



# The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling

By Jeanne Safer

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**The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling** By Jeanne Safer

**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:

**Nancy Farley:**

The guide with title The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling possesses a lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. This kind of book exist new expertise the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world right now. That is important to you to find out how the improvement of the world. This specific book will bring you inside new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read it anywhere you want.

**Wm Schroeder:**

This The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling is great reserve for you because the content which is full of information for you who also always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. That book reveal it facts accurately using great coordinate word or we can state no rambling sentences included. So if you are read this hurriedly you can have whole details in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but tricky core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Normal One: Life with a Difficult or Damaged Sibling in your hand like getting the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no guide that offer you world with ten or fifteen second right but this e-book already do that. So , it is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that?

**Neil Nilsson:**

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