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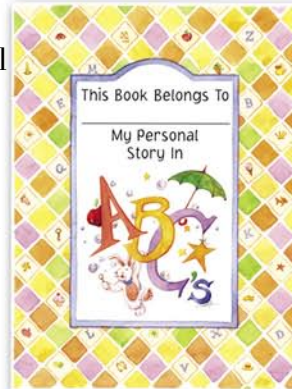
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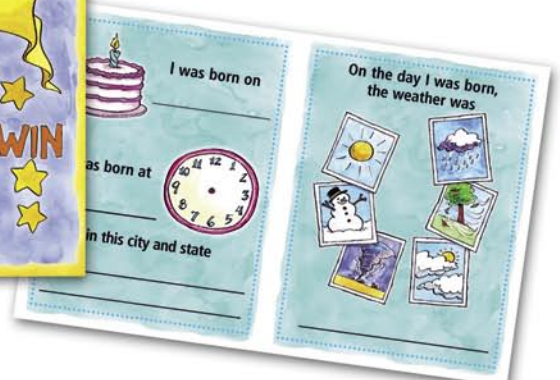
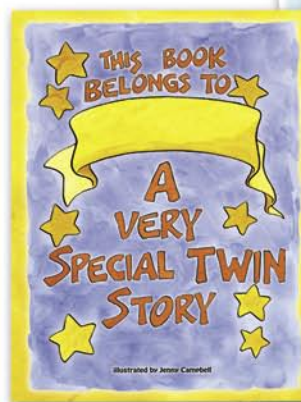
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ON THE COVER

Lily (left) and **Megan Parker**, Evergreen, Colo., born June 7, 2003, in China, love Cheerios and playing dress-up in princess clothes, tutus, and sparkly red slippers. Read more about their adoption on page 41.

Cover Photography by Covalli Photography



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Twin parents stay involved and active

One of the most exciting things about the community of twins parents I am so fortunate to work with is how incredibly involved you are—with your children, with each other, and with us here at TWINS™ Magazine.

You are thoughtful, resilient, you ask great questions. You are opinionated—witness the flood of excellent Letters to the Editor we receive each month—and articulate!

I think of your snail-mail and e-mail letters as my scorecard for each issue. Judging from your responses and suggestions, we're on the right track these days. Keep those cards and letters coming, friends!

You're always itching for solid information about all things related to twinniness and parenting, coping and cooking, saving time and solving twin disputes, preventing biting and praising your kids the right way. This issue is going to blow you away: You can actually save a ton of money on diapers by using an ancient Chinese method of potty-training newborn infant twins practically from the day you bring them home from the hospital. Don't believe it? Take a look at Donna Kahwaty's story on page 20 for the real deal.

Neonatal intensive care units, where a great many twins and triplets spend their first weeks and months, along with anxious Moms and Dads, are undergoing revolutionary—yes, truly revolutionary!—changes. Thank goodness! Maybe within this decade, we will see the end to noisy, cold, institutional and disruptive NICUs that can affect babies' physical, emotional and mental health for years if not for lifetimes. NICUs are destined to become "womblike." Amy Tracy shines a light on the future, page 28.

Talk about Involvement with a capital I, Kathy Dolan Caracciola wins this month's "TWINS I" award for spearheading an unbelievable campaign to rid the U.S. of those irritating, frustrating, and damaging school rules that forcibly separate twins and triplets into different classrooms from kindergarten on. Taking her cue from the Haavisto family's victory last year passing a twins-in-school law in Minnesota, Kathy has petitions going in 11 states and is going to try to take this issue to the federal level as well, using 'unfair class discrimination' as her springboard. This New York mom of 6-year-old twin boys is hard-charging and creative. Get the details on pages 8 and 9. Go for it, Kathy! We're with you all the way!



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Autism followup

Regarding your story on autism in the Jan./Feb. 2006 issue of TWINS™, I told you that I would update you on Jacoby (Dent's) most recent evaluation results. We met with his IEP team today to go over his test scores. The team informed us he scored so well that not only does he no longer meet the requirements of an educational classification of "autism", but he is no longer eligible for ANY special education services. He will remain in his current school until the end of next week and after the Christmas break, he will be enrolled in our home district at our local elementary school's preschool program.

I don't need a Christmas gift this year—I just got mine!!

Lisa Dent

Mom to Jacoby and Journey, twins born 1999

Via E-mail

Editor's note: Jacoby has undergone treatment for autism using a highly controversial procedure called chelation therapy, and has experienced marked improvement. We're delighted for him and his family.

Hands-free feeding recommendation

Please let Sall Weiler from the Nov./Dec. 2005 Mailbox know

(and all other readers) about the Podee bottle holder. It is the best hands-free bottle holder I tried!!! It is great.

My girls (now 3) loved them. They were easy to use—I just had to squeeze the nipple part a few times to "prime" the tubing. I tried those prop-up bottle holders and they were no good. These were great for home, stroller or car use.

These were a real life saver....it was much faster and easier for me to pump and give my twins the breast milk by the Podee than to try and nurse the two of them.

Here is a site people can go to for info about the Podee product: <http://www.bonnybabies.com/handsfreebabybottles.htm>

Brigid Eliaz, R.N.

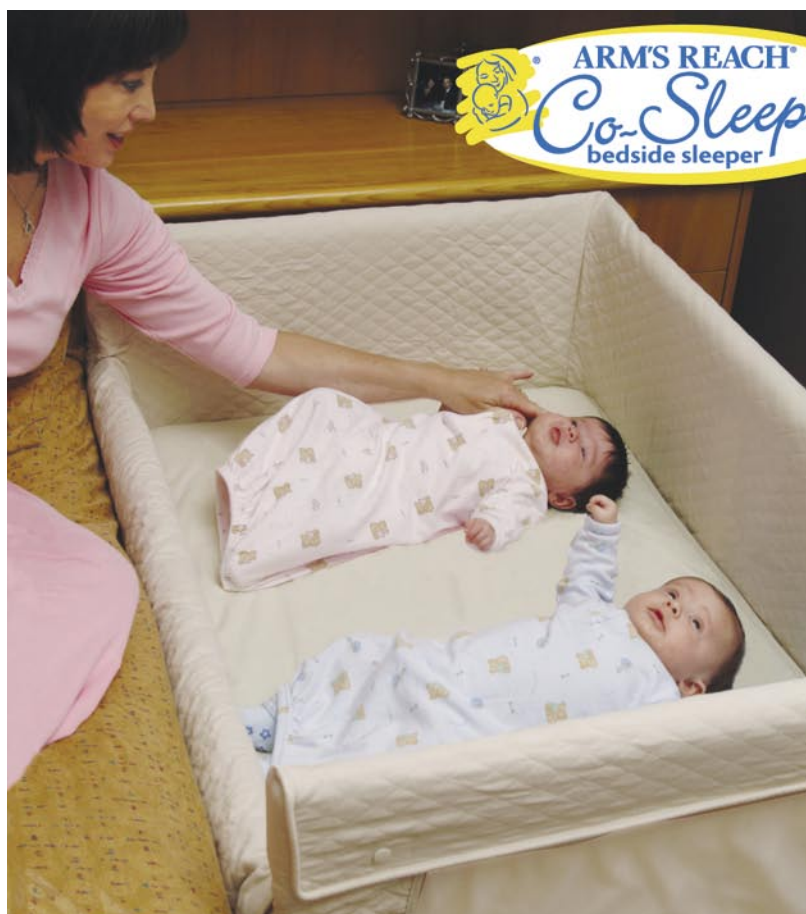
Via E-mail

Special needs

I am a subscriber to TWINS™ Magazine and find it to be a great magazine.

It's informative and answers a lot of questions that parents of multiples have. I was especially interested in the article on autism in the Jan./Feb. 2006 issue.

I have a set of 26-month-old twins. Both Nicholas and Theresa



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have their issues. Theresa is asthmatic and has severe respiratory problems, and Nicholas was diagnosed with PDD (pervasive developmental disorders) and severe developmental delays. Nicholas has been receiving services through Early Intervention since he was 17 months old. He attends a center-based program, five days a week. He receives speech and feeding therapy three days a week at a local rehabilitation center, and we also have an ABA who comes in three days a week for two hours each day.

We really have our hands full. I also have a 5-year-old who is starting kindergarten in September. Is there anything more out there that I can get for my son that he doesn't have already?

Arlene Rogan
Mahopac, NY
via e-mail

Editor's note: Arlene, you sound like a miracle-worker. Perhaps our readers will write with ideas of their own. I'll forward the answers to you and also publish them in TWINS so other parents can learn from this, too. Readers, please send responses to twins.editor@businessword.com.



Susan Carney's twins.

Plagiocephaly can be spotted early

As a new subscriber, I found your Jan./Feb. 2006 issue to contain some very helpful and important information, in particular the information regarding vaccines and autism.

However, I was disturbed to read some of Dr. Rachel Moon's dismissive comments regarding plagiocephaly in "Babies on their backs, continued." The article falsely states that "The risk of causing your baby's head to become misshapen by too much time on his back isn't a real issue, providing parents are holding their babies enough each day, and babies are on their tummies quite a bit during the hours when they're awake." According to plagiocephaly.org, a number of recent studies have indeed associated the recent dramatic increase in children with flattened heads to the "back-to-sleep campaign." Yes, babies should always be put to sleep on their backs, but parents need to be aware that this risk exists, and be attuned to any changes in their baby's head shape.

I was also offended by the statement, "The problem with so-called plagiocephaly arises when babies are 'parked' by parents for too many hours on their backs in car seats, bouncers, floor

and bed, often to make life more convenient for the parent." First, I found the terms "so-called" and "parked" to be insulting and judgmental; they have no place in an article which purports to provide medical information. Second, I don't think that the word "convenient" is one that can be used to describe anything about life with twin babies.

Dr. Moon goes on to suggest that you "put your baby" (singular) into a sling or carrier during the day. Is this really a practical suggestion for someone with twins?

These comments seem to suggest that plagiocephaly only happens to children of lazy, uncaring parents, and that any responsible caregiver should be able to simultaneously hold two infants all day long. While it's true that the overuse of such items can increase the risk of plagiocephaly, the advice to avoid these items seems impractical to someone caring for two babies.

Our babies were premature (as many twins are) and since they were under 5 pounds each when they came home, could not tolerate much tummy time initially. They were also on apnea monitors (as many premature babies are) for four months, eliminating the option of any kind of carrier. As we found out later, both twins and babies born prematurely are at higher risk for developing plagiocephaly. Our son did develop mild plagio, and I'm sure one of the contributing factors was that he did, out of necessity, spend a lot of time in a bouncer (his twin sister had terrible colic and needed to be rocked much of the time). Fortunately, his pediatrician spotted the problem early, and with aggressive repositioning, we were able to correct most of the problem.

Uncorrected plagiocephaly can lead to other medical problems, including facial asymmetry, TMJ, migraines, and vision problems.

Additionally, a flattened spot on a child's head may be symptomatic of a more serious medical problem called craniosynostosis, a premature fusion of the sutures of the skull, which usually requires surgical intervention.

For your consideration, I have included a brief article on plagiocephaly, geared towards the parents of twins. This important topic deserves more serious attention and accurate information than the flippant comments made by Dr. Moon.

Susan Carney
Via e-mail

Editor's note: Right on, Susan! Thank you so much for adding this information. We're glad everything worked out all right for you and your son. (See Susan's related story on page 33.)

Commentary is off the mark

I am writing in response to the points outlined during an interview with Rachel Moon of the Children's National Medical Center (Jan./Feb. 2006, page 56). During the discussion of SIDS guidelines,

Dr. Moon speaks of the need to keep young infants on their backs while sleeping. The doctor goes on to state that the flattened head (plagiocephaly) risk isn't a real issue, if parents are holding their babies through the day and giving them tummy time during waking hours. She boldly asserts that the problem of plagiocephaly arises when "babies are 'parked' by parents for too many hours on their backs in car seats, bouncers, floor and bed, often to make life more convenient for the parent."

I feel this is an irresponsible comment from a member of a highly respected association. It suggests that parents with children afflicted with plagiocephaly are neglectful and only tend to their babies when they are not a nuisance to them. As if moms don't have enough guilt to deal with, then we have a "professional" suggesting that parents are lazy if their babies have plagiocephaly. And while I am an advocate of baby wearing, as a mother of twins, it is sometimes impossible to continually have a baby or babies in a sling, in your arms, or carrier at all hours of the day. I strongly disagree with Dr. Moon's response in your magazine and believe other moms would feel the same about her flippant commentary.

M. Haas
 Mom to 3-month-old MZ girls
 via e-mail

Matching outfits

Hooray to Lisa Krebs (*Twin Who's A Mom of Twins Talks To Other Moms of Twins*, Nov./Dec. 2005). I was so pleased to see her comment about NOT dressing twins alike. Despite being adamant that my girls would never be dressed exactly alike, family members continued to buy matching outfits for birthdays and Christmas until very recently. I was glad to see my view supported in print.

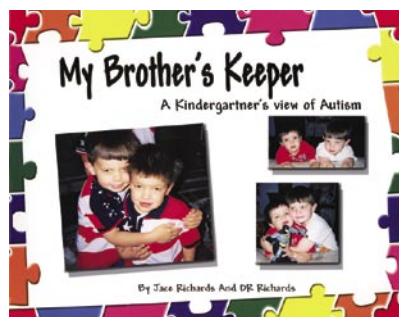
I was also pleased to read the assumption that even mom and dad may not instantly know who is who. I had so many people say to me, "You must be able to tell (them apart). You are their mom." Does that mean if I couldn't tell, I wasn't their mom?

Finally—a suggestion. A color theme isn't essential. I had lots of hand-me-downs, so I generally dressed one of my girls in solids and the other in anything but. They became known as "solid Sarah" and "everything else Emma" and most friends and family could name each twin easily.

Many thanks for continued thoughtful editorials and enlightening articles.

Heidi Swanick
 Via e-mail

Helping sibling children understand autism



I am writing in response to your story about autism in the Jan./Feb. 2006 issue. My son Jace is the author of a very special children's book entitled, "My Brother's Keeper: A

kindergartner's view of autism." Jace is now 7 and my autistic son Justin is 6. You can see us all at www.mybrotherskeeper.biz. This book could be very, very helpful to parents of twins who have an autistic child. Our second book, "The Parents Guide to Identifying and Minimizing Autism" is due out this spring. The publisher of Jace's book is MBK; it is hardcover, contains 18 pages and costs \$19.99. It is available online at our website and by phone. (We are currently working with Amazon and Barnes & Noble to sell it through them as well.)

Donna Richards
 Autism Advocate For The Cure
 via e-mail

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twinnyy tidbits

Tidbit #1—My twin and I are planning a Twins Day bowling event for May 13th in Modesto, Cal., the central valley. We plan to hold this event annually and hope it turns into the West Coast Twins Day festival. Please have anyone who's interested contact us.

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Tidbit #2—We receive a regular stream of mail, phone and e-mail inquiries from parents of darling twins and triplets who think they want to start their kids in modeling or acting. The “I want to be in movies” attitude grows from the aura of glamour that surrounds Hollywood. We also receive regular calls from TV, radio and movie producers asking for help in locating twins with certain age/sex/personality/physical/demographic characteristics needed for everything from acts to shows to commercials. There are several agencies around that specialize in twins, including one founded by Debbie and Lisa Ganz in New York City, www.TwinsWorld.com) and another by Carrie Nagy (lives in LA) and her twin Lesley Nagy, San Francisco, who operate The Twins Network. So we asked Carrie and Lesley, founders of www.twinsnetwork.com to tell us how their casting service works, what kinds of fees parents should expect to pay, and what's the best way for parents to proceed if they really want to pursue these dreams for their kiddos.

Carrie Ann and Lesley give their lowdown about the entertainment biz:

“Yes, we get those questions all the time from twins and parents of twins—How to get into the biz, whether it be modeling, acting, commercials, etc. Plainly stated, the most get cast in New York and LA. If you're located in or near those cities, there is usually plenty of info available and there's a lot of buzz about how to get into the biz, how to get an agent, how to get pictures taken and so forth. But if twins or parents of twins are anywhere else, they really need to get an agent by looking up agencies in their Yellow Pages or online.

Parents should keep in mind they may only get called in for an audition once or twice a year, unless they live near LA or NYC where they would get called for auditions more often.

With that said, we post casting notices for free on our website, so parents or twins can easily see what's out there. When we began our site several years ago, casting directors started contacting us to see if we knew of any twins for the jobs they had, so the casting page was born.

We don't charge a fee. Why not? Because we're not an agency. We don't make any money off our site. This began as a way to connect twins and give truthful information to anyone looking for twin-related info. Twins and their families are the nicest people—so we prefer it this way. We're having fun and it's a great hobby—also a good conversation-starter.”

TwinsWorld.com, operated by the Ganz twins, has been going for at least five years that we know of, and calls itself the only referral/service/talent agency exclusively for twins. Their website lists more than 55 casting placements completed between August 2003 and March 2004, but doesn't indicate fees charged or paid. We know the Ganzes do charge fees, of families as well as shows/producers, for linkups. We'll pursue this and get more info for an upcoming issue.

Tidbit #3—Kathy Dolan Caracciola, the proud mother of 6-year-old twin boys, Ryan and Nicholas, has launched an incredible campaign in New York state to have legislation written, introduced and passed that would allow parents to keep their twins (and triplets and more!) together in school if that is best for the kids and the family. Kathy read about the law passed last year in Minnesota requiring all schools and districts to allow parents with their children to make the decision about together-or-separate in school classrooms, and decided to expand the effort after two years of futile fighting to keep her kids together in a classroom.

Kathy, a Registered Nurse (R.N.), musician, singer, songwriter, performer on weekends, and caregiver for her mother who has MS and Alzheimer's, needed a bit more on her plate and dove in headfirst. She resides in Bayside, Queens, about 12 miles outside Manhattan. “One good battle will prevent a hundred more” Kathy told TWINS™ Magazine when she requested permission to post details about her campaign on the TMMB, with a website where parents of twins can sign an online petition to support the cause (<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/ryannick/petition.html>).

We wholeheartedly support Kathy's activities and sincerely hope she succeeds. TWINS™ Magazine has championed this cause for



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Ryan (left) and Nicholas Caracciola, 6, wanted to stay together in school. Their mom, Kathy, fought so hard with school officials for two years that now she's on fire for "the cause."

more than nine years, concluding immediately after we researched the issue back in 1996. We found that of school district rules mandating separation of twins from kindergarten onward were not grounded in any clinical or medical evidence at all. Nothing supports the belief that separation has been beneficial or necessary for twins. No one other than parents of twins seems to have recognized or acknowledged the extensive harm these rules have done. We've long been on the soapbox declaring that parents in tandem with their kids should make the choice whether to be

together or separate in school.

Kathy Dolan posted her information Feb. 3 with our permission and encouragement in two places on the TWINS™ Message Board at www.TwinsMagazine.com. Within days she had quickly gathered over 100 signatures. Moreover, she enlisted the help of Nancy Segal, Ph.D., California State University, Fullerton, leading researcher on twins and author of two excellent books about twins and multiples. Dr. Segal offered to serve as an expert witness at legislative hearings, sharing the stories of families with whom she has personally discussed the trauma to children and families when twins are forcibly separated in school.

Kathy found there was such extensive interest in this type of legislation she launched www.twinlegislation.com to recruit reps in every state other than Minnesota to help further the cause. By Feb. 7, Kathy had enlisted individuals in 11 states eager to pursue not only state legislation but go for federal legislation, possibly using the grounds of "unfair discrimination against a class" as the basis for pushing action at the federal level.

Needless to say, Kathy has been in touch with Wendy Haavisto in Minnesota, a mom of twins who spearheaded the efforts there. She has also written to Oprah Winfrey in the hopes of enticing Oprah to produce a whole show on the subject of forced separation of multiples in school. This lady is a go-getter, following in the exceptional footsteps of Wendy Haavisto and her family in Minnesota. She expects to have petition drives for state legislation underway in at least 22 states during 2006. ♡

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NOT JUST TWIN SPEAK

by Laura Munion



If you are worried that your children may be more than just late talkers, you are not alone. Many parents worry about their children's development. Several parents I've talked with have told me that their concerns are attributed to being overprotective or a worry wart. While there are many times that we, as parents, fear the worst, only to realize later that we have blown something way out of proportion, there are also the times that our hunch is correct. Checking into our suspicions is a natural and healthy instinct when it comes to our kids. When it comes to learning to talk multiples present a unique situation that singletons don't experience: Twinspeak. You may have heard it called a secret language, twin talk, or many other cute euphemisms, but it is the same thing: a language that your multiples create and speak between themselves.

This can contribute to your kids being late talkers, but there are also many other factors that could be affecting their language abilities. Having been in the situation of wondering whether or not my kids were just late talkers myself, I know how confusing and upsetting it can be.

In our case, it turned out to be something much more serious than twinspeak or late speech; my twins have autism. Still, there are multiple other possibilities as well.

If you think your children may have an underlying condition that is causing them not to develop language, speak to your pediatrician about the following possibilities.

Hearing problems—If your child has impaired hearing or even a build up of ear wax they may not be getting the audible stimulation they need to learn the nuances of language. If your children do need tubes or a hearing aid their language can take off quickly once the hearing issue is taken care of. Your pediatrician can refer you to a language and hearing specialist who can perform the tests your child needs.

Twinspeak—If your children really do have their own language and prefer it to English, you'll have to make an effort to bring them into social and conversational situations. A speech pathologist may be needed to help tap into the learning potential of your child.

Elective mutism—A rare condition in which a child may know how to talk, but choose to do so in only certain situations. Again, a speech therapist can help you if your children have this condition.

Apraxia—This is a condition in which a child cannot make the precise motor movements required for speech. The tongue, jaw, lips,

and palate all have specific movements and functions in speech. For some reason, as yet unknown, some kids cannot perform the intricate movements that speech requires. Again, a speech language pathologist is invaluable in helping your children reach their potential.

Autism—Autism affects 1 in 166 kids; it is four times more prevalent in boys. While speech problems make up a big part of autism's symptoms, other common problems that coincide are: ritualistic or repetitive behaviors, rigidity, sensory integration issues (doesn't like the way certain textures feel; picky eater; may gag when presented with certain smells or tastes; doesn't seem to get dizzy), and lack of social awareness.

The first thing that worried me about my daughters was the lack of language.

This was due in part to the fact that they had developed language and then lost it. This regression of skills is common in autism. If you suspect your children may have autism, talk to your doctor. Typically a diagnosis is made after evaluations are done by a developmental pediatrician or a child psychologist.

There are many other reasons that may affect your children's development of language that are benign, such as personality, birth order, or gender, but it is always best to have your suspicions checked out. If I had listened to my pediatrician, who told me to bring my daughters back in a year, we would have lost a valuable year of development not knowing there was anything wrong.

You may need to be assertive with your physician to get what you want, but remember that they deserve your courtesy and patience. If you truly don't think your pediatrician has your best interests at heart find a new one. You are the best advocate your child has. ♡

Laura Munion, Canal Winchester, Oh., is a freelance writer and copy editor. Her daughters are now 7.

Resources:

Spasaro, Schaefer, Charles, *Refusal to Speak: Treatment of Selective Mutism in Children*. Jason Aronson, 1999.

Kids Family Start Guide- *What is Childhood Apraxia of Speech?*

<http://www.apraxia-kids.org/site/apps/nl/content.asp?c=chKMI0PIIsE&b=839037&ct=837215>

Autism Society of America: *What is Autism?* <http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=WhatIsAutism>



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Saturday, Aug. 27, 2005, was a beautiful, hot summer day in Biloxi, Miss. I took my twin daughter for her first haircut. As Ms. Bonnie cut Paige's hair she and I discussed the hurricane that was fast approaching our beautiful coast. Jim Cantore of The Weather Channel was reporting live from our beach.

Bonnie finished cutting Paige's hair and we returned home to start the "evacuation debate." Should we stay or should we leave again? We'd have to pack everything up again and leave for a storm that would probably fizzle like all of the others. After watching a meteorologist on Fox News pleading with everyone to evacuate, my husband and I decided for our daughters' sake to leave for Navarre, Fla., to stay with a friend.

Up the coast in Bay St. Louis, Kelley Winders, a single mom of two boys, was 34 weeks pregnant with fraternal twins. She was uncertain whether to leave or stay; she was so close to delivery and the drop in barometric pressure during hurricanes could trigger labor. With that in mind Kelley and her two boys, age 17 and 19, loaded her car with belongings and headed for Birmingham, Ala., to stay with family.



The Sutton home before (above) and after (below) Katrina.



Sutton twins.

In Long Beach, Jennifer Sutton was 29 weeks pregnant with twin girls. She and husband Jeff, both veterinarians, own and operate the Animal Emergency Clinic on the coast while raising their 2-year-old son, Connor. As a business owner she hesitated to leave, deciding with her family to stay at the clinic to ride out Katrina. Their clinic is located north of the interstate, far away from the shore. Jennifer's home, however,

was only one block from the water; as a precaution she placed personal belongings up high in case the storm caused flooding.

Kim and Jeff Lawrence had just brought their newborn twin daughters home

from the hospital in Biloxi two days before the storm, joining their 4-year-old daughter, Katelin. Fearing for their safety because they lived in a low-lying area, the Lawrences went to stay with Kim's parents in Ocean Springs, Miss., across the Biloxi/Ocean Springs Bridge. Jeff had never left the house for a hurricane before, not even for Camille in 1969. However, because Kim needed help with their twins, he joined his family in Ocean Springs.

Tracy Roth was 28½ weeks pregnant with triplets, lying in the hospital in Mobile, Ala., trying to stop her premature labor as Katrina approached. Tracy is an OB/Gyn physician, so she understood the stress a hurricane could impose on a pregnant woman. Here she was expecting triplets and in premature labor, at a very inopportune time. Her husband Randy, also a physician, made sure their house on the beach in Pascagoula was secure—windows covered, patio cleared of chairs, etc. The Roths sent their son Patrick to stay with his grandmother in Dallas while Randy and their daughter Anna waited at the hospital with Tracy for the storm to pass. They figured the schools would reopen Tuesday and didn't want Anna to miss any days.

As Hurricane Katrina ravaged the coast from one end to the other all day Monday, I sat in Florida stunned. Stunned at how, overnight, she spun from a category 3 storm into a category 5 and picked up speed. We were going to be homeless, and jobless. I felt completely and utterly lost.

Tuesday morning we received great news. Our home had sustained only minor damage compared to most. Our roof needed replacing along with our fence and shed. As an active member of Mississippi Moms of Multiples, I knew that where some of our MOMS lived, they probably wouldn't have been as fortunate as we were.

E-mails started arriving. Kelley's home received extensive wind damage, but was standing. She was safe in Birmingham awaiting the arrival of her twins. (Her twin son and daughter were born without complications slightly less than a month later, Sept. 23.) Currently Kelley and her family are living in a FEMA trailer on her property while repairs are being made to her home.

The Suttons returned to their home to find only a slab remaining. It had done no good to put personal belongings in high places to keep them safe. Jennifer and Jeff are still awaiting a final outcome on their insurance claims, and in the meantime have bought a new home.

The Lawrence family lost everything below their attic. Nine feet of water consumed their home and all of their cherished mementos. They were able to buy a home very near Kim's parents' house in Ocean Springs following the storm.

The Roths also found nothing left but a concrete slab where their home once stood. One day before Tracy's premature labor

had been controlled and she was to be released from the hospital when her triplets made their grand entrance. She was about to be discharged so she could move into a rental house in Mobile, to await the triplets births, when her water broke. Ryan, Emma and Ella were born Sept. 10, and arrived home Oct. 24 and Oct. 28.

After hearing these families' stories, I sent an e-mail out to everyone in my address book asking for donations to help these folks recover. We quickly received \$650 in donations.

Sue, who founded our local multiples group, was staying with her mom in West Virginia until she could return to the coast with her twin boys. She had submitted an article to the local paper explaining our situation and requesting help. The response was overwhelming. Immediately multiples groups from around the country started mailing us packages loaded with everything from diapers to clothes. Baby Einstein sent 35 boxes of merchandise for the families who suffered losses due to Katrina. Kelley Winders was showered with donations and help from the twins club in Birmingham, Ala. Tracy also received generous help from multiples groups in Alabama. Sue and I distributed items to families along the Mississippi coast and we continue to check on their progress.

Stories are still pouring in. We continue to find families with multiples that suffered great losses. One of those families actually gave birth to the first and second baby of the New Year in Mississippi. Mom, dad and their twins are doing well and picking up the pieces.

Parents of multiples often have inner strength that allows them to handle the curves life throws at you. The families in our local club have proven they have what it takes to survive just about anything.

Mississippi Moms of Multiples would like to express its special thanks to all who sent gifts and donations. From California to Florida, you will always be remembered. We hope one day we can return your generosity. Amy, who owns our local play center, deserves applause for helping the family with quads in Pascagoula celebrate their 5th birthday. Their home was flooded and without her, a birthday party wouldn't have happened.

How can you help these and other families? Mention Mississippi whenever you talk about Hurricane Katrina. Our coast spanning 70 miles was nearly wiped off the map. But we'll recover, and it'll be beautiful again. If you have a chance to visit us, please come—we'll pour you a nice cold glass of sweet tea....it just might be on the porch of a FEMA trailer. ♥



The Maxted family.

Stacey is mom to Anna and Paige, who were born March, 2003.

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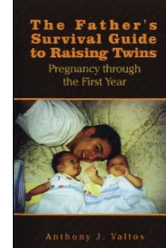


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Lessons Learned: *Mom of two sets of twins shares her experience*

I'm a mom of two sets of twins. This can't possibly be as shocking to you as it is to me.

Brian and Andrew are teen-aged identical sons from my first marriage, while Matthew and Sarah are twin toddlers age 2 from my present marriage.

In case you're wondering, the odds of having a set of identical twins and a set of fraternal twins are 1 in 10,000. My best friend has a theory that I have two sets of twins because I can't do anything like a normal person. Hmmmm....

After the initial shock wore off (which took about two years) I began to notice little things happening with my younger twins that sparked memories of events from when my teen-age sons were toddlers. I have, indeed, learned some lessons from raising the first set, and can offer some good advice that will help you, and our twins, be happier in the process.

The Coolness Factor

If a particular toy or book has an unusually high "coolness factor," I have been known to break down and buy two of that item. I realize full well that teaching twins to share at the earliest possible age will alleviate a good deal of "mine, mine" issues. However, having said that, I also firmly believe that just because a twin is a twin, it shouldn't mean they have to share everything. There should be some kid stuff that each child can claim for their very own.

You needn't go over the top and get two of every toy; that would be ridiculous and expensive. But two boxes of the jumbo blocks they so dearly love is a good idea. In my case, it stopped the kids from clapping each other on the head with the beloved Legos.

Mommy time and Daddy time

From the very beginning, twins do everything together. They usually share a bath and even a bedroom. Twins really never get

unencumbered mommy time and daddy time the way singletons do. I like taking one child out for a special time; just the two of us. It needn't be a major outing. It can be a run for an ice cream cone, a trip to the pet store to see the pretty fish or even going to the grocery store. Helpful hint: A trip to the grocery store with only one child is a mind-bending experience. It's so...easy!



From left, Jonathan Eichner holds Matthew, Pam holds Sarah, Brian and Andrew, 15.

I soon discovered an added benefit to my little outings with each of my kids. It gave me time to talk—really talk—with each one. Doing so has helped me gain invaluable insights into what makes each child tick and what sparks their individual imagination. I believe that each, in turn, has had a chance to get to know me better.

Parent-teacher conferences

Here's one I feel strongly about. Schools tend to group twins together during parent-teacher conferences. Insist on individually allotted time for each child. It signals the school that you are interested in your kids being separate and unique, and not lumped together as "the twins." This is especially true of identical twins.

Speak up in defense of twins

When my big twins were little, I was concerned about appearing rude when passers-by would say things like, "Twins, wow! You sure have your hands full." I used to let that type of comment go. Not anymore.

All four of my kids make me happy and proud. Not responding to dopey comments may make the kids feel that, simply because they are twins, they are somehow a burden. Now when I'm offered a useless comment, I put my arms around my big twins and say, "I'll say my hands are full. Look at how tall and gorgeous they are!"

Less is more

I am domestically challenged. As such, I pursued the goal of homemaking a lot harder the first go-round. I have since eliminated "stuff" and that makes my home easier to manage. I'm in the fortunate position of being able to afford more with my second set of twins, but frankly I don't want it. Keeping the clutter at bay keeps the clutter out of your life. Why complicate things with too much stuff that you probably don't even look at anymore? Get rid of the peripheral clutter. Your house will look better and you won't constantly be besieged by the feeling that your head is about to explode. Simple is good.

Be honest with your kids, even when it hurts

My big boys endured my divorce. Albeit amicable, it was a divorce all the same. I regret now that I didn't come as clean with them as I should have about what was going on in my marriage and in my life. In an effort to protect them, I actually made their situation harder. I'll never forget one afternoon, I was gazing out of the bedroom window trying to gather courage to leave a marriage that wasn't working. My son Brian was 7 at the time. He came up to me, took my face in his warm little hands and said, "Are you sad? In your eyes?" Ugh. I still get choked up at the memory of it. Sad in my eyes. I was smiling and cracking jokes to the world, but at the tender age of 7, he saw right through my act.

Remember this: Kids see everything, and I mean everything. When you are true to yourself and your own personal happiness, your children will grow to see the wisdom of your choices. I know mine have; they often tell me so.

Take pride in your appearance

It would be great if we could all effortlessly look like Catherine Zeta-Jones. However, for those of us who are mere mortals, that probably won't be happening anytime soon. With my first set of twins, I was always too exhausted to give myself a second thought.

I've learned, in retrospect, that I was creating a cycle of self-loathing that couldn't possibly do anyone any good, least of all my children. I allowed my health to slip, something that can easily occur in the aftermath of a twin birth. I was not on top of taking vitamins, exercising and allowing myself to have some much-needed down-time. I also used to spend the entire day in my pajamas if I could get away with it. Bad move.

Face it, when you look dreadful, you feel dreadful.

Now, if my toddlers feel compelled to have a meltdown while I take six minutes to shower and shave my legs, so be it. I'm not suggesting anything radical like clean hair and mascara every day, merely that it helps to try to look your personal best.

Don't kill yourself trying to get your body back. It took me 13 months to get back into my size 6 jeans after my second set of twins was born. The weight didn't go on overnight and it won't come off overnight.

Forget about how great celebrities look 45 minutes after giving birth. It takes work and patience, so be kind to yourself.

Oh, and ditch those sweat pants. No one on the planet looks good in sweat pants!

This is not a dress rehearsal: Do what you love doing and do it now

When my big boys were little, they often heard me grumble about my job. I was

working like a dog for a monster who did everything possible to break me down. I needed the job and I was too afraid of how I'd support my kids if I left it.

Rubbish! In hindsight, I should have gone out and found employment with a decent human being. A situation better suited to my skills and with more agreeable work hours would have made me a much happier person for my kids to be around. I'm sick at the thought of how many times they must have seen me in tears from the sheer exhaustion of killing myself for a job that gave me little in return.

Now, I am a writer working from home. It's something I love and, consequently, it loves me back. My big twins often tell me how wonderful it is to see me so happy.

It's fascinating how life will allow everything to click into place when you are open to letting it do so.

Get out of bed half an hour earlier

That extra 30 minutes will do wonders for the rest of your day. Have an unhurried cup of coffee, stare out the window, write a letter to someone you've been meaning to write to. Anything, as long as it's for you. You'll be in much better spirits when the kids wake up.

Hold those little hands often

Little hands are attached to little people who grow up so quickly. I was always so busy rushing to work, rushing to clean the house, rushing to pay bills...you get the picture. I dashed straight through Brian's and Andrew's toddler years. Slow down a bit.

Tickle-time on the living room floor is the stuff memories are made of. I can honestly say that I have never done a memorable load of laundry.

Childhood is fleeting. It's corny and we all hear how, "I blinked and now the kids are so big."

Corny? Perhaps. True? Definitely. ♥

Pam Eichner is a keynote speaker in March at the Successful Mothering Conference in Salt Lake City. She smiles a lot, even when meeting deadlines.

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TWIN TAKES

from the horse's mouth

■ by Jennifer Jordan

For kids, part of the excitement of getting a gift is owning that gift.

PARENTS ALWAYS ASK: Did you ever get “joint presents” for holidays or birthdays...that is, a single present for the two of you? How did you feel about that? How do twins feel if they are each given the same present for holiday or birthday? There are two presents, but are they the same? How did you feel about that? Do twins really want two presents, and want them to be different? What if one of you gets something that the other twin really wants, and vice versa? Do you swap? Do you feel hurt?

JENNIFER'S TAKE: As I write more and more columns for TWINS™, the readers of this magazine will come to learn more about my twin sister and me. One thing you'll learn is that we spent our childhoods with our favorite hobby. Ignoring the games of tag or hide-and-go-seek, our favorite activity was decidedly different than those of most kids: Above everything else, we loved to blackmail each other.

As far as hobbies went, there was only one other activity that could compete with blackmailing in terms of our dedication. This hobby, which most twins likely practice, was best during holidays and on our birthdays.

It had many names—trading, swapping, “I'll give you this if you give me that.” It often emerged at holidays and birthdays because the presents we received at these times fell into two categories: joint presents, and two-of-the-exact-same presents.

We never really enjoyed joint presents. For kids, part of the excitement of getting a gift is owning that gift. And by that I mean taking sole ownership of it. Yet, when twins receive joint presents, the gift belongs to both, so neither twin feels as though that gift is hers.

I can remember my sister and me taking stock in the presents we received for holidays and birthdays. Joint presents were often cast aside and not included in our inventory. This was because we each possessed the same philosophy: “Oh, we have to share that gift, so it doesn't really count.”

One year, someone gave us a teddy bear to share, a teddy we each wanted for ourselves. We had no idea how to share this gift. Perhaps my sister should have kept the teddy bear full-time, and would let me have it for myself every other weekend and holidays. Or something like that. Ultimately the teddy bear, and eventually every joint gift we ever received, ended up in a custody battle between the two of us. It was during this battle that “trading” became another favorite pasttime; my sister gave me the teddy bear, and I gave her one of my toys.

When we weren't getting joint presents, we were often getting the same separate presents. My sister and I weren't into the same

things growing up. She loved shopping and playing with dolls, while I loved sports and pulling the heads off her dolls. Often, the only thing we had in common was our DNA. So, when someone gave us the same gift, it was as if they weren't attempting to give us gifts we would enjoy; they were merely attempting to give us “twin” gifts.

Whenever this happened, we would again swap. A lot of the time, we would receive gifts that my sister liked and I had no use for. Because these were slightly different—for example, different colored jackets, or different dolls—my sister often wanted both presents. When this occurred, she, knowing I had no use for my gift, would ask me if she could have my present. I, in the true spirit of sisterhood, would simply say, “What will you give me?” After she gave me something I wanted—a shirt, a stuffed animal, a promise that she would do my chores—I would hand over the gift to her. On occasion, we would combine our two favorite hobbies and she would gain ownership of my present through blackmail.

The majority of the time, people were good about giving us presents that at least one of us liked. Thus, we were able to trade our things with each other. But the absolute worst was when people gave us the same present that neither of us wanted.

I remember one Christmas when my younger sister got something really nice from my parents. I can't recall exactly what it was, but I know it was something big—something along the lines of a Ferrari or the Hope Diamond. After watching my younger sister open her gift, my twin and I figured we, too, were in for something equal. Instead, we were both given the exact same present: cordless phones that neither of us wanted.

Not getting what you want for holidays and birthdays is part of childhood, but my twin and I felt—and I will still say this today—that the only reason we got those cordless phones was because my parents wanted to get “the twins” the same present. Even though they knew we had different interests, they decided the present should be something not partial to either one of us.

In a nutshell, a good rule of thumb is to avoid giving twins the same gift. You would never give regular siblings of different ages the same gift. So don't do it to twins.

Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. Twins may be alike in their interests and tastes, and both may want the same gift. Similarly, there are times when giving a single “joint” gift that they will share may be appropriate, if done sparingly. If both twins want something that they really should share—such as a trampoline or a video game console—joint ownership might be fine. But, in most cases, a joint gift or two gifts exactly the same make us twins feel as if gift-givers are trying to kill two birds with one stone—and that really ruffles our feathers. ♡

Jennifer is 27 and lives in Aurora, Colo. Her twin, Kimberly, is moving back to Aurora from Portland, Ore., early next year.

the family coach

parent-to-parent



I am the mother of 3-year-old Katrina and 1-year-old boys, Zayne and Zander. Next year I am having my sons join a 2-day-a-week educational program that my daughter absolutely loved. Should I have them in the same class? I have heard many different beliefs of how they may become too dependent on each other, whether they would properly develop their own identities, and homework issues. They will be about 2½ when they attend, but will this start the dependency problem I've heard about? Should they attend the same classes until a certain point, and then separate? How old should they be before we separate them? Any advice?

Heather Pino
Via e-mail



My b/b ID twins were 15 months when we started them in a Mothers Morning Out program 2 days a week, 3 hours a day. I chose to separate them from the beginning. They love their separate classes and do so well apart. I think it's easier to separate them sooner rather than later, and let's face it, they will be separated at some point so why not begin as you wish to continue? Our preschool director was very open with whatever we wanted to do, but she made some very good points for separating them. All in all, I think my guys get along much better now that they have some time away from each other.

Amy (dunwoody twins)
Mama to Will and Tim (6/11/04 @ 36 weeks)
On the TWINS™ Message Board

Wow, I love what Amy said about separating them early! I have g/b twins 22 months and I think it's a really good idea to separate them, especially after reading this post on the TMMB. I think it will help them to be more secure in the long run.

Sweetmomma
On the TWINS™ Message Board

My twins are 6 years old. They fight so much lately. I don't know why. I started reading information and searching the Internet. They are together 24/7: They go to the same classroom, sleep on the same bed, watch TV together, accompany each other to the restroom, take baths together, etc. They don't have their own space or time to be away from each other and rest. They don't have anything new or different to talk about with each other, or any different friends to talk with. If you want to avoid all this—and the desperation I am feeling right now—please start giving each one some separate time now. The later you start the harder it will be, not just for them but for you.

Faby (fabystwins)
Mom to Socrates & Maximiliano (2/25/99 @ 35.5 weeks)
On the TWINS™ Message Board

E-mail your Family Coach questions to:
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Vision Myths

by Steven Sainsbury



Anyone who undertakes the task of myth-busting treads on dangerous ground. We love our myths, and hold on to them tighter than a winning lottery ticket.

Some of you will sigh in disbelief as a cherished myth is dashed to pieces. Others will question my credentials. Or sanity. But ultimately, you will find that discerning fact from fiction is empowering, and frees us for bigger and better things—like potty-training.

Today's group of myths involves our sense of sight. What a marvelous gift—the ability to see. It makes sense that we would make every effort to protect our own—and our children's—vision, and the following myths probably stem from that desire. But let us not get so caught up in optometric fervor that we lose sight of the facts.

Myth #1: Reading in dim light will ruin your eyes

Nope. Not true.

In spite of countless parents informing countless children that they need better light to read by, or else they will “strain” and possibly damage their eyes, it just isn't so. True, dim light makes it harder to read, and forces the reader to squint, thereby concentrating their eyes to focus on a smaller area. The reader may also move the book closer and closer to his face in an effort to actually see the printed page. But short of a child poking her eye physically with the binding of the book, reading in dim light will not harm your children's vision.

Myth #2: Sitting too close to the TV will ruin your eyes

“Hold on,” you might be thinking. “I know for a fact that my eyes get ‘tired’ and worn out if I am too close to the TV or movie screen.”

And I would agree.

You have probably noticed this fatigue when forced to sit in the front row of a movie theater that is nearly sold out. Focusing on the big screen immediately in front of you left you with tired eyes. Why? The closer a person sits to the object they are watching, the more strenuous it is to focus on the images. Focusing requires the tensing of certain eye muscles--these muscles fatigue just like your quadriceps might do in step-up classes. But neither your thigh muscles nor your child's eye muscles are harmed by getting fatigued.

What we allow our children to watch on television presents far more potential harm than any risk posed by how close your children sit to the screen. Eye doctors agree: Sitting too close will not harm children's vision.

Myth #3: Eating carrots is good for your eyes.

Yes, carrots do contain healthy amounts of vitamin A.

Yes, vitamin A is important, as are all vitamins, for every bodily function including healthy vision.

But no, eating carrots (or taking extra vitamin A) will not make us see more clearly in the day or night.

Perhaps this myth was started by the Carrot Growers Association of America, but I suspect a more likely source was some frustrated parent trying to get their 5-year-old twins to eat their vegetables.

MYTH #4: If you keep crossing your eyes, they will get stuck.

We choose to cross our eyes. It is a voluntary action. As a result, once we decide to stop crossing our eyes, the eye-crossing muscles relax, and both eyes resume their normal positions. They are no more likely to get stuck in a tensed position than any other muscle of the body. Eventually, all muscles get worn out and simply relax.

Undoubtedly, this myth was perpetuated by parents who wanted their children to quit making those awful faces. Fat chance. ♡

Steven Sainsbury lives in San Luis Obispo, Calif., and is the father of eight in a blended family, including three surviving quads, now 21 years old. He's been writing medical articles for TWINS since 1986, and has worked as a full-time emergency physician since 1985.

What is This Lovefest Thing?

ILLUSTRATION BY CHUCK GALEY



Have you experienced a lovefest? Just before I put my twin sons, Michael and Jude, to sleep, whether for a nap or for the night, they both do some pretty cute, spontaneous cuddling and wooing.

I discussed this with my neighbor and friend, Wendy, a counselor by profession and also a new mother. She called it a “lovefest.” Huh? I asked if her daughter, Abby, did anything like it and she replied, “Yes, she grabs my hair and looks at me. She likes to play with my hair.”

When I saw Wendy again at the pool, I asked her if “lovefest” was a psychological term? She advised me that there was no psychological term for what a mother and her babies experience, and added, “It sounds like something I’d make up.” Wendy had coined the word/phrase “lovefest.” How cool is that! What a fun word to use

for such a beautiful, loving experience between a mother and her babies.

My firstborn, Michael, has slightly different cuddly moves than his twin, Jude. For example, Michael looks at me with laughing and loving eyes, and he’ll roll around and giggle. He will also bite—or I guess, kiss—my arm with an open mouth and make a sound something like, “Ah baa, ah baa.” At times, he smacks my arm like gentle love taps but faster and faster, similar to Woody Woodpecker. (I’m dating myself.)

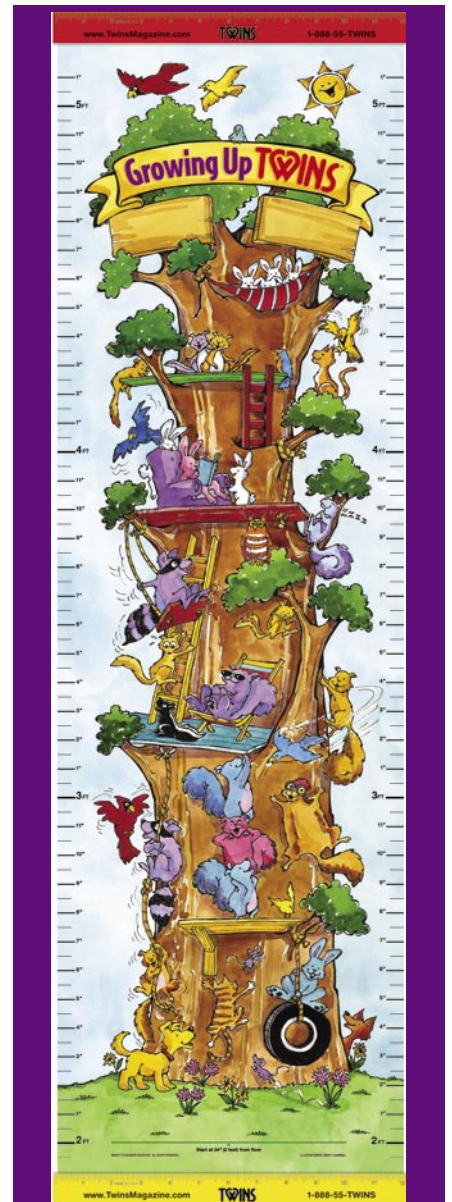
Michael makes incredible noises like a cross between a motorboat, a helicopter, and the wet but adorable baby raspberries. Finally, he’ll look at me adoringly, sporting his new, toothy grin, before he shuts his big, brown eyes and drifts off to sleep.

Jude on the other hand, maneuvers his way to the middle of my abdomen and chest, rolls up his back and gives me a sheepish smile as we bonk foreheads together. Next, he’ll give me a smile that lights up the room, giggles and moves to the other side to get comfortable. Jude will also hold my hand, pull my hair or pull my glasses off and laugh.

He, too, smacks my arm like love taps, but they’re smaller and gentler than his older brother’s taps. In addition, Jude verbalizes an “Ahhh” like he just took a big swig from a tall, cool drink. Sometimes, after his bottle, he’ll get himself situated just so in my arms, look me square in the face and give me a big smile. Then he’ll laugh and we rub noses together before he closes his smiling, brown eyes to slumber.

Excuse me, it’s time for my twins’ naps now. I can’t wait to experience what Michael and Jude will do today! ♡

Maria Vandervort is a journalism graduate of Monmouth University and lives in Robbinsville, N.J. with her cuddly family.



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Toilet-training newborns: Parents grab hold of trend to potty-train infant twins

By Donna Hoke Kahwaty

The very mention of potty-training newborn infants elicits reactions ranging from skepticism and confusion to intimidation, amazement and plain old curiosity. Who wouldn't be delighted at the prospect of shortening the years of diaper-changing, accidents, diaper costs and inconvenience?

Parents of multiples can only dream of how blissful life would be without constant diaper changes, and almost endless purchases of disposables, times two.

But we've all grown up in a diaper culture—with the idea that children should toilet train when they're ready. So the notion of teaching a very young infant to urinate or poo on command, using a potty from birth, is a foreign one. And I mean that both literally and figuratively.

Infant potty training (commonly called IPT)—or Elimination Communication (EC), as it is sometimes called—has been used extensively in other countries long before it made an appearance in U.S.

"My theory is that it goes way back to

the beginning of human time," says Laurie Boucke, author of *Infant Potty Training: A Gentle and Primeval Method Adapted to Modern Living*. "Like animals, we didn't diaper. We were likely in warmer climates, there was no furniture, but over time, maybe we started using natural things like animal skins or leaves, and those evolved into diapers."

No one keeps any statistics about the use by parents of IPT and EC in the U.S., but well-educated parents across the nation seem to be grabbing hold of the concept and trying it because it makes sense. For many parents—and their children—traditional potty training continues to be a choice that works for their lifestyles and preferences.

Yet it's clear from the amount of interest in the diaperfreebaby.com website that a growing number of parents, once hearing about IPT, find themselves curious enough to give it a try. They take the leap for myriad reasons: Earlier completion of toilet training; increased bonding with

their babies; cost savings, environmental reasons; fewer diaper rashes or simply better all-around hygiene.

"A friend had a lot of success with her baby in the first six months," says Wendy Matteucci, a Renton, Wash., mother of 4-year-old twins. "Her success, and reading about the history of infant potty training throughout the world, convinced me it must work. Everything about it was a plus; there were no drawbacks. I knew I was staying home with [my twins] and I thought if it worked for so many people, I could make it work for me."

And work it did. Matteucci first held her babies over a small potty when they were only 7 weeks old, and dripped warm water over their genitals as instructed. "Taylor peed the first time and Tess peed the second time, and I never had to use water again," Wendy recalls. "I also made the 'ssssss' sound and used a sign for toilet, even though they were only seven weeks old. By the end of the first week, they were both peeing regularly on the potty, so I

knew that it was working.”

Of course, at seven weeks, “working” doesn’t mean that every single time a baby eliminates, he or she is going on the potty. “It is important to emphasize from the start that IPT is about working with infants toward accomplishing what is commonly known as potty training,” says Boucke. “The process is more akin to teamwork and interconnectedness than actual training.”

Over time, parents will recognize patterns of elimination in each baby, and cues that a child is about to urinate or have a bowel movement; often, it’s simply a matter of putting babies on the potty at logical times—after eating, or following a long car trip or nap. The process becomes a form of conditioning, and the habit becomes ingrained.

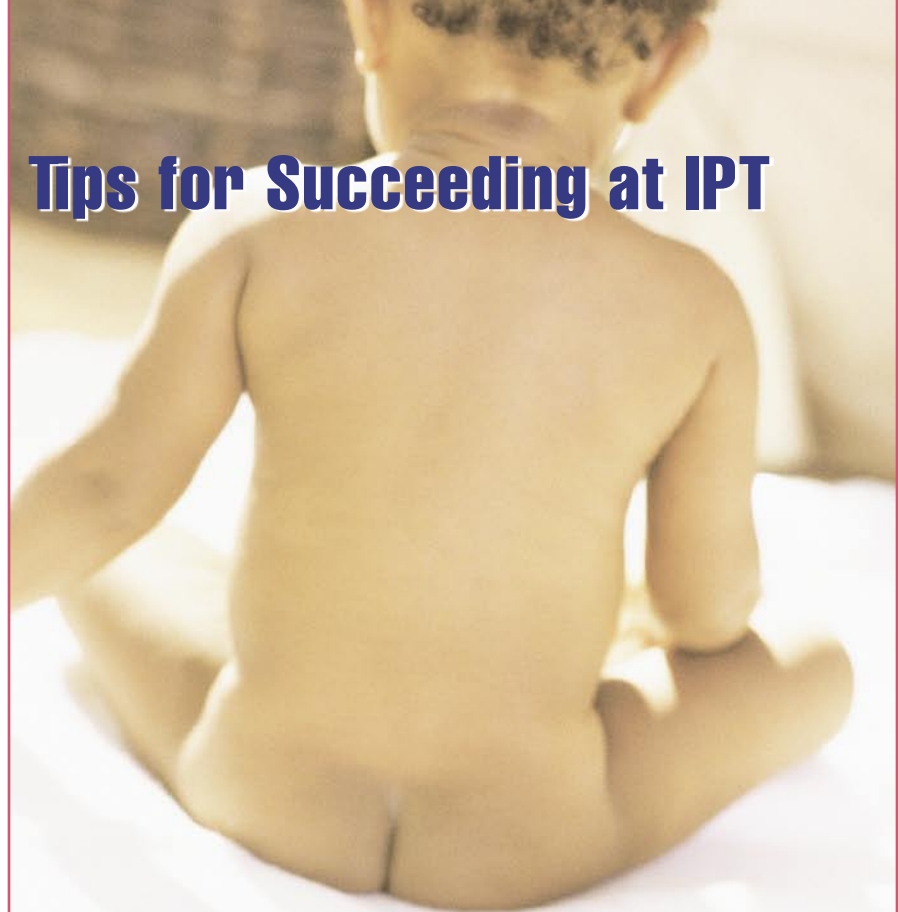
Matteucci initially took her babies to their little potties at natural intervals—after naps, following car rides, after eating—and very quickly the babies began to anticipate their trips to the potty, and they would hold their urine until they were taken to the toilet.

As babies grow a bit older and become more conscious of the process, they begin to communicate their needs on their own. Long before they are fully toilet trained, IPT’ed children already have a great deal of control over their bodily functions.

“When Tess was only 2½-months-old, she went 17 days without a poopy diaper, and she was bowel-trained completely by 16 months,” Wendy marvels. “Even before that, there were benefits, too, because they’re holding their urine and bowels, so they never pooped in the car or in public. I think I used a diaper-changing station maybe once. After a year, they never pooped at nap time. They’d wake up and cry and I’d take them to the potty and they’d go back to bed.”

For children who are prone to diaper rash, eliminating times when a child may be stuck in a soiled diaper for more than a few minutes—or eliminating soiled diapers entirely—may be reason enough to try IPT. That was the case for Julie DeWyse, a Genoa City, Wisc., mother of 4-year-old twins. When her twins were only five months old, her son was suffering from such horrible

Tips for Succeeding at IPT



“I published my book in 1991, the first book on the subject that I know of, *Infant Potty Training: A Gengle and Primeval Method Adapted to Modern Living*,” says Laurie Boucke, author of . “And the popularity keeps growing. There were a lot of skeptics, but then the Internet came along and offered mothers a way to support each other. DiaperFreeBaby started playgroups in most states. The Oct. 9, 2005, front-page article in the Sunday New York Times. Made it really take off. I’ve been promoting this for 26 years and it’s like a whole different planet of people willing to hear about it and try it now.”

If you’re one of those parents who wants to try infant potty training (IPT), also known as evacuation communication (EC), here are a few pointers to get you started:

- Do your homework. Read as much as you can about IPT/EC, so you are armed with knowledge not only about what to do when things go right, but what to do when they go wrong.
- Get support. At diaperfreebaby.com, you can find a local support group. If there isn’t one, find online support from other moms and/or experts.
- Start early. In the first six months after birth, there is a window of learning when babies are aware of elimination, before they become

mobile and before the world becomes too interesting to concentrate.

- Favor cloth diapers. Use what you have to, but IPT is easier if babies can feel when they are wet.
- Use sign language. Babies will quickly learn the sign for “toilet,” and should also be taught the sign for “all done.” Both are signs that can be used before babies are verbal.
- Don’t compare or hold back progress of one for the other. “Where there’s a pair, one will typically finish sooner than the other, so don’t compare your twins to each other,” says Boucke. Wendy Matteucci realizes, looking back, she should have allowed her daughter to stop wearing diapers earlier. Instead, Matteucci kept Tess in diapers because she didn’t want her son, Taylor, to feel badly.
- Have two potties. “It was not uncommon for me to give the signal to one of them to go, only to have the other one go in their diaper,” Matteucci laughs.
- Keep it a day job: At least at first, don’t worry about nighttime elimination. “It’s really important that everyone get enough rest; it might be easier to get up at night with one than with two,” Boucke points out.
- Expect good days and bad days, and remember it’s a gradual process.

diaper rash that she went online looking for solutions to alleviate his pain. There, she found Boucke's book and figured she had nothing to lose.

"It helped because we could catch some of his pees and poops, and he wasn't crying so much," DeWyse says. "If it weren't for Wyatt, I probably never would have known about it."

Though Julie started IPT with the hope of helping Wyatt, she admits the idea of getting rid of diapers sooner rather than later was appealing. "Diapers weren't horrible," she says, "but it was just another chore, so I didn't feel like this was a waste of time. And if you add up the time you spend changing diapers or washing them, I'm not sure it took any more time than that." The end result: Tressa was fully

toilet trained by 18 months, Wyatt shortly afterward. Julie had equal success with her third child, a singleton.

Both Matteucci and DeWyse took a relaxed attitude to IPT, something that Boucke says is vital: "I advise parents to keep a balance in everything they do, not to become obsessive about this. Stay relaxed. Especially with two babies, it's better to start out with just a few potty visits a day and gradually increase, because you'll experience burnout if you try to be there every time they go."

That's advice Emily Gelbert, a Brookline, Mass., mom of 3-month-old twins has taken to heart. Though she'd always wanted to do EC—she never liked the idea of children sitting in their dirty diapers—she worried it might be more difficult with

twins. "Now my motto is to do everything 'perfectly imperfect,' especially with twins," she says. "I'm doing EC infrequently; I'm not catching every poop, and I don't know all their cues yet, but this is what perfect looks like for a new mother of twins who is new to the system. But I'm not going to give up because I think it's worth it and I'm willing to do it imperfectly."

That is definitely the right attitude, Boucke says. "For some parents, it resonates and they want to try it," she observes, "but no one should feel pressured. It's not about rushing toilet training; it's just about trying to work with kids when they have this awareness. It's a gradual process."

In the end, IPT is just one more choice—for both parents and children. There is no right or wrong. "After Tess and Taylor knew

Diaper Free Baby Tips for Twins and Multiples:

- Remember, each child is an individual. Each will complete various stages of EC and finish the process at different times.
- Be careful what you say. A compliment to one could be taken as criticism by the other. Don't compare achievements or performances.
- Never punish or show disappointment. You don't want a power struggle over this later on.
- Avoid using rewards or excessive praise. Don't have an opinion about whether they go or not.
- Stay relaxed.
- This isn't an all-or-nothing process; it can be done part-time.
- Have at least one potty for each child. Change the style of potty to match each one's stage.
- Keep extra potties in your car.
- Use a consistent "cue" word, sound or association.
- Put both children on the potty at the same time (once they can sit unassisted) before giving the "cue." Before they can sit unassisted, potty each child separately to avoid confusing the one not near the potty by hearing/seeing a cue.
- Have each child pick out his own potty



Tressa and Wyatt, 8 months.

chair, in a shopping trip together, when it is time (base this on age, more than stage).

- Use cloth diapers, if possible.
- Change diapers frequently.
- Dress your children for success as they

gain independence—put very little clothing on them or have them wear clothing easy to get off and on.

- Have each child pick out his and her own small underwear when it is time (base this on age, more than stage).

what the toilet was for, it was up to them to make the choice to use it. I didn't make it for them." Matteucci points out, "There was no reward for them going in the toilet, no punishment for going in their diapers. They could—and sometimes did—soil their diapers when the need arose, without fear of condemnation. It was clear to me early on that they preferred the toilet, so I just kept offering them the option. People think you have to be some kind of supermom to do this, but that's not true; it just becomes part of the day."

IPT actually has a relatively long history in this country, too, but it wasn't called IPT or EC, and never caught on until recent years. Maybe part of the popularity derives from increased international travel to Asian countries by younger people during the

last decade, and exposure to different ways of caring for children in other countries. Although a form of early potty training was promoted by the U.S. government in the early 1900s, it was a more punitive method that bears only a minor resemblance to infant potty training (so-called IPT) as it's practiced today. Later, in the 1950s, Dr. Spock convinced a generation of parents not to rush their children. And even more recently, we have become still more lenient, watching for toddler cues and initiatives that demonstrate our children are indeed ready to give up their diapers.

"The problem," says Boucke, "is that some kids never show the signs or take the initiative because diapers are so comfortable. Children are getting toilet trained much later than they used to." ♡



Just think of the savings!

Disposables are used very seldom with IPT.

The cost of disposable diapers for twins typically runs about \$80 a month, so if IPT can eliminate (pardon the pun!) roughly 18 months of disposable diaper expenses, that's a very significant \$1,400 or more. Of course, that number doesn't take into account the hot water and laundry detergent used to launder cloth diapers.

Yet, look at it this way: If you have to buy 60 cloth diapers two different times

(for size, as your babies grow), that might require an outlay of \$300 to \$400. Add to that the cost of diaper covers—let's say another \$200 to \$250 or so—and perhaps a Diaper Genie (plus the cost of endless refills for it) to keep stinky diapers out of sight and out of smelling range, maybe another investment of \$200 during your babies' earliest years. You've still only spent \$850 at the high end, meaning with successful IPT, you'd save a good \$600 or more.

IPT and EC Resources

- <http://www.pottywhisperer.com>: Comprehensive Web site offering history, resources and support.
- <http://diaperfreebaby.com>: A network of free support groups promoting a natural approach to responding to babies' elimination needs.
- <http://www.natural-wisdom.com>: Informational site of Ingrid Bauer, who coined the terms "natural infant hygiene" and "elimination communication."
- <http://www.theecstore.com>: Offers a wide range of EC-related merchandise, including mini-potties for young babies.
- <http://www.whizkidz.biz>: EC information and store.
- <http://www.white-boucke.com/reviews/lateststarters.html>: Article that includes tips and guidelines for late starters.
- <http://www.jalexlang.com/parenting/diaper.htm>: One mom's story.
- <http://messageboards.ivillage.com/iv-ppelimtrain?redirCnt=2>: ivillage message board for communication and support among parents using IPT. (You will need to join ivillage to participate.)
- <http://www.mothering.com/discussions/forumdisplay.php?s=&forumid=227>: Mothering.com message board for support and communication among parent using EC.
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NaturalInfantHygiene/?yguid=25086016>: Yahoo e-mail group for support and communication among parents using EC/IPT.
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eliminationcommunication>: Alternative parenting e-mail list for parents practicing EC/IPT.



Helping Multiples Cope With Loss

And Lessons My Twins Taught Me Along the Way

By Heather Siladi

“Yeah, but we’re not really twins,” Connor announces proudly to the unsuspecting passer-by—one of the many who love to ask the charmingly obvious question: Twins?

Cole quickly jumps in to finish his brother’s sentence, “Yeah, Conrad died two days after we were born. He was our trip-i-let brudder.”

“Wow! You guys are triplets?” says the stranger, without missing a beat and sensing their pride at being more than mere twins. “That’s awesome!” She looks at me as we pass, still beaming over my boys, and I see the message of sympathy articulated in a slight arch of her eyebrows. I nod in acceptance of her silent condolences. We all wave good-bye to our newfound anonymous friend, and continue to the car to load up the groceries.

Having multiples is a unique experience, and so is losing one. It’s not any easier or harder than losing a single child, it’s just different. There were pros and cons to having two newborns to take care of while grieving the loss of one, but overall I’m very thankful that my boys were there to help me through that difficult time. They could never fill the void left by the absence of Conrad, but they kept me too busy to wallow in my own despair.

Lesson #1: Life goes on (ready or not).

One psychological difference in losing a baby who is part of a set of multiples is that along with losing the child, it feels as if you’re losing the whole set. If there are no longer two of them, are they still twins? If there are no longer three of them, are they still triplets?

This identity crisis was especially problematic because my son, Conrad, died shortly after my boys were born. My husband and I knew them as triplets ever since I was five weeks pregnant. We planned for triplets; we named them as triplets; we ate, slept, and breathed triplets for six months. But the fact remained that they would not grow up as triplets. In a way, although they were triplets, they could never be triplets.

We made a conscious decision to call our boys twins. We knew we couldn’t call them triplets without people looking around for number three. Still, for months after they were born I couldn’t call them twins without feeling I was lying, or feeling a pang of

Having multiples is a unique experience, and so is losing one. It’s not any easier or harder than losing a single child, it’s just different.

...they dreamed about Conrad, drew pictures of him at school, wished they could play with him, and told every inquisitive stranger that they were actually triplets.

guilt for denying Conrad's existence. I eventually came to terms with all these feelings through the slow process of grieving, only to find yet another problem in my path: How do I help my boys understand and cope with their loss?

Siblings, more than any other kind of family member, shape a large part of who we are, simply by existing. You don't just have a younger brother; you are a big sister. The relationship between siblings and self-identity is exceptionally profound for multiples, probably because they are so uncommon. One support group particularly useful in the unique situation of losing a multiple is Twinless Twins (www.twinlesstwins.org).

Being twins is a huge part of who my boys are, if for no other reason than that everywhere we go, people make such a fuss over them. It wasn't until they started school and began having contact with lots of other kids that they realized just how special they are. So, from the beginning, I really felt that the loss of their brother was a loss that affected the core of who my boys were: They were triplets. The problem was complicated because they lost their brother shortly after they were born. I didn't know the right way to help them cope with something they wouldn't even be able to understand for years.

When is the right time to tell them about the brother they would never know, I wondered. When is too soon to burden children with the painful reality of death? What if we wait too long, and they feel as if we were hiding something they had a right to know?

For my husband and me, there was only one answer, and though it came out of necessity, I feel comfortable that we did the right thing. We decided not to bury our son for one very practical reason: We planned on moving to California. We couldn't bear the thought of leaving our son's earthly remains in Ohio, where we couldn't personally tend to his memory. Our solution was to have Conrad cremated. We got him a beautiful little urn, and made a place for him on our bookshelf with pictures of his brothers and tiny dragon figurines.

The result is that Conrad has always been a part of Cole and Connor's lives. Before they could understand anything about life or death, or mourn the loss of their brother, they could point to the little green and gold vase and say, "That's Conrad." Kids will absorb only what they're capable of understanding at a given time, and when they want to know more, they need to have learned they can trust that you've been truthful with them.

Lesson #2: Be honest with kids from the very beginning, and let them handle life's profound philosophical problems in their own way.

My boys were five when they suddenly became obsessed with their "trip-i-let brudder." Fortunately, by that time I was in the right frame of mind to deal with the endless barrage of questions. "Why did Conrad die?" "How did we all fit in your belly?" "Was Daddy sad?" "Did I cry?"

I had a box full of their brother's things that we would sit down and go through together. A candle from his memorial service, two little stuffed toys that were in his incubator, a set of three matching teddy-bear print sleepers—two fully-worn, stained, and grown out of, and one that still had the store tags dangling from the sleeve. For a solid couple of months, Connor and Cole loved going through that box and touching everything in it. For them it was like a treasure chest filled with fluffy little blankets, a silver baby spoon, and little blue booties.

For that same couple of months, they dreamed about Conrad, drew pictures of him at school, wished they could play with him, and told every inquisitive stranger that they were actually triplets. After all the time I spent fretting over the "right" way to help my boys deal with the loss of their brother, it turned out that there was very little for me to do besides be there for them. I had worried that their brother wouldn't be an important enough part of their lives or that I would impose an unnecessary sorrow on them too soon. But when they were ready, they accepted their brother wholly, mourned his loss in the most beautiful way I could have imagined, and put his memory back on the shelf for safe-keeping.

Lesson # 3: It's okay to worry, that's what parents do.

But when the time comes, sometimes the best action is to take a step back and let your kids lead the way.

I have never believed that bad things happen for a reason. But I wholeheartedly believe we can choose to learn from every experience, and we can choose to come out of every trial a better person than we were before. After everything that my boys have taught me, I think that's the lesson I want to impart: Life is beautiful, death is painful, and every experience can make you stronger or weaker, but the choice is yours to make. ❤️

Heather Siladi lives in Blue Ash, Ohio. She is a freelance writer and mom of 2-year-old sons.

Traveling with twins—the ultimate adventure

by Jim Schutz



The view from Jim and Hannah's rental house in Kilauea, Kauai.

The babies are wailing in unison. Hunger, wet diaper, fatigue? Hard to say which. I start preparing a bottle; the twins suddenly fall silent. My wife Hannah Ballard is singing Natalie Merchant's 'These Are Days.'

To this day, that song is the universal remedy to soothe our 10-month-old twins. I wouldn't believe it, either, if I hadn't seen it work a hundred times. They quiet at the first words, "These are days you'll remember."

Pre-twins, we were what you'd call peripatetic. We lived to travel. We'd clambered up Mayan pyramids in the Yucatán and safaried in Namibia. I remember thinking "those were the days" as I blearily got up at 2:00 a.m. to change a diaper on a writhing baby in the dark. At one of those moments I started planning a trip to Kauai with our girl/boy twins, Lindy and Griff.

We ultimately learned we could travel like we used to, climbing mountains and exploring back streets, but that it would be on the babies' terms.

On our first family vacation—emphasis on *family*, please—we traveled with two other couples, their newborns and several young kids. With five total children, we were just one Brady short of a bunch.

Our flight from San Francisco to Kauai

left us a bit battered. Occupying each baby during the long flight was like holding in your arms a miniature Olympic gymnast going through a floor routine. Griff performs a tucked double-double, full-in, 2½ punch layout front, with a triple twist.

Lindy tumbles an Arabian double-front and a whip-triple twist into a double pike and...sticks the landing!

We eventually learned the secret was to keep changing their environment every 45 seconds or so for the entire five-hour flight. We alternated among books, bottles, snacks and toys. Gone were the days when we could nap on an airplane. The in-flight movie beckoned but I had no time to respond. Forget about reading your favorite novel. "Headphones, sir?" Absolutely, the babies love to suck on them.

We all met up at our rented four-bedroom house in Kilauea, a former plantation town famous for its elegant lighthouse built in 1913 at the northernmost point of the Hawaiian Islands. With two kitchens, three decks, and two large living rooms, home base was palatial. From there, we planned day trips to sights around the island.

After reading up on kid-friendly areas, the whole group caravanned to Lydgate Beach, which features playgrounds and shallow swimming areas in boulder-enclosed ponds. All five keikis (Hawaiian for kids) loved the calm, clear water and darting fish.

We discovered the sheer amount of baggage we needed to pull off a beach adventure with infant twins. A few years back, Hannah and I traversed Thailand

TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH INFANT TWINS

- If traveling with another family(ies), find out if your kids have similar nap schedules. If not, it will be difficult to do things as a group. Get 'em in synch!
- Always bring the double stroller into restaurants. Some restaurants have no high chairs or dangerous ones. A big flat chair with nothing to hold babies in place means they will be joining the Cheerios on the floor in no time.
- Rent equipment at your destination point to avoid the need for sherpas. We rented Pack N' Plays, ExerSaucers, bouncy seats, baby backpacks, and gates—delivery to our rented house was \$15 from Ready Rentals (800) 599-8008. www.readyrentals.com
- Remember to take the checkbook. We thought we'd save a fortune not dining out every night as we'd done in the past while traveling. But home cooking for almost a dozen brought a four-digit grocery bill.
- If kids are under 1-year-old and 20 pounds, cut a section from a foam pool noodle to use under car seats to properly recline the seat in a rental car.
- If possible, purchase one extra seat on the plane so that you will not have the babies on your laps the entire time. The extra seat will hold the car seat you carry aboard. This allows a rotation of twins into the car seat, easier naps, and a short break from wrestling gymnasts.



Lindy, (left) and Griff are happy cherubs in their rented baby backpacks, as Hannah shares the water bottle.

for two weeks carrying a single day-pack each. Now, two hours at a beach in Kauai required towels, mats, a sun tent, diaper bag, toy bag, beach bag, and food bag with cold pack for lunch.

Even as the babies laughed and splashed, I kept having an uneasy feeling I hadn't encountered in past travels. I had been noticing it since we arrived in Kauai: frequent uninvited visits from fear, dressed darkly in its pith helmet and Kevlar vest. Being responsible for infant twins added a whole new element to travel—the goal was still fun, but safety first!

In fact, I was now always on the lookout for hazards and how to avoid them. The first day in Kauai was also the day the twins starting walking while holding onto furniture. No longer in our baby-proofed home, their first cruise was around a glass coffee table on hardwood floors near a steep staircase.

Hazards abounded inside and out. Can a baby be electrocuted by putting a hand



Hannah and Jim on the move with Griff (left) and Lindy in their rented sling carriers.

inside a VCR? Which babies are in their biting stage? Is the skin of a paper bark tree poisonous when sucked on for an hour undiscovered?

With the twins, my driving technique changed from *'The Fast and the Furious'* to *'Driving Miss Daisy.'* Most traffic in Kauai takes the main road travelling the perimeter of the island. That road is hectic, with cars darting on and off constantly. I enjoyed the "Watch for Falling Rocks" signs. I had never thought about those in the past. Should I go faster? Slow down? Drive with head out the window looking up and alternating gas and brake to dupe any rocks with nefarious plans?

Fear of harm to the babies infused my being. I used to be the first to leap off the cliff into the sea below, but I now found myself wearing a life vest while kayaking the sleepy Hanalei River, and slathering on sunscreen.

Luckily, the lush scenery and the peaceful rhythm of the paddles on the water put me in my first relaxed state in months. But not for long. The tsunami warning siren blasted—a routine test—and I anxiously tried to convince the group to turn back, just in case.

Each day we set out on new adventures, some more ambitious than others. It felt like an Everest expedition when several of us donned baby backpacks and hiked several miles of the steep Kalalau Trail from Ke'e Beach. We visited a local festival complete with hula dancers, water slides and a parade.

Mostly we all just spent time in the house playing with the keikis. We had

graduated from kids to parents of kids. The conversation made it clear. "I'm bummed that Costco isn't selling Pampers anymore." "Has anyone seen Helen's sippy cup?" "We love our new mini-van."

The mass of drooling, diapered babies of mass destruction kept the house fairly churning with chaos until late at night. I was frequently mired in the process of determining which baby was most in need at which moment: the one precariously balancing on a lightweight stool about to flip over? Or the one on the floor opening a dirty diaper remaining from the morning? Life's choices.

Hannah and I tried once to paint the town after the twins went to bed for the night—our friends staying behind to watch over them. The babies had been rousing us before dawn each morning and our goal was to stay awake for a 9:00 p.m. reggae show. Exhausted, we half-heartedly sipped blue drinks and watched the sound check around 8:30 p.m. Minutes later, we watched as members of the band joined hands in the parking lot for a pre-show ceremony as we walked to our car, done for the night.

Returning to the sanctuary of our welcoming house and sleeping babies, we joined our friends on the deck for a nightcap while melting into the lounge chairs. In those rare reflective moments, I bathed in the simple joys of fatherhood and recognized that all would be well; there was nothing to fear.

We are now a family of travelers. Kauai was dazzling, a new adventure. We all made it through entirely unscathed. Not rested, but unscathed.

Recently, Hannah sang *'These Are Days'* on stage with her cousin's rock band in San Francisco. The song has become a mantra for our new lives. It summarizes what we feel as new parents: "And as you feel it, You'll know it's true, That you are blessed and lucky, It's true that you are touched by something, That will grow and bloom in you." ♥

Jim Schutz is a freelance writer from the San Francisco Bay area. His day job is Assistant City Manager for Pinole, Calif. Lindy and Griff were born two minutes apart on October 6, 2004.



Listening to the babies: Hospitals create vastly improved environments for preemies

By Amy E. Tracy

I met Stacey Heath at Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, Colo., by the bedside of her 4-week-old preemie twins, Owen and Ellery. Stacey was tiny herself and stood on a stool to reach inside the metal crib where her babies lay side by side.

While Stacey started telling me her twins' birth story, she expertly changed Owen's diaper, wrapped him securely in a blanket, pulled another light blanket over the crib's railing to dim the ceiling lights shining on Owen, and gently patted his little bottom until his kitten-like cries stopped.

Stacey wasn't bothered by the long oxygen tubing stretched between Owen's nose and a nearby oxygen tank, or by the feeding tube inserted in his belly. "I was holding both of them and changing their diapers within the first days of their birth," Heath says.

I had to remind myself that this was the same neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) where my son, born 12 weeks early, spent his first four months of life more than 14 years ago. I recognized some of the nurses from that long-ago time and some recognized me. But the NICU itself, the nursing care, and the parents' involvement with their babies were very different from the early 1990s when incubators were lined up against the wall and parents had to comply with strict visiting hours.

These changes can be attributed to a process called developmental care that is now common practice in most NICUs across the country. Efforts vary from hospital to hospital but the concept encompasses a broad variety of interventions designed to minimize the stress in the NICU. Developmental care includes such practices as dimming bright lights and reducing jarring noises, recognizing when babies need comforting and pain relief, and providing physical boundaries for preemies similar to what they have experienced while in the womb.

Developmental care in NICUs minimizes babies' stress levels by timing medical procedures and evaluations, and keeping the staff and parents informed of each baby's likes and dislikes. All family members in each baby's care. Parents are encouraged to hold their babies skin-to-skin, leave audiotapes of their voices and leave comforting familiar-smelling items of clothing.

"Developmental care is considered a new idea, but has been around since the mid-1980s," says Laura Robison, a neonatal nurse and newborn developmental specialist at Aurora Sinai Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisc. As medicine and technology advanced, and babies were born earlier and tinier, experts began studying the impact of hospital environments on premature babies.

The price of success

When a baby is born preterm (some as early as 23 or 24 weeks' gestation), the infant is unprepared for the outside world. "Within the womb, the baby's brain is developing rapidly," Robison says. "Outside the womb, a preemie newborn's brain continues to develop at the same rate, but in a totally different environment."

Where the fetus once heard muffled sounds of the mother's voice, the newborn now hears jolting sounds from medical machinery, often-loud voices of hospital staff and visitors, even the nurse's radio. In the womb, fetuses have no visual experience, but in the NICU infants are exposed to blinding fluorescent lighting and myriad faces.

The soft watery surroundings of the womb (and comfort of the other twin in close quarters) is replaced by the hard flat surface of a cool plastic bed and no warmth of a nearby sibling. The baby

"Research shows about 20% to 40% of preterm babies weighing 3.5 pounds or less at birth display behavioral problems later in life..."

who was on no schedule in utero is thrust into a dizzying routine of medical procedures, diaper changes, feedings, weigh-ins, and visitors, with confusing noise accompanying every activity.

"All these experiences have an impact on the baby's brain," Robison says. In fact, studies show most preemies do not fare as well as their full-term peers. The smallest and sickest preemie newborns have the most problems physically, emotionally and mentally.

Research shows about 20% to 40% of preterm babies weighing 3.5 pounds or less at birth display behavioral problems later in life, and 30% to 40% of them have documented difficulties in school.

Kim Rowley, of Pierce, Neb., says her twins born in January, 1994, are showing some effects of being born too soon. Mallory was hospitalized for six months and Macy for over eight months. Both weighed just over 2 pounds at birth. "Surprisingly, they are pretty healthy, but small for their age. Both are developmentally delayed and in special education and speech therapy," Rowley says.

Experts, like Robison, hope that with increased focus on making

Small talk

Owen and Ellery Heath were but a few weeks old, yet they could tell their mom Stacey when they needed some quiet, were hungry, wanted to sleep, and when something irritated them.

"Ellery even tells me when the lights are too bright, by putting her arm over her eyes," Heath says.

"All babies communicate through their behaviors—how they move their bodies and change their arousal levels, and through their breathing and skin color," says Joy Browne, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, Denver.

"Many preemies aren't developmentally ready to handle a lot of sensory input at once, and their reactions are often exaggerated because they're overwhelmed," Dr. Browne says.

Learning and responding to your twins'

individual behaviors will enhance your parenting skills and deepen your parent-child bond. Here's how to know what your babies are saying:

"I need a time-out!"

The hospital environment with its loud noises, bright lights, and frequent touches can be highly stressful for your tiny babies. Similarly, taking your pre-term discharged babies home where smells, sights and sounds are unfamiliar, can wreak havoc physically, mentally and emotionally.

Your baby wants a break if she:

- cries or is fussy
- looks away or closes her eyes
- turns pale
- holds hands up as if to say "stop"
- spreads fingers apart
- salutes with one hand
- appears panicked
- has a bowel movement (or strains as if she needs to)
- gags or spits up.

"Respond as soon as your baby is aroused," Dr. Browne says. Encourage your baby to suck on her hand, your fingers, or a pacifier. Then snuggle her in a blanket, and remove her from—or eliminate—the cause of the stress.

"Let's play!"

Socializing is important to your twins' development, but how will you know when they are ready to interact?

Your baby is probably enjoying playful activity when he:

- grasps your finger or an object
- holds his hands together
- looks content
- holds one foot on top of or next to the other
- stays put without squirming.

Interactions will be brief at first, but as your babies grow, handling the world won't be so difficult, and soon you'll all be enjoying longer and more satisfying play sessions.

—AET

More multiples in NICUs

Many more twins, triplets, and higher-order multiples are being conceived and born, thanks to fertility-enhancing drugs, advances in reproductive medicine, and many women waiting until later in life to have babies.

When multiple babies share the womb, there is an increased likelihood that they will arrive ahead of schedule. This has led to NICUs around the world experiencing a large number of premature, multiple-birth admissions. Between 1980 and 1997, pregnancies resulting in multiple births increased by 52%.

Today, the twin birth rate continues to climb, although at a slower rate than in previous years. The extremely rapid growth in triplet and higher-order-multiple births that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s has also tapered off a bit, although the number of triplet births and higher-order-multiple births is still increasing.

the NICU less harsh and more womb-like, and by teaching hospital staff and parents how to be more in tune with each individual baby's needs, these percentages will go down.

A concept for care

One of the oldest and most studied organized approaches to developmental care is the Newborn Individualized Developmental Care and Assessment Program (NIDCAP), developed in 1985 by Heidelise Als, a developmental psychologist at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital in Boston. Als teaches that infants are capable of communicating through their behaviors (see "Small Talk", on page 29). By learning to read an individual baby's behaviors and responding appropriately, caregivers can make a difference in the infant's outcome, Als and others like her are convinced.

This theory was tested by Als and her team in 2003. Three different NICUs provided organized care based on the needs of babies and their parents (not doctors and staff). The babies (and their parents) thrived. Preemies transitioned more quickly from tube feedings to oral feedings, had fewer infections, and grew faster. Invariably, they were discharged earlier. Family members were more

"We need nurseries to redefine what constitutes good care. Treating parents as visitors is not good care. We need to treat parents as primary caregivers."

comfortable with caregiving and displayed less stress.

Als lead a second study in 2004, reported in the *Journal Pediatrics*, which documented that brain function in preterm infants improved when individualized developmental care was provided. Through conference presentations and journal articles, Als's methods have reached NICUs across the country, and there are now nine NIDCAP training centers in the U.S. offering extensive training in infant assessment and developmental care procedures.

Memorial Hospital's developmental care program in Colorado Springs is based on NIDCAP methods (a NIDCAP-certified nurse started the program). Vanessa Howell, a neonatal nurse for more than 20 years, says a developmental care committee with six nurses and six rehabilitation professionals (physical and occupational therapists) ensure that developmental care principles are being followed.

"To get nurses and other staff to practice developmental care at the bedside, you have to get them to buy into it," Howell says. "There has to be an internal change in the nursery."

For some caregivers, changing old ways is difficult, as Kori Kramer, of Torrence, Calif., a new mother of preemie twins discovered. Her babies were born 14 weeks early (Cayden at 2 pounds, and Bryden at 1 lb. 11 oz.) and have been hospitalized for almost four months.

"Sometimes I don't want to go to the hospital to see them because I feel so uncomfortable. I don't feel like a mom there," Kramer says. Just recently, she held both boys together for the first time in over three months. "The nurses tell me when I can and can't feed them, change them, and touch them. I want to co-bed them, but they won't let me," she says.

Robison, a certified NIDCAP trainer who has provided training to over 20 NICUs, says developmental care will vary among nurseries until a standard of care is developed. "My feeling is that the system has to change. We need nurseries to redefine what constitutes good care. Treating parents as visitors is not good care. We need to treat parents as primary caregivers."

Als's developmental care model is based on change—changes in caregivers' attitudes and in traditional ways of providing care. While many NICUs, like Memorial Hospital's, have incorporated Als's ideas—to the delight of parents like Stacey Heath—some NICUs are slow to respond. Some continue to provide care based on the clock and use audible alarms and bright lights.

"When we provide care, it must be when the infant says he is ready," Robison insists, echoing Als. "We need to listen to the babies." ♥

Amy E. Tracy is the author of *Your Premature Baby and Child: Helpful Answers and Advice for Parents*. She lives in Colorado and has twin sons, Daniel and Steven.

Resources:

NIDCAP Federation International
www.nidcap.org
408-978-6776

Twin Advice

By Donna Scrima-Black



photosbynelsch.com

As an adult, I consider myself very lucky to have an identical twin sister. Now that we both have our own children, we often talk about the wonderful childhood memories we share—along with a few of the twin-related struggles we wish could be erased. It would be amazing if we could simply press the rewind button on a magical remote control and re-record some past events.

Yet, the reality is that we all have some life lessons to uncover, and that includes twins. In fact, it has taken my twin and me years to learn and then to convey one message: Even though we are a fabulous duo, we are also amazing individuals who must only fulfill the expectations we have for ourselves. I have also become my sister's number-one fan, encouraging her acting and singing pursuits while she supports my many writing endeavors.

I know—being the twin that I am—I should think twice before giving any advice. Yet if parents of twins benefit by having as

much information and guidance as they can muster, who better to share with them unique insights than me, a twin?

Each twin—like every child—needs to feel that she is a special individual. Many times my sister and I were referred to as “the twins,” by well-meaning people in our lives, instead of by our separate names. After a while, we began to feel like one entity, as if we were a pair of shoes, barely distinguishable (except one of us was the left, and the other, the right.) We gently reminded everyone what our names were and responded once we were called by them. Even if twins look similar and have shared interests, it's vital to nurture each twin's persona—her strengths, aspirations and talents.

The key to mastering this philosophy is to keep the doors—double doors—of communication open. Parents should schedule alone-time or “special” time for doing an activity of each twin's choice—even if it's just to have a conversation. Then when situations arise that twins have trouble han-

dling, they're more likely to feel comfortable discussing them with adults, parents especially.

Validate each twin's feelings, even if you don't understand them. After all, it's difficult for singletons to understand what it's like to live as a twin. Having family discussions with all children is a key ingredient in many successful families. Twins, in particular, may need to discuss unique issues such as whether or not they want to dress alike. This is a topic so many parents of twins wonder about; in fact, the ones whom I've met have always asked me about it. The answer, to me, is to ask the twins about their feelings once they are old enough. Some toddlers know at an early age what their preferences are. They may even want to dress alike at times and differently at others. This can change as they grow.

For example, my twin and I loved dressing alike as toddlers all the way through sixth grade. Then, when our family moved from the Bronx to the suburbs, we changed

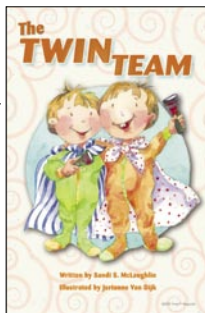
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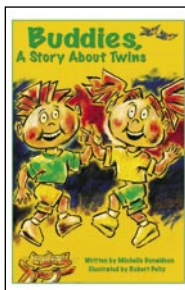
Grandpa's Twins

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Buddies

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our minds. Starting at a new school was difficult enough without peers saying we looked like “The Bobsey Twins.” Students and teachers had been comparing us so much we were compelled to express our individuality. One way of doing this was through our attire.

For the first time, we purchased single clothing items and the doubles that we already had in our closets were worn on different days by each of us. We told our parents about this and asked them to encourage our relatives, who bought us gifts, to honor this request as well.

Adults can help prepare twins and family members for situations they encounter—and model possible responses. I know for my sister and me this would have been extremely helpful in dealing with the insensitive comparisons made—and the ridiculous questions onlookers often ask.

Additionally, our younger sister, who felt “left out” because nobody ever made a “big deal” about her, would also have benefited from these discussions. My twin and I often explained to our younger sister that we didn’t like the constant attention we received—however positive people might have intended it to be—because it often led to onlookers asking or commenting which of us was “nicer,” “prettier,” or “smarter.”

Sly sarcasm, devilish grins

Until we learned how to respond, we usually remained silent, often feeling badly for the twin relegated to second place. As we grew, we learned appropriate responses to these unfair critiques. We used light sarcasm and laughter as powerful tools. When asked which of us was prettier, I might say, “Oh, my sister, of course. She’s gorgeous and I look just like her.”

Or, to the question: “Which one of you is nicer?” I have responded, “Neither of us; we’re both double trouble.” A big grin usually sealed the response nicely.

Each set of twins is a one-of-a-kind partnership. No two sets of kids are really alike. People often generalize about twins because they know one set and think everybody else is the same, but it’s just not true.

Even if twins look similar and have shared interests, it’s vital to nurture each twin’s persona—her strengths, aspirations and talents.

Decisions about children, including twins, are specific to every family’s situation. When parents of twins ask me questions about whether or not their twins should be placed in the same class, or be allowed to wear a ring or pierced earrings to differentiate one from the other, the best answer I can give them is that “It’s a personal choice,” based on the circumstances unique to their twins’ relationship.

I always like to assure parents that if they make mistakes—like all parents do—they can make adjustments later and move forward. For example, twins in one of my children’s classes were separated during first grade at the school’s recommendation. For second grade, however, the twins’ parents, based on feedback from their kids, requested that the school place them in the same second grade class.

Although my twin sister lives in a different state, I share an indescribable bond with her. When our children—her three girls and my two boys—are together, it’s as if we are one family. It was like this from the moment our children met. As adults, we remain similar in the ways we dress and our food preferences. We often buy each other identical items, and our families spend holidays and summer vacations together.

Now when we get together, we relish onlookers’ attention and hope one day to do commercials or pursue other twin-related endeavors. We may use the same pitch we used when pursuing our babysitting careers at age 12: “Two for the price of one.” ♡



William and Matthew, 9 months wearing DOC® Bands.

By Susan Carney

Our son Jacob was diagnosed with moderate plagiocephaly when he was 4-months-old. At a routine check-up, his pediatrician noticed a flattened spot on the back of the right side of Jacob's head. She told us it would probably round out over time as his head grew and he spent less time on his back, and encouraged us to try to reposition him on the other side as much as possible.

When we got home, I went online to gather as much information about plagiocephaly as I could. I found out that the incidence of plagiocephaly has increased dramatically since the initiation of the national back-to-sleep campaign designed to lower the risk of SIDS deaths. Yet many parents have never even heard of plagiocephaly.

When I found out I was pregnant with my twins, I read everything I could get my hands on about preparing for both my pregnancy and life with twin babies. I didn't remember reading one word about the risks of plagiocephaly! I was surprised to learn that Jacob was at higher risk for plagiocephaly because he is a twin. This is because the more restrictive uterine environment in a multiple pregnancy can put additional pressure on a baby's soft skull.

“In the case of a child with plagiocephaly, the head takes on a parallelogram shape due to a flattened spot on one side of the back of the head as well as a ‘bussing’ or protrusion on the forehead...”

Jacob's prematurity also increased his risk. When he was born at 29 weeks, his skull was extremely soft and very susceptible to molding from external pressure. Though the NICU nurses were great about rotating his head on a regular basis, he had 11 extra weeks lying in bed that should have been spent freely floating in my amniotic fluid. Additionally, since it would be awhile before Jacob had the neck strength to lift his head, he couldn't tolerate much tummy time.

In the case of a child with plagiocephaly, the head takes on a parallelogram shape due to a flattened spot on one side of the back of the head as well as a “bussing” or protrusion on the forehead of that side. (Scaphocephaly is a related condition that results in a disproportionately long and narrow skull, and is more common in premature babies. Brachycephaly is diagnosed in babies who have disproportionately wider and shorter heads, usually with uniform flattening across the back of the head.)

Untreated, these conditions and the resulting facial asymmetry can lead to other medical problems later in life, including TMJ, migraines, ear infections, and vision problems. Self-esteem can also be affected by a child's having an irregular head shape.

All of these conditions can be the result of positional issues, which can be treated through the use of repositioning or helmet therapy. However, a distorted head shape may be symptomatic of a more serious medical condition called craniosynostosis, which occurs when there is a premature fusion of the sutures of the skull. This distorts the growth of the skull and can increase cranial pressure. Craniosynostosis requires surgical correction.

I also found out (after the fact) that excessive time spent in car seats, bouncers, and swings can increase the pressure on a baby's head. Having that knowledge ahead of time probably wouldn't have mattered much anyway. I don't know how one could care for two babies at the same time without using these items!

In Jake's case, we were forced to have him sleep in a swing for the first few weeks of his life at home because his reflux was so severe he couldn't tolerate lying flat. He also spent a lot of time in a bouncer during the day—his twin sister, Megan, suffered from severe colic, and had to be rocked and held for long stretches of time. Jake was such a complacent and happy baby; he seemed quite satisfied playing in his bouncy seat as long as he needed to. I was at my wit's end during that period of my twins' lives, and I'll readily admit, I didn't object to having him happily residing in his bouncy seat.



Megan (left) and Jacob (right) Carney, 10 months.

“ Jake has had his helmet for almost two weeks now. He adjusted to it beautifully and doesn't seem to mind it at all. The orthotist warned us when he first put it on Jake that 'this would be the hardest part.' Jake just looked up at him and grinned! He is a pretty easygoing guy. He wears the helmet about 23 hours a day, taking short breaks for baths and to 'air out his head.' Makes it a little harder to snuggle with Jake. We see the orthotist every two weeks to check the fit and make adjustments, and monitor head shape changes. We hope Jake only needs this for a couple of months.

A condition called torticollis can be another contributing factor to plagiocephaly. This is a shortening or tightening of one of the neck muscles that can cause a baby to lean to one side or prefer turning the head towards one side. We were stunned to look back at pictures of Jacob during the first few months of his life and see that he almost exclusively turned to the right. How could we not have noticed this? His pediatrician put Jake through some range-of-motion exercises to see if there was, indeed, some tightening, and referred us to a physical therapist to work on stretching his neck muscles.

We knew that most cases of plagiocephaly resolve satisfactorily with repositioning. We also knew that because a baby's skull gradually hardens throughout the first year, we had only a limited window of opportunity in which to effect change in Jake's head shape. I had heard stories of children whose parents were assured the problem would correct itself over time, and by the time they realized their child's head wasn't getting any better, it was too late for helmeting therapy to be effective. We didn't want that to happen to Jake.

Because helmet therapy is most effective when started when

Dynamic Orthotic Cranioplasty is used as a non-surgical alternative for correcting misshapen heads in infants. The band applies mild pressure to an infant's head and redirects growth and is most effective in the first twelve months. The DOC® Band is the first device to receive approval from the FDA for the treatment of plagiocephaly.

—Source: www.cranialtech.com

babies are between 4- and 7-months-old, we needed to make a decision quickly. We decided to try repositioning for a couple of months first. We were fanatics about repositioning Jacob towards the left side. We also switched the side on which we fed and changed him. As the physical therapist suggested, we rolled up cloth diapers and placed them strategically in his car seat to keep him properly aligned.

While he was supervised, we tucked small stuffed animals under the right side of his head when he was in his bouncy or swing (even on his play mat!) to keep pressure off the right side of his head. We always placed toys and other things he liked to look at (including his sister) on his left. I found myself barking at people who were helping us, "Turn his head to the left!" We even went into his room several times a night to turn his head.

All of these measures required a lot of work, and Jake was not always happy about it. But over the next two months, we saw definite improvement in the shape of his head.

As Jake became more mobile and began rolling over and lifting his head, repositioning was less effective. Let's face it, we could reposition him all we wanted, and he would just change position on his own. His head shape improved dramatically, but the asymmetry was still noticeable. We made the difficult decision to pursue helmet therapy, and we hope this will help us see continued progress.

While back-sleeping is the safest for babies, parents need to be aware of the risk of plagiocephaly and remain vigilant about rotating their baby's head so that external pressure is evenly distributed. Limit the use of carseats and swings when you can, and check your child's head periodically for any distortions. Seek immediate direction from your child's pediatrician if you notice any problems. ♡

Sue and Drew Craney live in Gilbertsville, Penn. with their 10-month-old twins, Jacob and Megan.

Resources

www.cranialtech.com
www.plagiocephaly.org
www.headsupbaby.com
www.cappskids.org
www.orthomerica.com

Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins

Indivisible by Two by Nancy Segal, Ph.D., is a feast of stories about monozygotic (identical) twins. It demonstrates the variety of unusual experiences that sometimes come with twinship. Author Nancy Segal is a psychologist and professor with many years of twin research to her credit, first at the University of Minnesota where she met and studied adult twins who had been reared apart.

Since 1991, Segal has directed twin research at California State University, Fullerton. In her earlier book, *Entwined Lives*, (Dutton, 1999) Segal reviewed the facts about twin research. Now, in a switch from the conventional approach to twin research, she takes us behind the statistics for a look at the life experiences of some extraordinary multiples. Her introduction “For the lucky few who are indivisible by 2 or 3 or 4...” gives readers a clue that, for Segal’s clinical interest in the situations she reports, she understands and appreciates the special connections with which multiples are blessed. After all, she is herself a twin.

Each of the 12 chapters contains the story of a remarkable twin situation. The personal stories of these multiples offer a depth of understanding and appreciation of the variety of benefits and challenges that are part of life for multiples. Segal does a thorough job of examining the implications of each situation for science and human understanding.

Section one introduces three pairs of twins who were separated at birth. One pair was separated as a consequence of adoption; another as a consequence of mistakes made by the foster care system. The third pair have often been described in articles about twins who were reared apart. They are Oskar, raised by his mother and grandmother as a Catholic in Nazi Germany and Jack, raised Jewish

by his father in Trinidad.

Segal digs beyond the facts of each case to the human dimension. We learn the mixtures of joy, sorrow, confusion and anger that separated twins experience once the euphoria of their first reunions wears off. There is an undercurrent of mixed emotions that accompanies amazement and excitement when two people who have grown up separately are introduced and prove to be quite alike. They are real people who have to adjust to an earthquake of change for reasons no one born single will ever experience.

Since 1991, Segal has directed twin research at California State University, Fullerton. In her earlier book, *Entwined Lives*, (Dutton, 1999) Segal reviewed the facts about twin research.

Section two describes remarkable differences in three sets of monozygotic (identical) multiples and how they cope. One pair suffers from differing degrees of selective mutism; two of a set of identical triplets are heterosexual and one is homosexual; and in the third pair, who were born females, one is a transsexual, who has always believed herself a male.

Along with Segal, we wonder how it is possible for monozygotic babies who inherit the very same DNA and have lived in the same family throughout childhood to grow up so differently? There are no clear answers. Segal discusses the possibility that such differences may be the result of differing amounts of exposure to hormones by the developing fetuses. Even though she could not identify any major differences in experience in the lives of these particular

multiples, she thinks it is possible different social experiences in early childhood could help magnify underlying differences. So far the real answers have eluded research.

The third section of the book tells the stories of monozygotic twin pairs living through extraordinary circumstances. Stepha and Annetta are Holocaust survivors. Because they were twins, they were selected to be part of Josef Mengele’s demonic experiments in Nazi Germany during the 1940s. They were not spared the horrors of the concentration camps, but their twinship saved their lives. Their survival story is a poignant demonstration of the power of the twin bond.

In another illustration of that bond, we meet Linda Conway, who lost her twin, Benda McGee, in the attack on New York City’s Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. The difficulties of Linda’s struggles to redefine herself and go on living after Brenda’s death paint a graphic picture of the devastation of twin loss.

Next we meet Lilly and Gillian, pre-schoolers from China who, in a twist of fate, were adopted as infants by two different U.S. families. Their families keep the girls in touch with each other, but the girls are growing up separated. Segal marvels along with their parents at the girls’ physical and emotional similarities. Their home lives are very different. Gillian has two older siblings. Lilly has none. Nevertheless, they are the same height and weight, enjoy the limelight, and are completely at home in each other’s company when they get together.

The book’s final section is aptly named “Everyday Wonders.” In it we glimpse what “normal” life is for multiples with an extraordinary biological underpinning. There are Marcy and infertile Tracy for whom Marcy has twice given birth for her sister using Tracy’s husband’s sperm. There are Craig and Mark, who are monozygotic

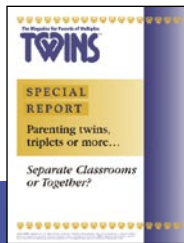
males married to monozygotic females, Diane and Darlene.

Finally, there are the "Quad Brothers", 5-year-olds Nicky, Benny, Matthew and Michael, two sets of monozygotic males who can be recombined into dizygotic (fraternal) pairs. These boys are a researcher's dream. It is extraordinary to find both monozygotic and dizygotic twins the same age and gender, growing up in the same family. Segal is intrigued by the stronger affinity the monozygotic twin boys have for each other than for their dizygotic twin brothers. Each of the monozygotic twin boys prefers the company of his identical twin over either twin in the "other set." This is yet another proof of the power of genetic influence in the bond of monozygotic pairs. Segal plans to continue studying these quads in future years.

In a final affirmation of the benefits of twinship, Segal shares her thoughts about the controversies surrounding the prospect of human cloning. Though human cloning is unlikely to occur anytime soon, if at all, according to Segal, the positive aspects of monozygotic twins' lives—people who are, in fact, living clones—ought to reassure skeptics that cloned individuals would not be dysfunctional carbon copies, as some fear, but would be whole individuals in their own right. ♡

Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins by Nancy Segal, Ph.D., Harvard University Press, 2005, 280 pgs. (available at the TWINS Bookshelf, www.TwinsMagazine.com)

Patricia M. Malmstrom, M.A., is director of Twin Services Consulting, www.twinservices.org, and co-author of *The Art of Parenting Twins*, (Ballantine, NY, 1999). You may e-mail her at twinservices@juno.com.



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Preschool and Kindergarten – A Guide For Parents of Twins —Preschool and kindergarten are exciting times in the lives of young multiple children, and for their parents, too. From gathering supplies for school, to coaxing nervous twins out of the car on their very first day, to supporting the growth of children as they learn and increase their knowledge, this collection of articles by parenting experts can help all parents of school-age twins. Read how twins learn in school and how parents can help teachers and other students identify each twin. *36 pages.*

Getting Ready: When You're Expecting Twins — NEW! This report covers everything from understanding twin zygosity to fostering a healthy pregnancy to a primer on the NICU to synchronizing schedules and hiring a nanny or parttime helper. This report offers solid advice and knowledgeable information that new parents of multiple children absolutely need to know. The report also provides help for everything from bed rest, and expecting the unexpected, to critical concerns for preemie babies to the stress a family may experience when twins arrive. *72 pages.*

Did Picasso Love Blue This Much?

We thought it was just a phase, but it seemed to go on and on. Around the time Julian turned 2½, he developed a burning passion for the color blue. At first we thought we must have inadvertently emphasized blue's importance over, say, pink or purple. This wasn't a conscious emphasis. If anything, we tried not to play into those gender stereotypes.

The fondness began with clothing and quickly spread to food, beverages and toys. When Julian discovered his father's Cool Blue Raspberry Gatorade, he decided he wanted to drink "blue juice" with every meal. In an attempt to encourage him to drink milk again, Alex told him he couldn't have blue juice with dinner because the bottle wasn't open. During that weekend's shopping trip, Julian asked Alex if we could buy blue juice that opens.

During Julian's recovery from hernia surgery, his first requests after the anesthesia wore off were blue juice, blue crackers and blue socks. Unless we hid his blue snow pants, he begged to wear them even during humid summer days. If all his blue socks were in the laundry, he threw screaming fits and asked if he could wear dirty, blue socks instead of clean, white ones. One day in his preschool parking lot, Julian asked if we could buy the blue car parked next to ours.

During the peak of this phase, Julian told people that all of his beloved objects were blue, even stuffed animals that were black and white. He loved his cow and doggie best, so they were his blue people. Nobody dared to point out that they were neither blue, nor were they people. As parents, we have to choose our battles.

In our efforts to appease Julian's need to see the world through blue-tinted glasses but also help him accept the world's palette, Alex came up with a brilliant solution. If Julian insisted that something were blue,



and we wanted to convey to him that it wasn't, we compromised and called the objects in question "honorary blue." This tactic worked well during breakfast when our son, the stickler, refused to eat his Flintstones chewable vitamins unless they were blue.

"Is it blue, daddy?" he'd ask. "Actually, it's green," his daddy said, with the tone a therapist might use to speak to a fragile psychiatric patient, "but how about if we call it honorary blue?"

On long walks and stroller rides, Julian loved to point out cars, flowers, balls and other beloved objects and give them his certificate of approval by declaring them "blue." If the object were particularly magical, he let the word linger on his lovely lips for a long time as he sensually and delightfully described its "buh-LUE" color. During one stroller ride around the neighborhood on a crisp December afternoon, Adrienne was singing the "A, B, C's," song, but Julian

wasn't in the mood for a duet.

"The sky is buh-LUE?" he asked longingly with the same wonder in his voice as if he'd just noticed Haley's Comet or a long-awaited solar eclipse. "Yes, it is," his daddy confirmed. And Julian stared at the sprawling expanse in a peaceful, contented state for the rest of the ride.

For more than a year, Julian's two-dimensional world became dominated by blue. He often rejected colorful crayon and marker assortments and chose to draw and paint his pictures in blue, exclusively. When offered sidewalk chalk, he almost always selected the blue stick.

A friend asked us whether he might be color blind or simply not know his colors yet, but on several occasions he rattled off colors of balloons, stickers and magnetic letters as competently as any game-show contestant. Those were different. Those objects were not special to him because they were divorced from his daily associations. They weren't soft stuffed animals who cuddled with him at bedtime, and they weren't cozy jackets that kept him warm on chilly days. Not until objects left the printed page or bulletin board and became integral parts of his daily routine did they acquire the lofty status and authority of his doggie, cow, favorite turtle neck, triple-roll socks or fleece jacket. That's when they became undeniably, emphatically, and unconditionally buh-LUE.

One night Julian let out a horrifying scream at about 3:00 a.m. Alex reflexively leapt out of bed. When he returned a few minutes later, I asked him what was wrong. "Julian had a nightmare," he said. "His entire wardrobe turned from blue to orange." ♥

Lauren Kafka reflects on the first year with her twins, now 7, from her home in Bethesda, Md.

Double Happiness

Keith and Michelle Parker had been married almost eight years in mid-2003, and were enjoying life together immensely when casual discussions about international adoption crystallized into a plan to begin adoption proceedings in China. They made the decision to seek a Chinese baby on June 7, 2003, the same day their twins were born in China. Call it destiny or fate or just serendipity, but the coincidences were amazing.



Megan and Lily.

After submitting their application to Chinese Children Adoption International (CCAI: www.chinesechildren.org), the Parkers completed mountains of paperwork, and waited. They requested twin girls but were told their chances were miniscule (the twinning rate in China is the lowest in the world). Initially, Michelle and Keith were told to expect to travel to China in December, 2004, nearly 15 months in the future.

They dreamed of "Match Day"—the announcement of what baby or babies have been selected for each set of applicants—with the same nervousness and anticipation well-known to pregnant parents awaiting childbirth.

The call came only 13 months after beginning the paperwork, taking the Parkers 8,300 miles to meet Yu Da Ben and Yu Xiao Ben in Nanchang, Jiangxi, when they were just over a year old.

Lily and Megan were only the 11th set of twins out of 4,900 placements through CCAI during its 12 years facilitating Chinese adoptions.

Match Day was exceeded only by "Gotcha Day!"; a term frequently used during the adoption process to confirm that after all the work, the pain, the waiting, the adoptive parents finally have their babies in their arms.

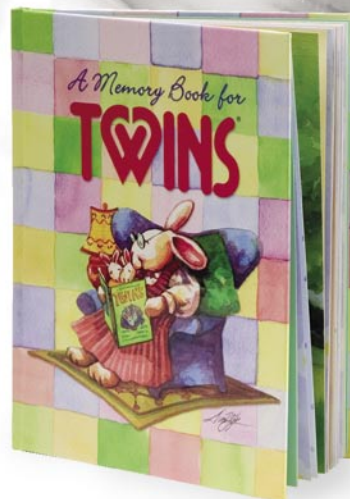
The Parkers flew from Denver to San Francisco and then Hong Kong, exhausted after 26 hours of travel and flying through a typhoon to get their kids. They joined 15 other couples "going through labor" together, learning how to make Chinese formula using a hot pot, among other things.

Yu Da Ben became Lily Austin Da Ben parker, and Yu Xiao Ben became Megan Wetherill Xiao Ben Parker on July 19, 2004. From day one, Lily and Megan ate virtually everything they were shown—eggs, cucumbers, cantaloupe, congee (a soupy rice/water mix), bread and enormous amounts of watermelon, which they adored.

The Chinese were as fascinated with the twins as Michelle and Keith were. Chinese tradition declares it good luck to touch a twin. The Parkers agree.

Lily and Megan, who had been left at the gate of an orphanage in a small paper box shortly after their birth, were healthy babies from the start. They lived with a loving foster family from June 18 until the Parkers took the babies in their arms on July 18, 2004. Lily, whose Chinese name means Big Runner, and Megan, whose Chinese name means Small Runner, are now nearly 3. ♡

Brad and Jake, 3 days old



sample of 2-page spread

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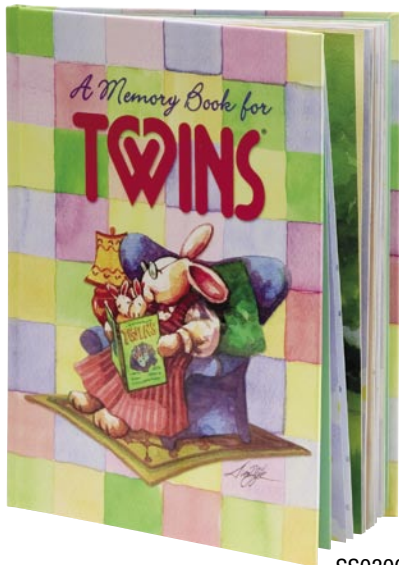
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Special Gifts for Families with Multiples

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TWINS Lifetime Memory Book



SS03003 \$34.95 for a set of 2 books

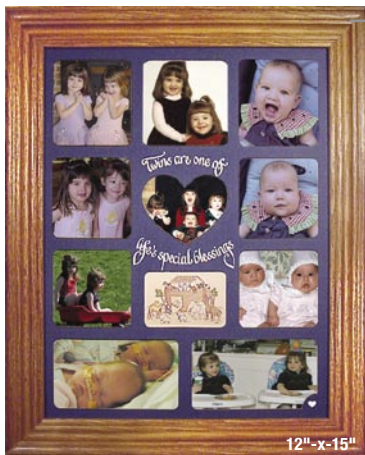
TWINS Exclusive! This remarkable new book captures the special moments in your life and the lives of your twins! Every one of the 56 full-color pages is filled with the gorgeous watercolor illustrations of renowned California artist Jerianne Van Dijk. They await your thoughts, family facts, and photos. Special pages for info from when Mom and Dad were growing up, your babies' wonderful "firsts", and your family trees. You'll love the luscious sherbet colors in this volume. Hard cover, 8.5" x 11" on heavy, durable paper stock. We sell a set of two at a special price so each of your twins will have one.

Dozens more products available at www.TwinsMagazine.com

Growing up Twins Growth Chart

TWINS Exclusive! Created especially for families with twins. Vibrant colors and adorable critters adorn this chart designed to hang on the wall. A unique accent piece for your children's room. Celebrate your children's growth milestones during their early years. Your family will enjoy this lifelong keepsake. Printed in full color and laminated for long-lasting durability. Use a permanent marker to write each child's name in the banners at the top, and then note your darlings' heights at important moments in their young lives. Ribbon hanger and adhesive hook-and-loop tabs included. When your children outgrow the chart, each one gets to keep a brightly enameled customized wooden ruler to use with school projects. 40" H x 12" W

SS03001 \$25.95 each



12"-x-15"



10"-x-12"

Photo Frames

Exclusive to us! Collect your twins' special pictures in these keepsake frames. Designed especially for families with twins. Choose from a 12"x15" frame with 10 openings in the matching mat, or a 10"x12" blue-painted frame with four openings in the matching mat. Both frames are beautifully lettered to say, "Twins are one of life's special blessings." Adorable Noah's Ark two-by-two illustration appears in one opening of each photo frame.

SF90031 12" x 15" \$23.99 each

SF90032 10" x 12" \$19.99 each

"The Twins Room" Door Hanger

NEW! Everything is ducky with this cute framed print to hang on your twins' doorknob. The 3½" x 5", white, framed print comes with a green double satin ribbon to hang it from a doorknob, door or wall. Packaged in a white toile coordinated gift bag.

SS05001 \$13.95 each



Twin Hearts

NEW! Brush away your tears after reading this heartfelt poem by Teri Harrison, a mother of four. Twin Hearts tells of the gift of twinship and the promises and encouragement a mother gives to her children in return. Available with blue, pink or yellow border, with matching ribbon. 11" x 14" matte print comes with a gift envelope to save a special letter for each twin. Also available: SS05003 5" x 7" card for \$3.25. Available in three colors: blue, pink and yellow.



Unframed Art



Gift Cards

Be sure to include your color choice on the order form or when you order by phone.

TWIN HEARTS

Awed to be expecting twins,
A mother's journey now begins
Blessed with heaven's gift of two,
I fell in love with both of you.

As days passed and months moved on,
I prayed for two, born safe and strong.
Thrilled by the promise of the joys to-be,
Like two voices joined in ABC's.
Shared sweet kisses on cheeks and lips,
Two toddlers riding atop two hips.
I promise to see you each as one,
Two connected, yet free lives begun.
Both loved completely, for all they are,
Following their own bright star.

I promise to encourage your treasured bond,
from babies to children and beyond.
Partners, soul mates and best friends,
The love of each of you will depend.

At last I stroke each newborn face,
I knew my heart was touched by grace.
My hands now full-as most will say,
Yet my life never richer than today.

Awed to hold my little ones,
Our lives together have begun.
Blessed with heaven's gift of two,
I forever love the both of you.

SS05002 Unframed Art \$16.99 each

SS05003 Cards \$ 3.25 each

To place an order, call (888) 55-TWINS, go online or use the order form in this issue.

Tiny Fingers and Tiny Toes

Celebrate twins and create a lasting keepsake!

Do-it-yourself kit comes with non-toxic ink pad and an extra verse-and-hand/footprint page in case you goof. Designed exclusively for us. Perfect gift for grandparents. Openings for twin photo alongside each unique "print". Frame is white painted wood. Overall size 12"H x 15"W.

- A. Fingers - SF90035 \$39.99 each
- B. Toes - SF90036 \$39.99 each



A. 12"-x-15"



B. 12"-x-15"

Twice as Nice Photo Frames

These two ceramic frames from Russ Baby will look fabulous on your dresser, bookcase, shelf or fireplace mantle. The frames have glass inserts and flocked backing, each frame provides a unique opportunity to show off your twins. The Stars and Hearts frame includes spaces for two photographs to show your twins separately. The Bears and Balloons frame has room for one big photograph to show your twins together. These are beautiful, wonderful gifts



A.



B.

to celebrate the birth of your twins for a close family member or even for yourself. Frames are individually boxed. Twice as Nice Stars and Hearts Frame is 4½" x 6" and holds two 1¾" x 2¾" photographs. Twice as Nice Bears and Balloons Frame is 8¾" x 6¾" and holds one 4" x 6" photograph.

- A. SF04002 Stars and Hearts \$12.99 each
- B. SF04003 Bears and Balloons \$14.99 each



"Discover Wildlife, Raise Twins" Ceramic Plaque

A sentiment every parent of twins can relate to! This handcrafted ceramic plaque will tickle your funny bone and keep your sense of humor charged when you most need it. Leather hanger. 5¾"H x 7¼"W.

SF90092 \$17.99 each

A. 11"-x-14"



"To a Mother of Twins"

A. Creamy parchment mat, pale gold liner; 11"x14" overall.

SW00022 \$31.99 each



"Pardon Our Mess... Twins Live Here"

B. Creamy parchment mat, pale gold liner; 11"x14" overall.

SW00021 \$31.99 each



B. 11"-x-14"

Personalized Twin Afghan

Clever original design created by an artist with twins and exclusive to us. Woven throw in a large size is personalized with your twins' names and their birth date in green embroidery. 100% cotton, washable. 46" x 67". Shipped directly from manufacturer. Allow 3 to 4 weeks for delivery. No express delivery.

SF90112 \$49.99 each

Be sure to include personalization information on the order form or when you order by phone.

How many friends do you have—in real life and virtually, as on the TwinsMagazine.com Message Board?

By Donald E.L. Johnson, Publisher

Over the years, new moms of multiples have reported with some dismay that while it's easy and fun to find friends on the TWINS™ Magazine Message Board (commonly called TMMB), it's much harder to build relationships with soul mates in real life (IRL). After you have your twins, have your old friends from work and your younger days suddenly dropped off your radar screen?

Many moms posting on TMMB have reported feeling abandoned, and they say replacing their old friends with new ones—even other new moms of twins—can be a long, discouraging process.

What makes it hard is that starting friendships takes time—time you don't have when your babies are infants. So you find other twin moms don't want to stop and talk when you encounter them in the store or mall, and often, neither do you. If you can't take time to chat, it's unlikely that you'll ever know whether you and another mom click and might become buddies. Not everybody clicks, because often the only thing a couple of moms have in common is that they have twins.

And so many new twin moms become isolated and wonder, "is it me?" The answer often is, it's them and you.

About a year ago, "Dukie mom", an engineer, started a thread entitled, Why aren't twin moms friendlier towards each other?

"I'm not talking about the people here on this board," she wrote," adding, "I'm talking about when you see another twin mom out and about. I usually try and strike up a conversation, ask them how old their twins are, the names, etc. It seems like I get a lukewarm response most of the time. Like they are being polite but not really interested in talking with me. I thought twin moms would want to stick together and be interested in finding local twin mom friends—the only ones who seem friendly or helpful are the ones that have much older twins (8+ yrs)."

Harried and aloof

She received some interesting replies.

One of our power posters known as "oneplusII" (4,937 posts since she registered on the TMMB in August 2002), agreed.

"You know what? I find the same thing, but it's usually when I don't have my girls with me and I sound all geeky and say, 'I have twins too.' They look at me like 'Uh-huh, sure.' I know exactly what you are talking about, it's like they are bothered. I thought it would be nice if us twin mommies [would] stick together!"

And "2blessed" says not all twin moms are into the twin thing the way she is: "I found that to be true a lot of the time too. I met a lot of multiple moms in the

hospital but not all of them are as nuts and focused on twins and stuff as I was! I think that some take their twins as, 'Oh well, two at a time,' and do not go as crazy (or seem) as interested as myself! For me, I LOVE to talk to other parents of multiples. I read everything I could on them...I am so amazed and interested!"

Yes, there are reasons twin moms blow each other off. They're busy, dealing with two screamers, trying to get the kids down for naps, among other challenges.

"Jgroom" explained how she reacts when approached by other moms of twins: "For me personally, I am just not into the whole comparing thing: 'How old are they? 'Are they walking?' 'How far along (were you) when they were born?' ...that sort of thing. I just don't think of my girls as twins, because they are so different, so maybe that has something to do with it. Plus, I get stopped SO often when I am out because people are fascinated with twins that I am annoyed when other twin moms stop me too. I feel like they should know better! Who knows, maybe I am just a crab."

And "Toni" agrees. She posted: "I think I might understand a little bit about the 'blowing you off' mentality that happens. I know I've had a lot of twin moms tell me they were twin moms—with children who are 2, 5, 10, 17, and 50! The thing is, when I'm out with the boys and people try to initiate conversation, I sometimes just put myself in 'smile at them' mode just so I can get something done. It isn't that I don't want to talk to twin moms, it's that I want to get my shopping done or whatever. And when I'm doing those things I'm so conscious of the time because of meals, naps, etc., and I feel that I'm sucking wind trying to get everything done anyway. The best twin mom story I have is when a lady called to me in Wal-Mart when we were vacationing at the Outer Banks last sum-



Twin moms are more likely to form friendships in playgroups or multiples clubs than when meeting other moms on the street or in the store.

mer. She saw the twins and pointed to hers and said, “Me, too. I don’t want to stop you, but mine are five now and it’s great. It gets much easier.” I really appreciated that—it was encouraging, but she knew how maddening it is to be stopped.

“Just a thought,” Toni added, “Maybe when mine are older I’ll have more time to chat. Right now—I save it for the board!”

Even “Dukie mom” has had her days, as she reported in the thread she had started 10 days earlier: “I was out with my boys, who are normally well-behaved in public. Today, they were monsters—climbing out of the stroller, grabbing at everything and each other, whining and crying... well, you’ve all been there, so you know. Although I didn’t run into any other twin moms, anyone who even looked my way I brushed off. I just didn’t want to deal with questions or comments with my boys behaving so terribly. I just wanted to get out of there as quick as possible. Since twin moms are at least twice as likely to be dealing with a cranky child or two, it’s understandable to be brusque. I guess the ideal place to meet and talk with other twin moms is in a multiples group.”

Not everyone has bad experiences.

Kendra, a physics professor who’s been on TMMB since April 2002 and goes by the handle “stargazer” because she teaches

astronomy, said, “I recently moved to the same city where my best friend since kindergarten lives and we have supper together about once a month. Compare that to my Internet friends. I correspond with them every day. I have forged such strong friendships over the past 3-4 years with them that I flew across the country last October to meet about 30 of them in New York City. It was an incredibly fun time.”

Bonding for real

“Darling” said, “I love the twin mommies around here (where she lives). Everyone is very friendly, and almost every time I go out I make a new twin mommy friend. My mothers of multiples group is great, also. It’s like everywhere I go, one of them is there. HAHA. Today I went to the mall and dashed into the play area so the boys could wear themselves out and sleep while I shop, and I bumped into four other twin mommies. Ended up spending four hours there! HAHA.”

“monandrews” says she’s found good friends on TMMB and in real life. “My friends on the May 05 thread in the (TMMB) First Years forum have been such a support for me. We have shared the ups and downs of our twins’ first year together. Another friend saw my profile and noticed how similar we are. We have a lot in com-

mon and communicate through e-mail regularly.”

“Malisa” says she’s met moms in doctors’ waiting rooms. “My kids are still pretty young, but I’d have to say that I’ve come across quite a few twin moms while waiting in doctors offices and such. They’ve all been supernice and very friendly. I think that it might also have something to do with the fact that our kids are ‘sicker’ than some and I’ve tended to meet other moms that have gone through the same types of things (hence meeting at the doctors offices).”

“sj73,” whose identical girls were born in August, 2003, was the 26th and last to post in the 11-day-old thread, and she explained her approach: “I don’t say anything to mothers with twins older than mine. However, if I see a mother with very young twins, I try to offer some encouraging words like, ‘It gets easier and pretty soon, you will have nonstop fun in your home.’ Well, I’ve been brushed off each time. I know how aggravating it is to be stopped, which is why I try to keep it brief. However, I remember longing for encouraging words when my twins were infants. Oh well...”

To read the whole thread and additional posts made since this article was written, go to: <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=33988>. And go on TMMB and search for “friends.” ♥

SPECIAL PLATE

By Lynn Ticknor

Last fall, my twins were constantly at each others' throats. They were on a never-ending cycle of grabbing, pushing and yelling. What unnerved me most was the name-calling and general disrespect they showed towards each other.

"Give me that! I want it now!" screamed my son, Jack.

"No, it's mine! Get away, you nasty boy!" hollered Abigail.

"You're a stupid-head," he yelled back.

"Mommmeeee!"

This was a typical exchange between them a year ago. "Why do they act this way?" I thought to myself. Since my husband, Alan, and I firmly believe that children learn by our example, I became concerned about my behavior and interactions with other people. I try to be polite and show appreciation for other people, but, admittedly, I'm not always very good at it. I can be short with others and demanding at times, especially towards those I love most.

I wanted my behavior to be a positive example for my children. Something had to change.

Then I remembered a little technique called Special Plate that I heard about at a parenting class I took. It's incredibly simple to do—there's no advance planning, no costs involved and it doesn't take any additional time out of busy lives. With nothing to lose, my husband and I decided to give it a try.

That night, while I was setting the dinner table, I took out a purple plastic plate that we had never used before and set it on my daughter's placemat. The difference was quite noticeable, since all other plates around the table were our usual white ones. As Abigail approached, she said, "Hey, this isn't my plate. What's going on here?"

"You've got Special Plate tonight, sweetie," I said.

"What's Special Plate?" she asked, wrinkling up her nose as if I had just given her a serving of brussels sprouts (her least favorite vegetable).

Taking a deep breath and hoping for a positive reaction, I explained that at dinner each night someone gets Special Plate. During dinner, each family member takes turns saying one thing they appreciate about the person eating off Special Plate. Special Plate rotates to a different person each night (for simplicity's sake, ours rotates from youngest to oldest).

I waited for Abigail's reaction. Finally, she said, "Well, what if Jack has Special Plate and I can't think of anything that I appreciate about him?"

"Hmmm, good question," I thought to myself. I didn't have an answer readily at hand. Luckily, my husband jumped in and said, "If nothing immediately comes to mind, you can pass until you can think of something to say," he explained. Then he quickly added, "But you have to say something before dinner is over."



As we began eating, she was obviously still wondering about this whole new idea. "Why are we doing this?" she asked.

"Just for fun," I responded, trying to act casual. My husband and I had agreed not to associate this with the lectures we had used in the past about appreciating each other more, respecting others, being more caring, blah, blah, blah. We also agreed that if it wasn't fun after a few nights of trying it, we would not continue.

"Well, I guess this will be OK. Go ahead, what do you appreciate about me?" Abigail asked.

I commented that I appreciated how she had put her dishes in the sink after lunchtime. My husband shared that he appreciated how she continued to work on her penmanship even though it was a challenging task that often frustrated her. She beamed with pride as we were giving her this feedback. The only problem was when we had finished she sat quietly for a moment, smirked and said, "What else do you appreciate about me?"

At that point, we reminded her that each person had to say one thing that they appreciated (and only one thing). She sighed and said, "I guess I'll just have to wait until next time."

She finished her dinner more animated than ever and I think she was even calculating which night of the week she'd have Special Plate again. After dinner, she cleared the table (without prompting) and volunteered to help vacuum the floor and wipe the countertops!

Since our youngest son was only 2 when we began Special Plate, I helped him articulate specific things he appreciated about family members. Now that he is older, he comes up with things on his own, such as "I appreciate that Daddy rode bikes with me today," and "I appreciate that Aba (his way of saying Abigail) shared her sidewalk chalk with me."

Added benefits of Special Plate are the acknowledgements my husband and I share when we are the recipients of Special Plate. Like many couples, we often take each other for granted or assume that the other person knows we appreciate certain efforts. Special Plate gives me an opportunity to acknowledge the small things my husband does that make my days a little easier (such as filling

Pack a first-aid kit

for safe travel with kids

the car with gas or calling to tell me he is going to be later than expected). These things may have gone unmentioned during a busy week of work, carpools, swim lessons, errands and laundry.

Special Plate reserves just a few minutes each day to communicate gratitude and appreciation and it provides us with an opportunity to be positive role models for Abigail and Jack.

It's been a year since we started doing Special Plate and we still enjoy hearing affirming comments about ourselves. I don't know how long we'll continue. I guess until it's no longer fun. One of the reasons I think it has worked so well is that we started when the kids were young. We haven't had much resistance, and, when we do, we make light of it and move on. If they'd been 8 or 11, they may have resisted more, or might have refused to participate at all. Another reason it has worked is that, even with our busy schedules, we still have a family dinner four to five times a week. We use Special Plate every time we are all eating dinner together.

There have been times when Special Plate has been a challenge. On days filled with temper tantrums, power struggles and little cooperation among family members, it's hard to conjure appreciative feelings. On several occasions, my husband and I have wracked our brains for relevant and recent positive comments. We've had anxious moments, but we've always been able to come up with something we sincerely appreciate, no matter how small.

After one particularly trying day, the only thing I could honestly say that I appreciated about my daughter was that she drew a very colorful picture in school and gave it to me to hang on the refrigerator.

In the past year, I have seen a difference in our interactions that has extended past the dinner hour. Sure, the kids still argue sometimes, but now they notice the things they appreciate about each other. And they are less inclined to argue over little things. Rarely do they resort to name-calling or harsh words any more.

This summer, while my kids were playing together on the beach, another mom commented about how respectful my children were to each other.

"Your kids speak so politely with each other," she said.

"Not always," I responded remembering a less-than-friendly interaction between the two of them just hours before.

"But when I watch your children playing together, it's almost like they really . . . um . . . appreciate each other. How do you nurture that type of interaction?" she asked.

It didn't take me long to respond; the answer was clear. "Special Plate," I said.

"What?" she responded, clearly confused by my answer.

"Special Plate," I said again.

And then I explained how this little parenting technique had helped all of us to appreciate each other. ♡

Lynne Ticknor lives in Clarksville, Md.

Pack a small first-aid kit to leave permanently in each of your family cars for emergencies. Expect the unexpected.

Make a rule that all passengers buckle up. Children should always ride in the back seat in a car safety seat appropriate for height and weight.

One of the lightweight, inexpensive zippered cool-kits for lunches makes a handy auto first-aid kit that can stay on the back floor or in the trunk at all times. Include in it:

- A gel ice bag or 2 (when activated, it becomes cold)
- Bandages for fingers slammed in doors, etc.
- Antibiotic ointment (a little tube of Neosporin is fine)
- Motion sickness medicine (and a little bottle of children's Tylenol)
- A lightweight blanket or 2 NASA heat-reflecting "blankets" (available in tiny, thin packs for campers and hikers in discount and camping stores)
- 1 or 2 bottles of water
- Sunscreen (and a small Solarcaine to deaden the pain of sunburn, if there's room)
- Insect repellent.

Place a list of family members (emergency contacts) and their phone numbers in the glove compartment, along with your health plan and auto club information.

Banish baby-bottle tooth decay

"Never put a baby to bed with a bottle because the liquid stays in the mouth," advises Bruce Carter, M.D., chief of the Texas Children's Hospital Dental Clinic, Houston, and clinical assistant professor of surgery at Baylor College of Medicine.

Avoid putting sweet drinks, such as juice or chocolate milk, in your twins' bottles. Start offering your twins cups to use at 6 months of age. "The sooner a child learns to drink from a cup, the better the chances of preventing baby-bottle tooth decay, he says.

Wipe your children's teeth and gums clean daily using a soft, clean, damp cloth. See a dentist as soon as your child cuts a few teeth.

❖❖ "Kiss me, >>>
I'm Irish!"



1:: Hayden and Reagan
7 months
Savannah, GA

Double Takes

Boy/girl twins are (almost) always dizygotic (DZ, "fraternal"). Can you guess whether the same-sex multiples pictured on these pages are monozygotic (MZ, "identical") or dizygotic?



2:: Joel and Joshua
2½ years
Sterling, CO



3:: Dominic and Brianna
15 months
Indianapolis, IN



4:: Abigail and Emma
11 months
Oak Park, IL



5:: Bryce and Makayla
2 years
Tinley Park, IL



6:: Brock and Jaxson
23 months
Cunningham, TN



7:: Kaleigh and Angela
3½ years
Manhattan, IL



8:: Catherine and Eva
4 months
Mequon, WI



9:: Heather and Abigail
4 years
Montvale, NJ



10:: Mia and Cades
18 months
Dallas, PA



11:: David and Colin
3 years
LaKeville, MA



12:: Jacob and Olivia
4 months
Scottsville, NY



13:: Holli and Haille
6 years
Pearland, Texas



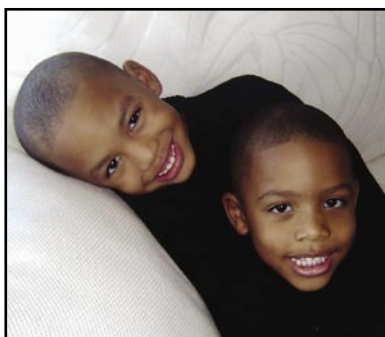
14:: Maegan and Gage
(Teresa, mother)
8 months
Minot AFB, ND



15:: Giuseppe, Rocc, Lucio
16 months
Mountainside, NY



16:: Evan and Owen
8 days
Calvert City, KY



17:: Christian and Christopher
4 years
Denver, CO



18:: Melody and Madison
(siblings Haley and Tyler)
2 months
Cdear Vale, KS



19:: Natalie and Nicole
4 months
Vanceleve, KY



20:: Jadon and Chaya
14 months
Jacksonville, FL

Photo Tips

What we are looking for:

- Sharp focus
- Crisp, clean, vivid color (no blue or yellow cast)
- Good, attractive lighting (no high shadow contrasts, no "red eye")
- Uncluttered backgrounds
- Happy children interacting with each other

We select photos for an upcoming issue three months prior to its distribution. Because of the volume of photos received, we are unable to respond individually. If your photo is selected and you have not included a release form with it you will be contacted to sign a photo release. **See Release Form on page 45 of this issue.**

Please be sure to:

- Place your address label on the back of the photo (or write softly with permanent ink pen) along with a phone number.
- Include the names of the children, their age in the photo and their twin type (dizygotic, monozygotic or unknown).

Send your twins' photograph to:

TWINS Double Takes
Attn. Art Director
11211 E. Arapahoe Road, Suite 101
Centennial, CO 80112-3851

NOTE: We are unable to use any professional photographs. Photos will not be returned. All photos become the property of TWINS.

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XNK - 16	ZQ - 15	ZQ - 14	ZQ - 13
ZQ - 12	ZW - 11	ZW - 10	9 - 0Z
XNK - 8	ZQ - 7	ZW - 6	5 - 0Z
4 - MZ	3 - 0Z	2 - MZ	1 - UNK

Based on parental reports.

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One day at a time...

One year ago this week, I took a second job. And though it doesn't offer a dental plan, sick leave, vacation pay, profit sharing, a Christmas bonus, an expense account, a 401(k) plan or even a company car, it does provide plenty of job security: I will be a mother every day for the rest of my life.

Raising a child may be a labor of love, but as anyone who's ever sung "Pop goes the weasel" 11 times in a row can tell you, it's still labor. So imagine my weariness when I picked up a magazine in the pediatrician's waiting room touting the virtues of a little something called mommy time. Apparently the concept involves making it a priority to get out there and enjoy a manicure, a new outfit, a long lunch with an old friend—it's all about taking time for yourself on a regular basis.

But here's the thing: I took 25 years for myself. Now I'm taking time for two Cheerio-encrusted 16-to-20 pounders with quite a few teeth, mashed banana in their eyebrows and a tendency to wake up at 5 a.m.

Who are these manicured mommies analyzing the latest flick over salad niçoise? Are they the same women who bake everything from scratch, do Pilates, run multi-million-dollar corporations, volunteer at nursing homes, and campaign for clean air while having sex with their adoring husbands four nights a week? I don't know any mommies like that—they sure don't live in my neighborhood!

The women I know feel victorious when they actually manage to put their laundry away the same day that it was cleaned. We're a motley crew, all in serious need of a dye job and a glass of wine. Like the Marines, we do more before 9 a.m. than most people do in a day. We've seen things in diapers that would send plenty of members of polite society shrieking into the night. There is no surface in our homes that doesn't feel sticky,



Kendall and Bryson, 13 months.

no shirt in our closets that hasn't been stained. There is no part of our physical beings that hasn't been gummed, sucked, gnawed, or spit up on. We live mostly on teething biscuits, rice cereal, and the edge—and that, for better or for worse, til preschool do us part, is mommy time.

No, I don't think I have it any more difficult than the next mother; raising twins has been a glorious challenge. I am not looking for help while walking a double stroller around the supermarket with a cart full of groceries on the day before Thanksgiving, or when carrying eight towels and two babies while Christmas shopping the day after Thanksgiving because there weren't any carts left. I don't expect my feelings to be mended when a young couple walks by, snickers, and says, "Imagine being her."

No, I am not looking for sympathy. I love my life; I wouldn't change a thing about it. Sometimes, it is nice to hear, "Boy, you have your hands full!" It makes me feel as if I am doing a good job.

I long too hear, "Can I help you with your groceries out to your car?" "Here, take my cart." "You are so lucky, two for the price of one!" "What a double blessing!" "You're doing a great job!" "What well behaved kids..."anything!

In all actuality, I am looking for these

comments from an adult; I'm not sure why, because I have the approval of my two 1-year-olds every day no matter what I do, how slowly I do it, how chaotic life gets, or how much I don't get done.

I am a thriving being, filled with so much love and excitement. I thrive like I never have before when I am teaching my son to say "light" and after hours of trying, he finally points to the light; when my daughter falls asleep in my arms for the first time and we nap together; when my son plays peek-a-boo and falls over from the excitement of pulling down the blanket covering his eyes; and when my daughter "forgets" to pull the blanket down for the effect of the game.

Nah... the manicure can wait, the clean or new clothes can wait, the romantic dinners and fun lunches will be there later, and even the laundry will still be there. I want to enjoy the moments I am having because they go by so fast: the sleepless nights, acid reflux, breathing treatments, medications, making 14 bottles a day, changing 20 diapers a day. Wondering, wishing, hoping that my daughter would accept solid foods. The fevers, coughs, sniffles and pumping in the middle of the night.

The anguish quickly fades when I experience the first smile, laughter, anticipation, excitement, learning, singing, playing, dancing, climbing over gates, up stairs and under beds. The familiarity happens.

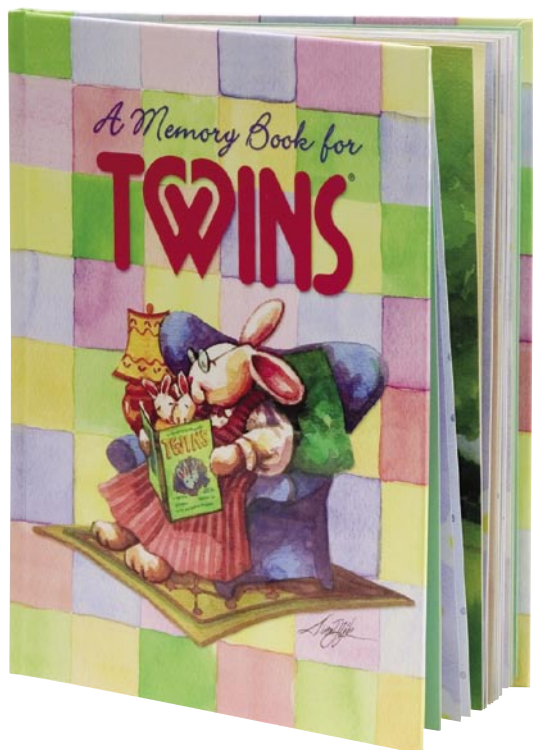
There is no better feeling than when you see your child after a long day at work, smiling and running you over to get into your arms!

I'll sleep when I'm dead. ♡

Blackwell is 27 and a high school special education math teacher. She and Kevin, married three years, recently moved to West Virginia from Atlanta. Twin sons Kendall and Bryson, 13 months, light up their lives.



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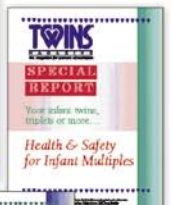
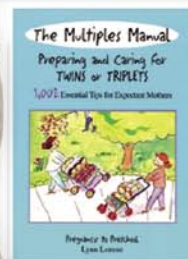
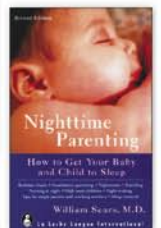
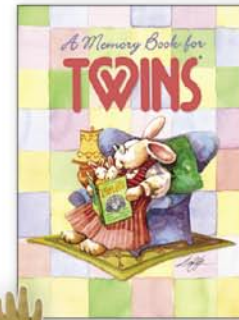
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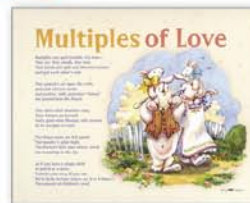
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