



## 2025 Ben Strauss Youth Program Middle School Essay Contest

# Ciarlo Liples

*Cancer Equals Lonely*

## Honorable Mention

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On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, my big brother Dominic was diagnosed with a diffused midline glioma (DMG). He lost his cancer battle exactly nine months later on December 7, 2016. Dominic was always a fighter, no matter the pain he was going through. After the radiation, chemo treatments and several surgeries, he always stayed happy with a big smile. He was my favorite person in the world, and he is still my hero. Cancer has affected my life in many ways but the way I will share that it affected me is what it was like for me to be without my brother and mom during most of this nine-month period.

When Dominic was diagnosed, I was five years old and in kindergarten and Dominic was seven and in second grade. The transition from normal life to having him in the hospital all the time was exceedingly difficult, especially since Mom stayed with him the entire time. It was incredibly quiet in the house since it was just me, my dad and our pets. Dad and I went to visit Dominic and Mom on weekends, but the rest of the week was long. It was so much fun getting to see them every weekend, though I missed them both very-very much every other day. Domi and I would play games, we would wheel down the big ramp at Main

Hospital together, and we would lay down in his hospital bed together and watch tv. Once we got home from the hospital grandma and grandpa would come over and watch me for the rest of the night if Dad had to work. I was little, though, and they would just let me eat whatever I wanted and watch tv.

Every other day, it was the same old routine. I would sleep in because I was in PM kindergarten then Grandma would wake me up, I would get dressed, brush my teeth and she would take me to school. A few hours later, dad would pick me up and we would spend quality time together. Every Tuesday Dad and I would go to my Grandparents for dinner, and I would always have spaghetti with butter and lots parmesan cheese, which is still one of my favorite meals. Our routine stayed that way until April 1<sup>st</sup> when Dominic was allowed to come home for the first time since he was diagnosed. I was so happy that day! Dominic at first did not even believe he was allowed to go home because he thought the doctors were playing a horrible April Fools joke on him. But he got to come home, and lots of Dominic's friends came by to give him a proper welcome. I was so happy that day to have Dominic and Mom back at home with us again. Some days later they needed to go back to the hospital daily for radiation and chemo treatments for six weeks. He was home until June when he had to stay at the hospital again, and we went back to visiting every Saturday or Sunday. Dad and I would try to do fun stuff together when we were not visiting them for two reasons. Reason 1 was I was young and had too much free time. Reason 2 was to keep my mind off Dominic and help me feel less lonely than I already felt without my big brother around me a lot like it used to be. Dad really helped with that though. Also, I got a lot of love



and support from friends and teachers at school, and lots of other people from my community. All the special attention was great, but I just wanted Dominic and my mom.

Dominic and Mom went to the hospital often, or he wasn't feeling well so she would be busy with him. There were a few special memories that I still got to make with him like my sixth birthday. We played games like basketball and football, smashed a piñata and ate all the candy. Another fun time was when we went on his Make-A-Wish trip to Disney World and Universal. We got to spend time together for a week which was so special. We both loved Harry Potter world so much!

In conclusion, cancer has affected my life very negatively and made me feel very lonely. I am so thankful I was also still able to spend time with my brother during his battle. I miss my brother. Home is so quiet.