

Many children rely upon the Internet to look for information and resources. For children who may be searching for help on the Web, see pages 37-38 of this guide to find more information about how to support yourself through these trying times.

This guide may contain many words that are unfamiliar to you. These words are found in **bold, colored type** throughout the guide. You can find definitions of these words on page 36.

What About Me?

COPING WITH THE ABDUCTION OF A BROTHER OR SISTER

If you are reading this because your brother or sister was abducted, **this guide is for you.**

If you are reading this because someone you know—a friend, a classmate, or a neighbor has been abducted, **this guide is for you.**

If you feel that nobody could possibly understand what you're going through, **this guide is for you.**

Yesterday, your brother or sister was abducted. Today, it seems like your life will never be the same again. Your thoughts are spinning around in your head. You may be thinking:

"I can't believe this is happening to me."

"Things like this only happen on TV."

"I feel like I'm having a nightmare—only I can't wake up."

"What about me? I'm afraid the same thing might happen to me!"

That's just the beginning. You probably have a million questions but are not sure where to find the answers. Where can you find support and encouragement? Who might help you feel better? What can you do to help find your **sibling**? When will life feel normal again? Has anyone else ever felt this way before?

Yes. The people who wrote this book understand what you are going through.

A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHORS OF THIS GUIDE

Like you, we are the brothers and sisters of children who were **kidnapped**. We felt frightened and confused, as you probably do now. Sometimes, we still do.

We wrote this guide because when our brother or sister was taken, we didn't have anyone to talk to. No one totally understood our feelings. No one really listened, and no one could really help us cope. We couldn't find answers to the millions of questions we had or people who could make us feel better. We felt alone.

You are not alone. We wrote this guide to give you some answers and to let you know there are people who really do understand a lot of what you're going through. We wanted to give you some idea of what you can expect to happen in this situation in the days and weeks—and maybe even the months—ahead. We wanted to help answer some questions, like:

- What feelings will I have?
- What might happen from day to day?
- What can I do to make myself feel better?

When we were asked to write this guide, it was the first time we had met other brothers and sisters who had gone through the same things we had. Finally, we felt we were not alone. And it finally felt good!

We also realized that we had learned some useful lessons—things to say and things to do that would help other children whose siblings had been **abducted**. We wrote this guide to help you deal with a situation that seems unreal and **abnormal**. We wrote it to

let you know that you can and will get through this, no matter how hard it may seem.

We wrote this guide for brothers and sisters like us, but in the process, we realized that it may also be helpful for the friends who are trying to support you, the teachers and counselors in school who want to help you, and the family members and even parents who are also struggling with how to cope. We wrote this guide to give you hope and encouragement.

We may not have all the answers, but we do understand a lot of what you're going through. One thing is for sure: it's not easy.

As you read this guide, remember that these are our thoughts and ideas about what might help you cope with this terrible ordeal. We found things that worked for us and things to think about. We also found things to avoid. We went through experiences similar to yours and, in the process, learned a lot.

We are not trained mental health professionals. We are compassionate brothers and sisters. If you feel like you are in a rut or feel that you cannot cope, please talk with your parents, another trusted adult, or a professional counselor or therapist. Professional help has been a part of all of our lives. It can help you get through each day.



Heather

"I hate that I am scared all the time. I hate feeling crazy. I hate this!"

"I have no answers, but questions and the need for reassurance. I feel so different from everyone else."



Martha

"Don't blame yourself for what's happening now. Don't blame yourself."

ABOUT FEELINGS

Here are some positive things you can do with your feelings:

- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings. Don't be afraid to let them out. You may feel better getting things off your chest.
- Write down your feelings. Keep a **journal** for when you have something to say but no one there to listen. Sometimes things that are hard to say are easier to write.
- You may want to keep your journal private, or you may want to share it with a trusted adult. They may help you cope. It's all up to you.
- Know that your feelings may change from day to day or even from minute to minute. That's natural. There's nothing wrong with it.
- Give yourself permission to take a break from feeling bad. It's okay to do something fun. It's okay to laugh.
- Do something that takes your mind off it. See a movie. Listen to music. Hang out with your friends. Don't feel like you have to think about the abduction every minute.

Right now you may be feeling:

- Scared.
- Confused.
- Worried.
- Angry.
- Guilty.
- Numb.
- Helpless.
- Out of control.
- Or all kinds of other things.

Maybe the best advice we can give you is not to be too hard on yourself. When it comes to feelings, there is no right or wrong way to feel. Your feelings are your own, and whatever they are, they're okay.

We can't tell you what to feel or do for every situation. Everybody's situation is different and unique. Maybe the best thing you can do is acknowledge your feelings and try to release them in a positive way.

We hope your brother or sister returns home safely and soon. But you should prepare yourself that this situation may go on for days, weeks, or months. And the outcome may not be what you expect. We are not

saying this to worry or scare you. There are many different outcomes, and as you read our stories, you will find that each one ended differently.

Take a look at the picture below. That's the eight of us today. We're all older now than when our brother or sister was abducted, and we've learned that, in many ways, this is a forever kind of process. We're still going through feelings about what happened. But a lot has changed, too. We hope that we can help you begin to put your life back together again, and give you some support. And we hope we give you the courage and help you need to get through this and find the positives in your lives.



Back row: Marcus, Martha, Trevor, Amy, and Robin.
Front row: Ericka, Heather, and Carmen.

ONE LAST THING

You have a lot on your mind now. When you pick up this guide, you may realize that you cannot read it from cover to cover. That's okay. We've written the guide to help you deal with different situations and circumstances. You can read it in any order and at any time. You may want to read one chapter at a time or just leaf through it. You may want to ask someone to read it to you. You may want to read parts of it aloud to your younger brothers and sisters. However you decide to use it, this guide is for you.

We know that children of all ages may face the abduction of a sibling. We were all different ages when this happened to us. The first part of the guide is for children who can read and understand our words. The second part is for children who are either too young to read or who choose not to read the guide right now. It contains activity pages for children of all ages with the understanding that they are meant to be introduced by a parent, adult, or even an older brother or sister, for younger children

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