



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

*Jeanne Safer PhD*

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

In the first book of its kind, renowned psychotherapist Jeanne Safer examines the hidden trauma of growing up with an emotionally troubled or physically disabled sibling, and helps adult "normal" siblings resolve their childhood pain.

For too long the therapeutic community has focused on the parent-child relationship as the primary relationship in a child's life. In *The Normal One*, Dr. Safer shows that sisters and brothers are just as important as parents, and she illuminates for the first time the experience of being "the normal one."

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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