

Loss During Childhood Trauma: I Am Not To Blame & Neither Are You

BY AURORA WINTERS

I lost him when I was around seven. He was the light of my life, my big brother, protector, playmate. My everything.

He used to hold my hand when we were being abused. He would call me outside to play, take my hand, and we would run into the woods, our giggles dressing us in sunshine. How he stayed so constant, so full of joy in the midst of terror will always amaze me. Because of our love, I will never underestimate the magic of childhood.

My cellular connection to his joy, to the essence of all he was – and still is – to me supports the sinews of my body, the synapses of my brain, the unbreakable hope I have in humanity; the belief I have in myself that has led me this far, where I can write this and share his memory, his life, and who I am with you.

For years, I have blamed myself for his death. He was hidden in the darkest, furthest parts of my gut, and yet the deepest, sacred parts of my atoms.

This writing is for him. It is for me, and it is for you. Anyone who has stared raw, heart-thieving grief in the face and had to go on. Anyone who couldn't grieve because they were in survival mode. Anyone who has experienced pain and trauma.

This is a declaration that I am not to blame. You are not to blame.

Here is something I urgently want you to know. Blame is not something you just get rid of or just choose to release,

especially self-blame. After years of work, blame is also not a monster. Here are a few things I have learned about self-blame and how I have built a relationship with my own.

1. Self-blame serves a purpose at some point.

For me, blaming myself helped me survive my childhood. If it was my fault that my brother died, then I would not be mad at the person whose fault it was. I could not be mad at the person whose fault it was because I relied on that person for my own survival, food, and shelter.

To be mad at myself aided me in not acting out and getting hurt in worse ways by my abuser. But now, I am an adult and I rely on myself and my partner for food and shelter. And we thrive in love and work through any issues with honesty and respect. So blaming myself no longer serves me. It no longer keeps me safe. I am now experiencing a lot of anger toward my abuser. And I am finding creative, healthy, and lovely ways to express that rightful anger.

2. Self-blame is a form of protecting yourself.

Again, there are times we must walk through many things at once in our lifetime and often, our minds just cannot process it all at once. When I lost my brother, he was the one consistent healthy biological, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual connection I had to a human. When you are little, and at every age, you have need of physical and emotional connection to others for healthy development and security. I recommend reading Peter Levine and Bessel Van Der Kolk – they will explain that much better than I can.

After my brother died, I began touching everything solid I could. Wood, trees,

chairs, the ground. Blaming myself protected my system from fully shutting down to the reality that I had no one safe to rely on anymore.

Today this no longer serves me, I am still working through this part of my relationship with self-blame. I can now handle the reality that I was alone after he died as a child. Once I fully accept that, I am going to be able to walk in grace and confidence of what a fiercely brave human I am. This part is in process. It has led me to more understandings.

3. Self-blame is a visitor.

Like Rumi says in his poem about emotions, "The Guest House," it is simply a visitor. It doesn't stay. It won't stay. It begins to transform into a constellation of other emotions depending on the circumstance. I mentioned now that self-blame no longer serves the purpose of protecting me from harsher abuse, I feel rightful anger towards the person who deserves this blame. Self-blame will eventually transform into deeper self-respect.

4. Self-blame is our desire to do more.

This one may be the one most filled with sorrow. We want to believe there was more we could do. I wanted to save him the way he saved me every day. I wanted to protect him the way he held me sacred. I wanted him to be safe. I loved him and he belonged with me at the river teaching me for the hundredth time how to skip rocks because mine always sank.

I am going to tell you today, gently, there is nothing more you could have done. And nothing I say is going to make that truth any easier to carry. Just know, you are not alone.

5. In the end, self-blame is not self-blame at all.

As you take down your guard, as you begin to interact and understand why self-blame is with you, you will begin to see it for what it is. It is a part of yourself that needs your love. It is a wound that needs your work and play to accept and heal it.

I have found out how to be a hero for myself now that my brother isn't with me. I take the arduous and tethered path to acceptance. It has been a long journey – it is not linear and is often messy. Regardless, I have been gifted with a lot of beauty as I continue forward. When I am not in a space of caring for myself, blame is where I go first. Everything wrong becomes my fault and I am so sorry for everything, and I worry that I am a burden.

When I take time to write articles like these, I smile when I look self-blame in the eyes, because it's a six-year-old little girl and she just needs someone to hold her and tell her it is okay to be hurt. To feel pain. To cry.

And as I become gentle with her, she begins to soften and melt into me. I integrate a little more. I move through it all a little more.

The next time you spiral, I encourage you to wrap your arms around yourself and say, "It's okay to not be okay." I learned much from the deeply intimate and raw work of Megan Devine on grief. Everyone has their own process. We have to earn our own trust, just like we require anyone else to on our journey through life. We have to tend our own hearts, our own wounds. We have to let it be okay that there is pain. We just have to do these things because we deserve to live fully. And that means accepting everything, living all of it.

As I move into, lean into the loss, truly being with it, I

remember more and more rolling down green grass hills filled with pinky promises and chocolate cake. I remember more the joys and the treasure of being well-loved. That expands me, fills me, and I can take that everywhere with me, all my life.

We deserve a lovely life. My brother deserved a lovely life, but he did not get it. I honor him every day I forgive myself, every day I allow myself to feel whatever I need to.

His name was Jacob and he played the piano.

While I wrote this in love for us all, I listened to piano music and I let the joy of him wash over me and the loss of him become reality. I will do it over and over again. Eventually, I will write him to peace and myself into a new story. I already know it will be one that includes him and the way we triumphed.

I am not to blame, and neither are you. Neither are you. You reading this, you are not to blame. Releasing the blame from yourself allows you to grieve and work through anger.

You may find like I have that I carried anger at my brother for his death. There was nothing more he could do either. Acceptance takes time, and that is more than okay. Take your time. Find whatever ounce of compassion you can for your journey.

My brother was little – I have been mad at us both a long time. There was nothing we could do. I am not to blame. And neither are you, dear brother. May you find true rest in whatever space death carried you to.

You live on and on in my spirit.

And may you all walk gently and slowly for your own unique journey.

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For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [The Universe Has Your Back: Transform Fear to Faith](#) .

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Now With Her One True Love***

***Embracing Grief & The Grace Of Transformation
After Trauma***

You can't hide from your inner shit. Nope. You can't sleep it off. You can't surgically remove it. You can't eat/buy/wish/exercise it away. You have to turn towards it & embrace it. Look into its eyes. Be patient & so f*cking tender. Then get intimate with it until it shows you another way, a different you.

thug unicorn by tanya markul

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