

WHEN YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER COMES HOME



Marcus

"Finding the victim is not the

end, recovery is just starting. Relationships can change; be aware things may be different than before. This is normal."



Ericka

"When a sibling is returned, it is

not over. Expect them to act different. Be sensitive to their wants and needs."



Robin

"Don't expect your brother or

sister to talk about everything that happened. Be patient. They will talk about things when they are ready."

Our greatest hope is that your brother or sister comes home safely. That was what we all hoped for. But when you read our messages of hope at the end of the guide, you will see that this was not the outcome for all of us. Sometimes a sibling is gone for a long time, sometimes siblings don't come home, and sometimes they don't come home alive. The hardest part in writing this guide was facing the reality that the outcome may not be what you expected or dreamed of. We aren't saying this to frighten you. We are saying this to be realistic and to let you know that we went through every possibly scenario that you can imagine. We know how hard it is. We know how painful it can be. Take one day at a time. Take one step at a time. Take care of yourself. Use this guide to help you get through each hour and each day. You will get through this no matter how hard it may seem right now.

As we said before, we sincerely hope that you are happily reunited with your brother or sister. This will be a time of joy and celebration for you and for your family. And while everyone will share in the joy, there are some things you may want to think about.

Chances are, you'll have a lot of questions about what happened to your sibling. Your brother or sister may not be ready or able to talk about it. If they don't want to discuss what happened, talk about things in general, everyday stuff like you used to talk about before the abduction. Don't try to pry information out of them. On the other hand, your brother or sister may want to talk all the time. Let them talk at their own pace and in their own time.

It's important to remember that kids who have been abducted have gone through a terrible ordeal. They may seem different than before. Some kids who go through this kind of an experience may seem distant and want to be left alone. Or they may pick someone to confide in—it might be another family member or a close friend. If they seem distant and want to spend a lot of time alone, don't take it personally. If they confide in someone besides you, try not to feel left out or insulted. Give them the time and space they need to sort out their feelings.

Try to pay attention to what your brother or sister needs from you. It's okay to ask if there's any special way you can help. But it's not a good idea to try to force information out of your sibling. Just as you needed others to respect your feelings throughout the time of the abduction, your brother or sister needs you to respect their feelings now.

You may tend to smother your sister or brother with affection or to feel overly protective. That may not be what your sibling needs right now, or even in the future.

Just be patient—and let your sibling know you're there to help in any way you can. And remember, the healing process may take some time.

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Here is some space for you to write about your thoughts.

The media may gather around your family all over again. Remember some points from the section on the media:

- Talk with your parents and your sibling about what is best for the family.
- You don't have to do interviews if you don't want to.
- Take care of yourself and each other. This can be a very vulnerable time for all of you.

Most importantly, you may find that your sibling's return stirs up a lot of feelings in you again. Ask for help if you need it. Ask your parents, a trusted adult, even a trusted law enforcement officer, if you think that you or your sibling needs help through the process.