

My Caring and Generous Big Brother

Monica Encalada

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Think about these vocabulary words: *reconciled*, *expressive*, *stepfather*, *coma*, *midst*, *sought*. As you read, see if you can figure out their meaning from the context.
2. Read the title and the headings. Turn the headings into questions.

Day and Night

My brother Alexander was two years older than me. He was my partner in life. When we were children, we used to fight during the day. For example, we disagreed about what to watch on the only television we had at home. We fought about it, but when night came, we always *reconciled* with a hug.

Our mother worked at night. When she left, we were afraid of being alone at home. I cried, and my brother hugged me. He said, “Don’t cry. We are not alone. We have each other.” We helped each other go to sleep on time.

He Protected Me

When we were little, we went together to children’s parties, concerts, and walks. One day, we were crossing the street and a boy riding his bike hit me and I fell to the ground. My brother jumped on the boy and hit him. He always protected me when someone made me cry or made me angry. That day, he looked very upset and very worried because my knee was bleeding, so he began to sing to me in a funny way until we got home. He did that so that I would forget about my pain.

On one occasion, our mother came home from work and saw my toys on the floor. She called me and began to whip me with the cable that she had torn from the iron. My brother Alexander stood as a shield before me so that my



Monica Encalada (center), her brother Alexander (left), and her husband Vicente (right).

mother would stop hitting me. He told her that he was the one who had left my toys on the floor.

A Loving Uncle to My Children

As we grew up, we became even closer. My mother and I have not had a good relationship since she met my *stepfather*. But my brother was always watching over me.

After I had my two children, my brother was a loving uncle. He never married. He never had children, but he loved my two children very much. We didn’t live together, but my brother was always very aware of me. He visited me and called almost every day. He was very *expressive*. He always told me that he loved me and that I was the most special person in his life.

I Could Not Save Him

One day, my brother called me very early in the morning. He said that he felt sick, but I never thought he was very sick. The next day, I took him to the doctor and he was admitted to the hospital. Before going into a *coma*, my brother Alexander told me: “Don’t worry so much about me, little sister. I’m fine. My body aches, but my heart is happy because you are by my side. I am not alone. You are not alone. In this world we have each other.”

My brother died 15 days later. He was 43 years old. After that, I did nothing but blame myself for his death. I thought he expected me to save him and I couldn’t do it.

Finding Comfort in the Midst of Sadness

Nine years have passed since he passed away, and I still cry when I remember him. Since he left, I feel like something of me left with him. I have a void that will last forever.

In the *midst* of great sadness, I have *sought* comfort by remembering his beautiful words of affection for me. My children have always been a support for me. They help me get over my

sadness. When I think about the difficult moments I have had in my life, I remember that I have my husband Vicente, and I have two wonderful children. I thank God that I have a beautiful family. It is what encourages me to live.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are some examples of emotional intelligence that Alexander and Monica show, both as children and adults?
2. Review the vocabulary listed in the “Before you read” activity. Try using the following in sentences: *to reconcile* (verb) and *reconciliation* (noun); and *to express* (verb), *expressive* (adjective), and *expression* (noun); and *to have sought* (the present perfect of the verb *to seek*).



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What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you.



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There are five key elements to Emotional Intelligence:

1. self-awareness,
2. self-regulation,
3. motivation,
4. empathy, and
5. social skills.

What are some examples of how you have used Emotional Intelligence in your family, community, or workplace? Be specific.