itself and grow anywhere. I think about my brother frequently, and when I do, sometimes I picture a dandelion that is being blown on the wind. The dandelion blossom might be gone but the scattered seeds will live on. In the same way the memory of our siblings, and how they touched the world, remains after they are gone.
I hope your visit to the Selah Carefarm brings you some peace and comfort.

Sarah

~A letter from Josh's Sister~

Hi,

My name is Brittany Klier (Hoffman). I lost my older brother Josh 10 years ago in October to suicide when he was 25. He is 2 years my elder and we were very close throughout our whole lives. His absence is more than words can say or ever express.

When my Mom read about this project, she told me about it immediately. The first thing that came to my mind was a poem I wrote several years ago about Josh's animated hands. I have been putting it off, coming up with different reasons. I am currently dealing with the quick illness of my (and Josh's) dog, Roxie who we found out this week is dying from lung cancer. As I "prepare" for Roxie's passing, I was thinking about the Carefarm and remembered this project. For some reason, I felt it very important to submit this before my Roxie goes to be with her Boy. I feel Roxie needs to know I did it.

As a sibling survivor, I spent so much time early on especially, searching for something to read that was from other people like me. Trying to find some sort of connection to others was so important. There is such a lack of this out there and it made me feel like my pain was less than my Mom's, as there is so much more out there for parents. I have learned over the decade that I am no less in my grief. Dr. Jo has helped me with her Facebook page realize this as well.

Thank you,
Brittany Klier (Hoffman)

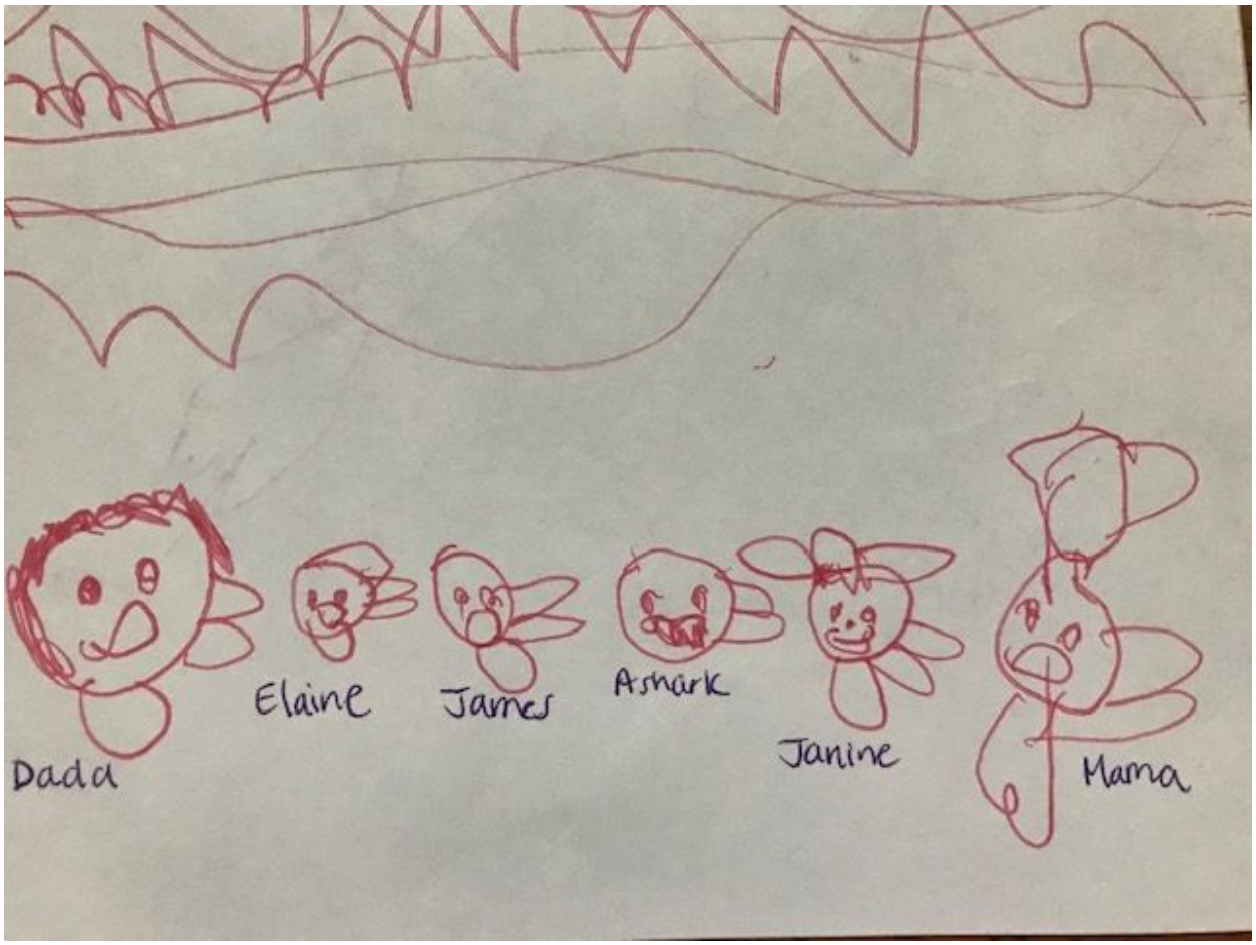
~A letter from Haley's Brother~

The Memory of my sister

I have a sister but I never met her. Her name is Haley and my middle name is like hers, Brooks. When I was born she had been gone for 3 years. She would be 25 now and I'm 7 now. I've been told that she was funny, smart, she liked acting, she liked writing. We both like science and math. I wish she was back alive. It would feel amazing because I never got to see her. I'd be a good brother to her and I know she'd be a good sister. I know she leaves me pennies. My mom and grandma are sad a lot about Haley. I feel sad too. One time, with my grandpa, on Haley's birthday, we went and bought a cake for someone in her honor. It felt good to do that. I felt like she was close to me. In my heart. We always do things like that on her birthday and angelversary. Sometimes I turn her special light on and off at my grandmas. I miss her even though I never met her.

True Lee Brooks Salvador
In memory of Haley Brooks Salvador 1/21/1994 – 03/29/2009

~Fish Family - a picture drawn by James's Sister~



James's sister, Janine, drew this picture of her family as fish at age 5

~A letter from Jacob's Sister~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

My name is Talia, and my brother Jacob died before I was born. Even though I've never met him, it doesn't mean I love or miss him any less. It's hard having so many unanswered questions about who he could of been and what life would have been like with him here. I often wonder what traits we would have had in common, and what his personality and interests would have been.

My advice would be to talk about your sibling as often and openly as you'd like so that it isn't awkward when the topic does come up. Another piece of advice would be to find something that comforts you, for me it's the Carefarm.

I have never felt as connected to Jacob as I did at the Carefarm. On the Carefarm the people not only rescue the animals, but in my opinion the animals rescue the people. The animals seem to have extra emotional intelligence, as they have also experienced grief and pain.

For most of my life I've felt alone, the only kid in my school grieving a sibling, but writing this letter helped me realize that we're not alone and that there are other kids like me, feeling the same pain. No matter how your sibling died or whether you knew them, they'll always be in your heart.

Thinking of you,
Talia

Talia at the Carefarm

~A letter from Gitel's Brother~

Dear Grieving Sibling,

I am sorry that you are reading this letter. I am really sorry about what happened to you. I have a sister, Gitel, who died in a car crash. She was 3 years old then. Now, she'd be 6. Gitel was amazing. I really miss her and wish she could come back. One piece of advice for when you are sad about your sibling is to think about all the really good memories with him or her. Then pretend that you are doing that exact thing.
I wish you to always remember your sibling and find joy in life.

Your friend,
Mikael

~A Letter From Gidi's Brother~

Dear grieving sibling,

A few years ago my younger brother, Gidi, died in a boating accident. A year later my family visited the Carefarm for the first time, and it really helped me. I'm not really that comfortable sharing my grief but I felt like I could connect with the animals and Dr Jo. The Carefarm also helped me and my family overcome some of our fears. After Gidi died, my family was never the same and the Carefarm helped me cope with my trauma and feelings, and we also helped the animals cope with their trauma and fears.

I'm sorry that you are also grieving your sibling, and I hope that the Carefarm helps you too. I think that when a parent loses their child everyone is always worrying about the parent, and maybe they don't think about the child's siblings as much. I hope this book will help you since it comes from a bereaved sibling's experience. You're not alone, and I hope you find the Carefarm and this booklet useful.

Love from one grieving sibling to another,
Oren Zilberstein (Gidi's brother)

We All Hope Your Visit At The Carefarm Is As Meaningful As Ours.

You Aren't Alone.

This Book Was Created In Honor Of Gidi Zilberstein.

He Made The World Sparkle.

He Is Missed Every Single Day.

Best Brothers For All Time