

Abstract

THE IMPACT OF CRITICAL ILLNESS ON SIBLINGS AS EXPRESSED THROUGH PERSONAL NARRATIVE.

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The bond of a sibling is unmatched and when a brother or sister is diagnosed with a critical illness, the sibling is impacted equally, although, in different ways. Some studies have attempted to capture the similar feelings and psychological adjustment siblings must make following a diagnosis. However, by quantifying and measuring these experiences they strip away the core of the story. Rather than transforming stories into data we should do as Arthur Frank suggests and “learn with stories” rather than from them. While illness memoir is a growing subgenre, there are hardly any works written from the perspective of a sibling. Through writing my own memoir about my sister’s cancer diagnosis to reading other illness memoirs written from the perspective of a sibling I have found three similar themes: a change in our relationships with our siblings as a result of illness, isolation, and the pain that comes with watching the repercussions of illness on the growth of our siblings.