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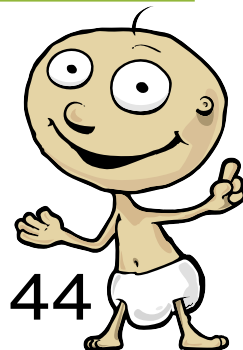
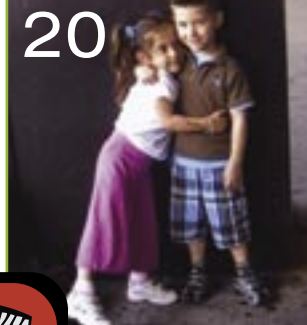
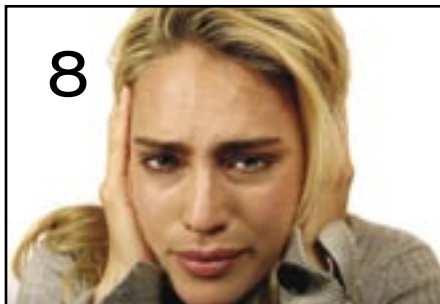
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## A lot of 'buzz' about a range of topics...readers speak out!

Such an exciting two months have passed since our last issue. I can hardly contain myself! Even before we closed the July/August edition and sent it to the printer, I began receiving what turned out to be a record-setting number of Letters to the Editor from readers itching to tell their stories about their twins' school placements, the dilemmas they face(d) regarding classroom togetherness, and twin(s) with disabilities.

We're especially gratified to receive many letters from families who appreciate our new column and columnist, Dr. John Wood, a dad of twin sons and family practice doctor in Duluth, who discusses family challenges when one twin has disabilities (or both do). Our readers affirm the difficulty of keeping life balanced while trying to satisfy and nurture the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of twins when one child has greater daily needs than the other, or both children's need stretch the family's inner reserves thin.

We received some unanticipated reactions from moms of twins who think we've displayed blatant bias in favor of stay-at-home-moms, and against moms who work after having twin infants. The coincidence of having several SAHM stories appear in a couple recent back-to-back issues might make it seem we favor SAHMs' decisions over those of working mothers. Being devoted (and committed) career-women ourselves, we certainly intended no slight. We've written a lot over the years about working moms of twins, and twin-mompreneurs, and how they juggle the demands of their busy lives. We'll continue to do so, as part of our commitment to helping all moms be good parents, working outside home or not.

So, with this stack of some 40+ letters from readers filling our in-box, we decided to deliver to you a one-time **SPECIAL SECTION** in this issue—a 16-page MailBox bound into the center of this magazine containing most of the letters we received, and piggybacking on the two-page MailBox on pages 5 and 6.

You'll enjoy these letters, full of tales from the trenches. Above all, you're reading TWINS™ with such enthusiasm and responding with lots of passion! Keep those cards and letters coming, folks!

Other exciting news...*Central Pennsylvania Parent* described our book *Twice the Love*, edited by Susan M. Heim, as "a vivid collection of tales" from "parents...who share their life-changing experiences." We second that! The book is warming hearts of family and friends nationwide and makes a perfect gift for loved ones.

...It's official! New Hampshire's governor signed Senate Bill 78—the NH Twins-in-School Bill—into law on July 13. Hooray! The New Hampshire Twin Law is now the fourth states that can be cited as great examples of enlightened thinking. Great job, parents of twins in NH! Your tireless work paid off. (go to [www.twinslaw.com](http://www.twinslaw.com) for more details, and to their new Message Board to comment!)

...Finally, there's a real book on the market about breastfeeding twins! We offer a 28-page TWINS Special Report on the subject (\$8.95), and now April Rudat, a registered dietician/nutritionist and mom of twins who successfully breastfed her babies until they were 2, has written *Oh Yes You Can BreastFeed Twins!* ...available for \$19.95 from TWINS™ Bookshelf (see page 37). Together, the two make a perfect package.

...Dad of twins Shane Borrowman deserves a very special mention this month. He writes on page 14 about an especially insidious kind of discrimination—against Dads—by workers in daycare centers and preschools, who invariably have the kiddos in their charge prepare special goodies for Moms, but never for Dads, which broke Shane's heart. Let's hope he helps bring changes!



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### Swaddling really worked for us!

I've just finished reading my Jan./Feb., 2007, issue...I've been busy and it took me a while to get to it. I want to comment on your article in that issue about swaddling twin infants. I would not have survived without swaddling. Actually, we swaddled our fraternal twin boys until they were 4-5 months old. We learned the technique during their first hours of life in the hospital. My advice to expectant moms and dads—take note of the nurses' techniques!

My memory device for reminding myself how to swaddle is to think T-A-C-O...No, "taco" isn't an acronym for anything. It's a food! You have to fold up your taco really tightly and fold in all the ends, or else the fillings fall out. When my best friend had her baby (I was still single), I helped at the hospital but didn't have a clue how to wrap her into her blanket after changing a diaper. My friend said, "Pretend she is a taco!" It always stuck with me.

I did find two of those great hospital blankets with our stuff when we came home—they worked best for swaddling until our boys outgrew them. We actually didn't like any of the marketed swaddling blankets—they didn't work for us. We used the hospital blankets, then switched to slightly larger thermal blankets, pulled tight. We weren't worried about the boys overheating—our home was 68-70 degrees in wintertime. They started sleeping through the night at 3 months, swaddled and happy. I don't recall having to wean them from swaddling; we just stopped when I would find them unswaddled and sleeping soundly a couple hours after I put them to bed—at about 6 months.

We learned within the first 12 hours after the boys were born they did better when placed in the same bassinet. They had a tough day at first, with heel-sticks, etc., and couldn't settle down. Finally, at 2 a.m., I suggested my husband put them in the same bassinet. They immediately calmed down and slept four hours before having to eat again! After that, we always made sure they were together in the bassinet to sleep throughout our four days in the hospital. At home, we swaddled them and placed them together in a porta-crib, snuggled shoulder to shoulder.

A cousin visited with her baby when our twins were about 3 months (her son is two weeks younger than our twins). All three were crying. To quiet them down, I swaddled my two and put them in their crib, then proceeded to take the third baby out of his mom's arms, swaddled him (she hadn't swaddled since he was 4 weeks old), and he immediately settled down and slept with mine in their crib. She was surprised it would still work at that age!

Patti Shinn  
Croswell, Mich.  
Via email



### Great wagon for beach

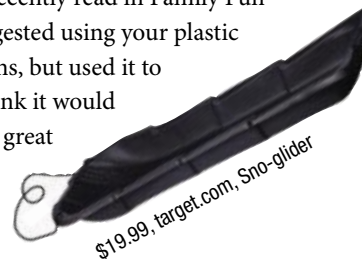
To the reader who was looking for a way to get her twins to the beach (July/Aug., MailBox), I have a great wagon for her. I purchased it from Lapps Coach Shop in Intercourse,

PA. (LappsCoachShop.com; they ship anywhere.) It is homemade by the Amish. They have many sizes and styles to choose from. The key to a good beach wagon is that it has to have inflatable tires. Solid rubber tires are not good in the sand. I take my four kids, ages 5, 3, and 11-month-old twins, to the beach almost every day!

Jennifer  
Posted on TMMB, Letters to the Editor Forum

Hi! I just love TWINS™ Magazine. I have twin boys who are 3 and a 6-year-old daughter. The July/August issue's MailBox contained a letter from a woman looking for ways to singlehandedly take her toddler twins to the beach. I recently read in Family Fun Magazine a tip from a reader who suggested using your plastic snow sled on sand. She didn't have twins, but used it to haul all of her stuff plus one child. I think it would work well with twins, too. Keep up the great work with TWINS™!

Michelle Kalkman  
Via email



### The TWINS™ MailBox overflowed this month!

And we couldn't be more pleased. Each letter we receive adds to our twins community's collective body of knowledge about what's happening out there and how best to deal with the "stuff of life" in our world of twinniness.

To say we received a record number of letters since the last issue came out is putting it mildly—an astonishing 45 letters came our way, some short, some long, some requiring responses, and all of them interesting and enlightening.

You're paying us the ultimate compliment—you're devouring TWINS™, and adding to the information in our double-duty package by piggybacking on the letters and articles. Hooray!

"Keep the conversation going...and keep it lively," is a good mantra. Above all, keep talking! This time, we've run letters in MailBox on pages 5 and 6—then you'll want to jump to the centerpiece of this issue—an added 16-page section containing all of these great pieces of correspondence.

Starting with the November/December 2007 issue, we'll begin posting our "overflow" letters in the new "Letters to the Editor" Forum on the TWINS™ Message Board at [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com).

### Subjects of Letters from readers:

- Twins in School—Separate them! No, keep them together! 19 letters
- TWINS (Twins With Increased Needs) 5 letters
- TWINS™ stories about SAHMs vs. working moms 4 letters
- Other subjects: Family finances; more kids after twins; TWINS™ e-Newsletter; mother-in-law favoritism; using sensitive (insensitive?) language; twinning statistics clarified; 1988 article on potty training in TWINS™; mommy tips.

**'Twice the Love' makes a perfect gift for those who've touched our lives!**

I wanted to let you know what I've done to promote *Twice the Love* and the miracle story of my twins, Conley and Nora. I ordered 50 copies of the book from TWINS™ Magazine. I am signing each one with a personalized note and sending a copy to everyone who helped our family or touched our lives while the girls were in the NICU and during the post-NICU period. In each book, I am including a recent photo of the twins and their older sister, Ella. As you can imagine, it is taking me forever to complete this task, but I'm getting it done, book by book.

Today, for example, I had lunch with one of the twins' NICU neonatologists with whom I developed a close personal relationship. I gave her a copy of the book and inscribed in it a few paragraphs about what she and her medical team mean to my family. She was incredibly touched and moved to tears. For me, it's an exercise in closure and a concrete way to thank folks for all their kindness.

Thanks again for allowing the girls and me to be included in your book.

Anne Rohall  
Falls Church, Va.  
Via email

*Editor's note: What a wonderful way to express your gratitude and crystallize a memory of how people helped during a rough time, Anne. You've found a great way to let everyone know what a huge difference they made, and we're excited at the role Twice the Love can play in this event in your lives and*

*theirs. (P.S. Anne is a fraternal twin herself, and became pregnant with identical twin girls, who developed Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) and were born at 24 weeks' gestation in December, 2004, weighing only 1.5 lbs. and 1.1 lbs. They spent four months in the NICU, but are doing well today. Anne is a health law attorney.*

**'Dear Abby' column heralds 1984 TWINS™ article**

I was delighted to see that the 'Dear Abby' column by Jeanne Phillips on July 4 mentioned TWINS™ Magazine. Ms Phillips, daughter of the column's founder, Abigail Van Buren, mentioned an article that her aunt, Ann Landers, wrote many years ago for TWINS™ Magazine about how she really would have preferred to be treated as an individual, rather than as a twin, while her sister loved and cherished their twinship.

Susan M. Heim  
Author, *Twice the Love*  
Via email

*Editor's note: We were delighted, too, and have spoken with "Dear Abby" aka Jeanne Phillips several times since July 4. To read the entire column, turn to page 13 of this issue. The Nov./ Dec., 1984, issue of TWINS™ ran dual stories by Abigail VanBuren and Ann Landers, highlighting their contrasting views of twinship and aspects of being inextricably linked throughout their lives. The article by Ann Landers, in particular, was especially poignant, tinged with sadness and some anger.*

**Better mousetrap...same nursing pillow I used!**

When I received my TWINS™ e-Delivery newsletter June 21 and saw your upcoming issue (July/August, 2007) contained an article about someone who claimed to have created a "better mousetrap" with a nursing pillow that really works for twins, my first thought was, "I can't wait to read this article. There's no way what I used could have been improved upon." When TWINS™ Magazine arrived in the mail I went right to the article and—surprise!—it was the same pillow I had used!

I had my boys 12/27/01 and the nurses were fascinated that I planned on nursing, especially tandem. They'd never seen a twins nursing pillow (the first thing I packed in my hospital bag!).

I couldn't imagine any other way—tandem saves time! The thought of making formula and cleaning so many bottles was overwhelming. It never occurred to me nursing would save so much money until later, when I heard how much formula costs and how much is needed for twins.

I started with the inflatable EZ-2-Nurse pillow and later added the foam model. I kept the foam one at home and the inflatable in my car. Family and friends were amazed at the whole process and, five years later, they still talk about my experience! I have recommended Double Blessings to many people and will continue to do so. I am so thankful Sandy (Clark, owner of Double Blessings and inventor of the twin nursing pillow she sells) had her babies before me!

(P.S. While nursing my boys, the EZ-2-Nurse pillow allowed for hands-free nursing. My water, phone headset, meals, TV clicker, paper, pens, thank-you notes, etc., were within easy reach on a TV tray. Guests were amazed at the multitasking I could accomplish during nursing.)

Kate, Mom of Michael and Steven  
Via email

**Married with Twins**  
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When twins arrive, the dynamics of a marriage change as parenthood brings challenges and rewards. Popular TWINS™ columnist Joshua Coleman uses humor and professional expertise to help parents retain their loving feelings and meet family challenges with ease.

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### Three PGA pro golfers are Dads of twins

The 2007 PGA 'Champions Tour' includes three players competing who are fathers of twins. In fact, Tom Purtzer and Denis Watson each have two sets of twins! Watson's twins are 4 and 5, and Purtzer's are 4 and 8. Jim Dent, 68, the third Dad of twins doing the PGA tour, are 7, and were adopted. All three have long been pro golfers and all three are over 50, with young families.

### The Few. The Proud. The Tired. ...with twins

Wendy Irvine, mom of 4-year-old twin boys, kept seeing T-shirts that had twinnny-stuff on them but that didn't really appeal to her tastes (too silly, too edgy, somewhat sarcastic, etc.) when her boys were twininfants. So she launched a company to fill the void. "After one horrifyingly long afternoon with my then-toddlers, I thought, 'Why can't I have a time-out?' and my multiple-moms' tee shirt line was born," Wendy told TWINS™. Wendy set out to create "elegant but humorous" twinnny tees that are high-quality and comfortable, in appealing colors. Her first was 'Why Can't I Have a Time Out?,' followed by 'Raising Twins Is An Extreme Sport!' The company recently began offering grandparents-of-multiples shirts—for gram, there's 'Ecstatic Woman In Search of a Nap.' For gramp, there's 'The Few. The Proud. The Tired. Grandfather of Twins.' (Shirts are also available for parents and grandparents of higher-order multiples.) [www.Multiplemomsrock.com](http://www.Multiplemomsrock.com)

### Complexity of life in Digital Age: Tell all, or not?

Wired Magazine, owned by Conde Nast Publications since July 2006, contains a "Mr. Know-It-All" column in each monthly issue "that answers readers' questions about the legal, moral and ethical complexities of life in the Digital Age." Mr. Know-It-All's writer/editor recently contacted TWINS™ Magazine for information to use in responding to "a fortysomething reader who recently gave birth to twins...was taking fertility drugs prior to her pregnancy... is wondering what to say when (her children) eventually ask how they came to be. Should she tell them about her fertility treatments...what is the best best way for her to discuss this topic with her children?" TWINS™ was happy to oblige, having recently published (July/Aug., 2007) a major story about all of these same questions besetting parents of multiples who'd undergone IVF treatments to help them conceive children. To read—and post your own response to—our full reply to Mr. Know-It-All go to <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/vbulletin/showthread.php?p=1003614#post1003614>

### Check out Shannon's blog about Mompreneurs

Shannon Cherry, Albany, N.Y., is a working mom of twins with her own PR/communications business (Cherry Communications, [www.beheardolutions.com](http://www.beheardolutions.com)) who launched what she calls "the only blog that focuses on the life of an entrepreneur mom raising twins." On [mommy-inc.com](http://mommy-inc.com), Shannon posts lots of good stories and info about mom-entrepreneurs—mompreneurs—nationwide and discusses her own experiences operating her business from home—with twins creating chaos around her. She uses her blog as a true Web-log that more or less journals her life, as blogs were meant to be, plus provides great tips and some super recipes for busy moms. Read more at [www.mommy-inc.com](http://www.mommy-inc.com)

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## Twice the Love: Stories of Inspiration for Families...with Twins, Multiples and Singletons

Compiled and Edited by Susan M. Heim  
Cartoon artistry by John M. Byrne

**\$13.95**

"Twice the Love: Stories of Inspiration for Families ... with Twins, Multiples, and Singletons," published in conjunction with TWINS™ Magazine, is a

compilation of 82 inspiring stories written by parents and other family members about the joys and challenges of raising multiples. These true tales reflect a variety of topics, such as the special bond between multiples, typical crazy days in the life of a family with twins, challenges encountered in pregnancy or childhood, humorous situations created by multiples, adopting twins, and much more. If you're the parent of twins or triplets, you'll love these heart-warming and encouraging stories. This book also makes a great gift for those who are expecting or raising multiples! *Paperback, 222 pages.*

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# Post-partum depression: A very real syndrome, especially with twinfants

By Lisa Stukel

*Some medical research indicates PPD can be even more severe following the births of twins or triplets, because a woman's body has had to adjust hormonally to the drastic physical demands of multiple babies in utero. Readjustment following the births, therefore, is all the more dramatic, which can send a new mom of twins into a total tailspin. Even the most emotionally-balanced, usually-rational moms can find themselves thrown for a loop by PPD. It's important to recognize the signs early and seek help.*

I remember my pregnancy fondly. There isn't a better feeling in the world than that first "butterfly flutter" inside the tummy.

Yet having two lives growing inside me was scary at times. Could there possibly be enough space for two? How would my body possibly get large enough for these lives to grow?

Well, amazingly enough, it did—and I ended up on bedrest when I reached 28 weeks. It was then that waves of nerves coupled with restless nights started me on the road to serious post-partum depression.

All my dreams for a pregnancy with cute maternity clothes and savoring every moment edging toward delivery were shattered at my 28-week ultrasound. My cervix had shortened and I had to quit work and stay in bed at home with a uterine monitoring machine to signal any contractions, and a tributaline pump. I'd been a 1st grade teacher for 10 years and found it difficult to leave my beloved students.

I traded in my pastel maternity clothes for extra-large sweatshirts and sweat pants.

The couch and I became close relatives for six weeks. I read books, watched leaves grow on my maple tree and dust settle under my couch. Doctor appointments were the highlights of my weeks. At my lowest times I thought: "It could be worse. Some women spend their entire pregnancy on bedrest in the hospital. At least I get to be home with lots of help to get me through the rough time."

I delivered identical twin boys at almost 33½ weeks.

Luckily, our boys were 4 lbs. 15 oz., and 4 lbs. 6 oz., on oxygen only one night. One son was in NICU two weeks; the other, two and a half weeks, mainly to learn how to suck-swallow-breathe in order to eat.

The first baby was delivered vaginally and the second by c-section. I remember feeling quite sad that they were instantly whisked away from me to be taken to NICU. I remember lying there listening to babies with their new mothers in rooms around me, thinking it wasn't fair that I had carried two lives, spent six weeks on the couch, and had no babies alongside me to show for it. I worried about their health. I hadn't even had time to count their fingers and toes. My husband brought me two Polaroid pictures of my boys and I cried looking at them.

For weeks afterward, one stressful event occurred after another. My heart had a gaping hole because my boys remained at the hospital while I went home. I felt disappointment, guilt and failure. I kept

wondering, "Had I done something during pregnancy to cause this?" Or, conversely, did I not do something that might have prevented this?

Looking back, I think this was when my depression started.

Everything I had dreamed of had turned inside out. I had eaten right, exercised, read books, did everything the doctors told me to do. So why was this happening to me? My husband and I spent

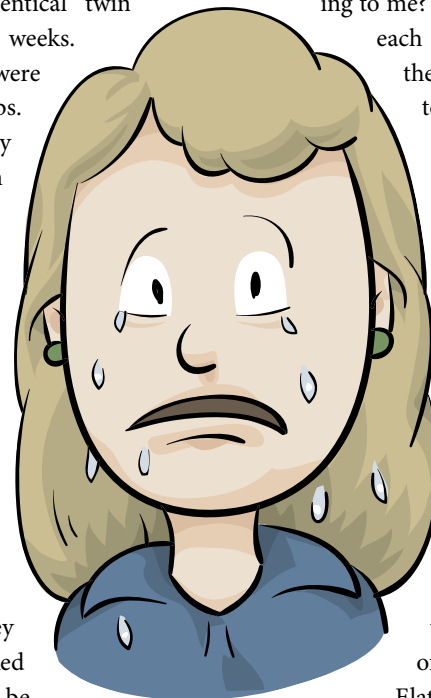
each day visiting our sons in their little cribs hooked up to beeping machines. I wanted to breastfeed so I pumped all day and every evening into bottles. This was my only real connection to my boys, my gift to them when we were apart.

My breast milk probably did help our sons leave the hospital quickly. When the doctor told us the boys were ready to go home, my emotions swirled in an array of seeming contradictions.

Elation. Fear. Nervous tension. We'd go from round-the-clock nurses, doctors, and machines caring for my helpless babies, to...nothing. Me. Alone. "How are we going to do this?" I wondered.

The morning we were to pick up our boys we learned #1 son would be coming home, but not #2 son, who appeared to have a minor breathing problem and a heart-rate drop. He would remain in NICU until he experienced no difficulties at all for an entire five-day period.

I sat and sobbed, telling my husband I couldn't take any more stress and feeling as if I were having a nervous breakdown. With my husband's help, I pulled myself





## 'Treat PPD quickly, aggressively!'

Gary Steinman, MD, PhD, a TWINS™ expert, offers these comments about PPD: "My general approach to PPD is to treat it very aggressively and quickly. Mothers of newborns, whether primips or multips, can unexpectedly succumb to the acute bombardment of new responsibilities and demands. If a patient contacts me, whether in the office or by phone, with symptoms of depression, sadness, ennui, or excessive fatigue, I immediately send her to a psychiatrist. The patient is told that I must have a call-back from the psychiatrist that same evening, or I will contact the patient again. Delaying even one day is unacceptable. We have at least two hospitals in Queens (N.Y.) with special sections of their ERs devoted to acute-onset psychiatric/psychological problems. If the patient can't find a psychiatrist, I have the person go to the designated ER. The risk is to the mother, and to her baby(ies) as well. Self-treatment is the worst of all possible courses—as a physician, I don't take out my own appendix. So, too, people with this type of depression should avoid trying to take care of the situation themselves. My review of the medical literature reveals that mothers of twins are at no higher risk for this problem than mothers of singletons. However, it is reasonable to assume the stress related to their workload is higher when caring for newborn twins. The incidence of PPD does increase with maternal age, so it is likely women having twins, if they are older, may be more prone to severe PPD."



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Dr. William Sears  
Author and child care specialist

together and we went to get our first bundle of joy.

Taking one baby home and leaving our other son in NICU was too much for me to handle, in my state. I cried at the hospital and all the way home, sad because I was a terrible mother who couldn't be both places at once with my babies. While at home caring for my son, my mind was always in another place.

My husband and I were up with our first son every two hours, taking turns feeding by both breast and bottle. I was so nervous and scared. I'd had no idea how difficult caring for a newborn baby would be. I really felt stupid. Here I was, a teacher with a Master's degree, and I barely knew how to put a diaper on correctly. I sat at 3 a.m., totally exhausted and thinking to myself, "This is just one baby. How can we possibly take care of two?"

My feelings of anxiety were beyond description. Nothing reassured or soothed me, not my husband nor family and friends.

Number-2 son came home after only five days and then the pressure built. At times I remember those first few months vividly;

continued on page 11



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# Postpartum depression and multiples

By Rebecca Moskwinski, MD

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a prevalent psychiatric disorder. The responsibilities of caring for a new baby, or multiple babies, can be overwhelming, even for the best prepared women.

“Postpartum blues” is the most common syndrome following birth and is not considered a psychiatric disorder. It is different from true postpartum depression.

Postpartum blues typically last less than two weeks and consist of symptoms such as fatigue, trouble concentrating, irritability, mood swings, and fluctuations in appetite. In an NOMOTC study, 40% of women experienced the “blues” after their multiple pregnancy. Interestingly, only 22.5% experienced the “blues” after their singleton pregnancy, which is lower than expected. In about 20% of all cases, blues will develop into major depression.

PPD, on the other hand, consists of a spectrum of symptoms—usually five or more symptoms in a combination of some type—lasting two weeks or more. Postpartum depression has been shown in other studies to have a prevalence of 10% to 15% in the first postpartum year. In a study done by NOMOTC this figure was confirmed, with 11% of women developing postpartum depression after their singleton births.

## One-third of twin-moms experience PPD

With the births of multiples, however, the study by NOMOTC showed that the rate of postpartum depression rises to a level of 33%. In addition, 72% of the women who participated in this survey also felt that their depression after multiples was worse (deeper, longer) than after their singleton (of those that had both).

The higher rate of PPD following births of multiples could be due to larger fluctuations of hormone levels following a multiple birth pregnancy, but this has not been consistently identified as a causal factor. In fact, the cause of PPD has yet to be determined. In recent years, increasing num-

bers of multiple births are the result of assisted reproduction techniques such as fertility medications. These also affect hormonal fluctuations. NOMOTC’s study showed that of the women who used fertility medications to become pregnant, 40% reported a depression lasting longer than two weeks.

## Frighteningly high number fail to seek help!

Alarming, the NOMOTC study revealed fully 17% of women listing “thoughts of suicide or hurting others” failed to seek professional help while in the grip of PPD. Also, 49% who reported five or more PPD symptoms (and an astounding 31.5% who reported having seven or more symptoms!) didn’t report depression to their doctors. Perhaps societal pressure (i.e., expectations that women be fulfilled and happy following the births of their children) keeps women from recognizing the importance of their symptoms and what they imply.

Joining a multiples’ support group was helpful to 70% of the mothers. Networking with other mothers in a similar situation helps women of newborn twin infants realize they are not alone and the feelings they experience are not unique to them.

Most women suffering from PPD can be helped with one of the many medications available for depression. Anti-depressant medications are generally safe and effective, and can begin relieving symptoms within a week or two, although they take a full four weeks to come to full effect.

Most physicians treating a mother for PPD want her to also participate in counseling during treatment, but medication should be started even if there is a delay in getting counseling. (Many anti-depressant medications are contraindicated for women breastfeeding their babies or pumping in order to bottlefeed breastmilk to their infants—in other words, “not indicated” because they are possibly inappropriate.

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Rebecca Moskwinski, MD, is president, National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc., and a practicing physician at the University of Notre Dame.

at other times, they are a blur—feeding schedules, diaper changes, sleep deprivation.

That summer—my favorite time of year—would prove to be like no other. I heard the roar of lawn mowers, the humming of bees, neighbors going to work and I'd think, "Life is moving on and I am locked in this house pumping, changing diapers, feeding and not sleeping!"

### Nothing seemed to help

My husband, also a teacher, was able to be with me a lot and we worked side-by-side to get things done. That saved my sanity. Wonderful friends made dinners, and grandparents and aunts came to relieve us so we'd get a much-needed nap. And some adult conversation.

I made time to ride my bike, take a walk and go to dinner with my husband. I took the boys for walks when it was safe. I went to friends' houses, a graduation party and visited grandparents.

Despite all of these things being done for me, enabling me to escape my captivity much more than many other parents of twins ever can, I remained desperately unhappy. I cried uncontrollably at times for absolutely no reason. I sobbed for the loss of my independence, weeping as I viewed pictures of our eight-year marriage and mourning the life we left behind.

One day I tried to figure out how to wear a Baby Bjorn front-carrier, and went into complete hysterics, upsetting both babies in the process. My clothes began to hang loosely on me because I was never hungry. The dark circles and bags under my eyes grew larger from crying and lack of sleep. My mind was a locked cocoon of dreary thoughts.

Normally, I'd been such a happy person. Before Babies, that is. This overwhelming sadness was so foreign to me. I was even depressed that my own sad thoughts interfered with my ability to bond with our babies. I worried I would ruin my marriage. My husband was so good to me, yet I found no comfort from him or anyone close to me.

I kept thinking, "What is wrong with me?" I'd read about post-partum depression, but never thought I'd go through it. I blithely dismissed it; therefore, I didn't know how to deal with it.

### 'I was afraid I'd hurt my babies!'

A close friend with whom I spoke thought I needed medication, making me feel even worse. Could it possibly be that I wasn't normal? Horrors! Not me.

A couple of times, I had to leave the house because I was so angry that my sons wouldn't stop crying. I'd hand the babies to my husband and walk away, for fear I'd pat them too hard when burping them in the middle of the night or hurt them in some other way, poor things.

My recurring worry was that I wasn't cut out to be a mom. How could I be experiencing inner rage at a 2-week-old baby? Is that possible? It pained me to have these feelings and not know how to deal with them.

At a post-partum appointment, my midwife reassured me these were all normal feelings, giving me the option of medication.

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**Let kids feed themselves without the mess or cleanup!**

continued on page 12

She knew my low opinion of taking medication of this type, so she suggested I walk out of the room or leave the house when my insides boiled with irritation at the babies' howls. These tactics did help me.

I told myself some depression does require intervention with medicine, but rationalized that many too many people opt for medication too quickly. I was determined to use my positive mind and spirit to regain my old self, to get back on

room, where I rocked and rocked myself as I lay on the bed crying so hard it hurt. My husband knocked to see if I was okay. He was there to help, but I needed to be by myself.

I talked to myself. I will never forget the moment I said to myself, "No one is going to pull me out of this depression but myself." I took a long series of deep breaths and fell asleep until morning. I had picked up the pieces and decided I was going to

mine didn't help at all.

I needed to find friends with similar backgrounds, job experiences and philosophies on taking care of children. I needed open-minded advice and people I closely identified with.

In retrospect, I should have listened to my sister, a dietician, who told me over and over to keep drinking liquids and eat right, even if I felt no immediate hunger. Had I done so, I might have escaped my depression sooner, or avoided it altogether.

But life is a learning experience. I learned a lot from my experience. I escaped unscathed, along with my husband and children, and for that I am so grateful, because some women do not. I now understand how women can be driven to completely break down, especially single mothers or women whose marriages are crumbling. But being in control of myself and having self-determination is always a part of me and I won't let anyone tell me differently, no matter what my situation may be.

My boys are 2½ now and I treasure each minute with them. I sometimes feel twinges of remorse when I reexamine those days when I was overcome by sadness and guilt. But if I can help other new mothers of twins realize these feelings are normal, it's all worth it.

### Had I known then what I know now...

We can all learn from the lessons life hands us. And my advice to other women who are preparing for their twins to arrive is this: Educate yourself about PPD. And take it seriously. Don't expect anything to be easy. Listen to your doctors, family and open-minded advice. Eat and sleep whenever you can. Most important, believe in yourself. You can overcome any obstacle after delivering twins and my story proves it. ♡

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Lisa Stukel, who lives in Brookfield, Ill., wishes she'd read an article like this before and during her PPD trials. She has a Master's degree in reading and literacy, and taught 1st and 2nd grades for more than a decade. Lisa will consider going back to work when her kids are in preschool or elementary school. In the meantime, she's content to savor each day.



track. And that is exactly what I did.

But not before hitting some more bumps in the road. I had several more breakdowns when I thought I was getting better. I hit rock bottom shortly after my husband went back to work after taking family leave. The boys were almost 3 months old but still needed feeding quite often, two to three times in the middle of each night. I'd spent an entire day at home coping with continuous crying and soiled diapers.

### Seeking nutrition, hydration and...sleep!

Thoughts of missing my career assaulted me and I questioned my decision to resign from teaching. My life spiraled down to depths I couldn't conceive.

My husband arrived home to find me sobbing uncontrollably. He stayed with the boys while I went upstairs to our bed-

discard my negative ball of energy.

I began eating right, taking vitamins, drinking lots of water, and sleeping when my children slept. I accepted babysitting offers and slept. I paid more attention to my husband and joined a twin support-group. I consulted a book about getting babies on a nap schedule.

The day I realized this depression was within my power to control was the day I took hold of my life again. And I was able to do it without medication.

There's hope for moms who go through this, especially mothers of twins. If I time-traveled back and could relive those months, I would read more about post-partum depression and take it much more seriously. I'd talk to more moms like me, whose longtime careers were very important to them and who'd been married for a long time Before Babies. Talking to others whose lives were very different from

## 'Dear Abby' answers query about twins by recalling 1984 article by Ann Landers in TWINS™ Magazine



Dear Abby

**Dear Abby:** My 12-year-old identical twin daughters, "Alicia" and "Amanda," have always dressed alike and enjoyed being completely identical. However, Alicia has recently decided that she wants to be an individual and dress differently.

Unfortunately, Amanda disagrees. Because they have all matching outfits and share a room,

Amanda just waits until Alicia gets dressed and puts on the same outfit. This results in arguments every morning.

Amanda suggested what I thought was a fair compromise: They would dress alike on alternate days. However, Alicia insists that if she wants to dress differently, she should be able to do it every day. What would you recommend?

Twins' Mom in Bellevue, Wash.

**Dear Twins' Mom:** Let me share a page from my family album. My mother, Pauline Esther, and my aunt, Esther Pauline,

were identical twins. They dressed in identical outfits and shared the same bed until their double wedding. They looked so much alike that when they would double date, they would switch dates in the middle of the evening and no one was the wiser.

My mother loved being an identical twin and regarded "twinning" as an asset. My aunt, on the other hand, yearned to be regarded as an individual.

I had always viewed twinship through my mother's rose-colored glasses until I read an eye-opening article my aunt had written for TWINS™ Magazine. In it, she expressed how important she felt it was for siblings who, by chance, had been born together be allowed to develop as the individuals they actually were.

In other words, although your daughters came in "one package," they were not joined at the hip physically or as personalities. If Alicia wishes to develop her individuality, she should certainly be allowed to do so. And consider this: Amanda may be so invested in her twinship that she is failing to do that—which is unhealthy.

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As seen July 4, 2007, in DEAR ABBY by Abigail Van Buren, a.k.a. Jeanne Phillips and founded by her mother Pauline Phillips. © 2007 Universal Press Syndicate. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

The TWINS™ Magazine article referred to in this column appeared in November/December, 1984, during this magazine's first year of life.

# Identical *or* Fraternal?

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# “Dad’s here!”

by Shane Borrowman

I had adequately anticipated most things that happened when my twins, John and Samantha, were born. I expected to lose the pristine back seat of my sporty little car to child seats and spilled milk. I expected to lose my home office to a monster-sized crib. I expected to disappear from the lives of my childless friends for long stretches of time. I even expected to pay nearly half of my monthly salary for good, professional, full-time daycare.

But...I never expected to have my feelings mauled regularly by those same daycare providers!

Like most parents of twins and higher multiples, my wife and I learned early that we can manage our lives as a couple and a family only if we divide every child-related chore equally—from feeding the kids to ferrying them around. Total equality.

As a father, however, I have noticed pervasive inequality exists: At daycare, the children craft things weekly, from paper flowers in foam vases to modern art abstractions in fingerpaint. Holidays such as Valentine’s Day and Halloween involve both. All of this we-love-you artwork is for either their mother or their parents. None is for Dad.

Mother’s Day was a big deal at John’s and Sam’s daycare. The kids made little booklets about their mommies. They made flower bouquets of construction paper and popsicle sticks. They made big hearts labelled “Mom” in red ink, tiny hand- and foot-prints all around.

It was all so cute it brought tears to my eyes. Still does. I even framed some of it to hang in their mother’s office.

I began looking forward to Father’s Day, casually scanning the tables and shelves when I’d pick up my twins at the daycare center, on the lookout for artwork-in-progress. In conversations with their teachers, I trolled for information about what to expect. I wondered how large a frame I’d need if I tried to include everything in my own office-wall display.

Father’s Day came and went without a

ripple. No flowers. No booklets. No construction-paper hearts, red ink or popsicle sticks. I was so certain there’d been a mistake that I asked my wife to check when she dropped the kids off, to see if I’d somehow missed my artwork.

I hadn’t missed anything. There was nothing to miss.

“You ok?” my wife asked when she called with the bad news.

“No,” I replied. “This really hurts my feelings.” That may be the least masculine thing I’ve ever said. It’s also entirely accurate, and it’s a feeling I would spare other fathers.

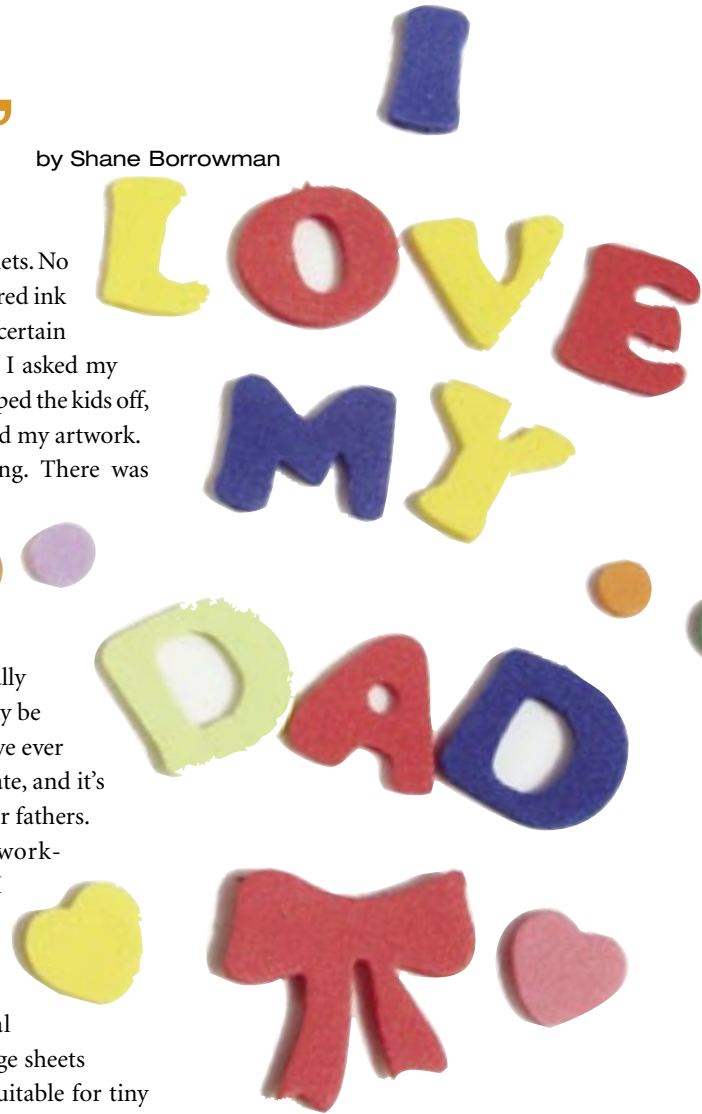
To deal with my artwork-impooverished office, I stopped waiting for daycare to provide me with frame-worthy materials. A quick trip to the local super-center landed me large sheets of paper and big crayons suitable for tiny hands, fingerpaints and sponges for stamping. I added arts-and-crafts time to our after-dinner schedule.

My office wall now sports a steady stream of John and Sam originals. As a side benefit, the art that doesn’t end up with me or my wife tends to move outward into the family, especially on birthdays and Grandparents’ Day. Some of it, laminated at a local print shop, becomes placemats for our table.

This solution enlivens my office space, gives the extended family a nice connection to our kids, and adds a fun ritual to our routine. But it did nothing to soothe my hurt feelings in relation to the daycare folks.

Thankfully, new teachers and new management moved into our local learning center. So I’ve begun asking questions long before every major holiday: What are the kids doing and when? Any supplies I can help out with?

On a personal level, these questions and their answers mean I’m a more



engaged participant in daycare where my children spend so much time during the week.

Possibly because I’ve been such a polite bother, the new management has begun sending home monthly calendars of activities, including art projects. I’m optimistic about my chances next Father’s Day. ♥

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Shane’s twins, John and Samantha, were 18 months old when he wrote this, and had been in daycare 11 months. He quickly discovered the pervasive American cultural bias toward mothers, from grammar school pageants honoring Mother’s Day to professional athletes grinning into every available camera and mouthing the words, “Hi, Mom!” As biases go, this one is mostly harmless...unless you’re a father. Shane declares, “I’m not the only father handling a full share of the twin-related load, and I’m not the only father having his feelings mauled by a virtually-unconscious cultural bias in favor of mothers.” He hopes he can help change our insensitive habits.

# Research helps us understand our twins' greater risks

By John Wood, MD

In my first article on this subject (July/August, 2007) I introduced our boys, Peter and Benjamin, to you. They were diagnosed with TTTS at 26 weeks. TTTS is a condition possible only in monozygotic twin pregnancies, and only in those MZ pregnancies in which the babies share a placenta (monochorionic).

TTTS occurs in about 10% of all monochorionic pregnancies, affecting about 2,000 pregnancies a year. Relatively speaking, it's a pretty common complication in a monozygotic pregnancy. TTTS can cause problems for both the donor and recipient twin. The recipient twin can develop cardiac hypertrophy due to the increased blood flow through his/her heart during fetal development. The donor twin can become anemic and have decreased blood flow due to the shunting of blood to the other fetus.

TTTS commonly leads to discordant growth of the twins, with the recipient twin becoming much larger (up to 20%) than the donor. The donor twin also has a much higher incidence of neurological injury.

What I wasn't as aware of when our babies were diagnosed with TTTS were the increased risks of birth defects associated with

TTTS occurs in about 10% of all monochorionic pregnancies, affecting about 2,000 pregnancies a year.

twins. A study conducted by the University of Florida (see reference below) in 2005 showed that multiple pregnancies (twins and higher) have a 46% higher rate of birth defects than singletons. These researchers reviewed birth records of 972,694 live births between 1996 and 2000. Of these, 27,727 were multiple births. Records were screened for some 40 different birth defects. Multiples were at risk of developing a birth defect more often in 23 of the 40 categories studied. The six most common birth defects were: anencephalus, biliary atresia, hydrocephalus without spina bifida, pulmonary valve atresia, pulmonary stenosis, and bladder exstrophy. The study also revealed higher risks of brain, heart, bladder and liver defects in multiples.

The same research team, in a different study, reviewed birth records of 47,768 opposite-sex twins. Boys' risks of developing birth defects were 29% higher than those of girls. The reason(s) for this differential were not clear, but since boys tend to develop at a slower pace than girls, it is possible the increased time as a fetus means more time for boys' problems to develop.

Birthweights of babies born in sets tend to be about 1,000 grams (approximately 2.2 lbs) lighter. Multiples are born, on average, about four weeks earlier. Both can effect the health of the babies.

The news isn't all bad, though. In twins and higher-order multiples, the risk of congenital hip dislocation is lower than for singletons, as is the risk of pyloric stenosis.

It's not clear why the rate of birth defects is higher in twins than singletons. Crowding in the womb may cause positional problems, leading to so-called mechanical birth defects. Perhaps moms of multiples lack a sufficient nutritional supply, which affects fetal development. The researchers in this article also theorized that the increased use of technology to help get pregnant may play a role. ♡

*Reference: The Risk of Birth Defects in Multiple Births: A Population Based Study. Tang et al. Maternal and Child Health Journal, Vol. 10, No. 1, January, 2006.*

John Wood, MD, is a board-certified Family Physician working in a small town in Northern Minnesota. He will be writing frequent articles about dealing as a family with a twin who has special needs. Many TWINS™ subscribers have responded with letters and calls about topics for discussion, which Dr. Wood will address in forthcoming issues.



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# Coming out of the fog

By Kim Bleich

“Are they twins?” “Are they identical or fraternal?” “Do twins run in your family?”

These questions—all too familiar and frequent—make it difficult to be patient or gracious in reply. The question most puzzling to me is: “How do you do it?” I’m never quite sure what the questioner means by “it”—how do I stay sane? Or how do I manage to feed, change, clothe, bathe, play with, nurture, cuddle, and talk to two babies at once, and still find time to take them shopping, do the laundry, fix meals, and get any sleep?

People who pop this question probably aren’t looking for an answer so much as implying they couldn’t possibly handle “it,” indirectly expressing admiration for my ability to cope with (and survive) “it.”

At least I like to think that’s what their question implies. Sometimes this question brings tears to my eyes. It makes me stop and think about what it takes to raise twins: strength, faith, family, friends and a ton of stamina, especially during long, sleepless nights. My tears are tears of sadness and joy and accomplishment.

Through the tears I can see clearly now. The fog has lifted. I recall all too clearly what my babies’ twin stage was like. At times, I was lonely and hazy, especially during those first months when I slept hardly very little. I remember keeping a record on my bedside table of feeding times and which side each baby breastfed from. A lot of good it did—I’d be so tired I was sometimes unable to read my notes. I’d use a flashlight to avoid waking my husband; I’d squint, pull the chart close and shine the light directly on it, still unable to decipher it. My eyes wouldn’t focus.

During one of these moments I decided I didn’t need a sheet of paper to tell me who ate last and which side they’d breast-fed on. I picked up my fussy son, put him on my breast and we both relaxed.

His fussing eased as he began to nurse. I heaved a sigh of relief and realized, I can do this!

I gained confidence in my mothering skills. I kept the breastfeeding schedule as a reminder of those early days. I’ve put it in my twinnies’ baby book. It’s hard to read, even now, in the daylight with a full night’s sleep!

As our sons, Joshua and Caleb, turned 6 months old, their wonderful personalities began to emerge—more smiling, cooing, and babbling rather than the crying, fussing and sleeplessness we’d become accustomed to. My mood was transformed. I slept more at night and felt more like myself. I smiled and babbled more, too!

I remember this period as the calm before the storm. And if I’d known what lay ahead, I might have whipped-a-U-ee, as they say.

## A Level-2 hurricane

We left our twinkles’ baby stage in the dust, drifting into our toddler-twins phase with barely a sign things were a-changing. Suddenly, Josh’s and Caleb’s bright and shining personalities were intermittently replaced with scowls and a loud “No.” Not just a sweet little “No,” either, but a persistent, foot-stomping “NO.” If Josh or Caleb became frustrated trying to put a square block into a round hole, he didn’t just drop the block. He threw it, setting off chain reactions. Their daily explorations took on the characteristics of a level-2 hurricane.

My boys were enshrouded by a cloud of mischief that reminded me of the image of Charles Schultz’s Pigpen from the Peanuts cartoon strip enshrouded in a cloud of dirt. No shelved book was left undisturbed, no toy unturned, no bed neatly made. I would make the boys’ beds each morning, feeling a sense of accomplishment, only to find sheets, bedspreads and even mattresses on the floor later. Some days I failed to get one step ahead of them early enough, and spent the rest of the day several steps behind them. I discovered

many types of products could be used as hair gel—Vaseline, Desitin, and my personal favorite, KY Jelly! Caleb and Josh tried them all. The goo-of-the-day encased their hair and traveled wherever greasy hands adventured forth. Hairstyles created with these concoctions were priceless.

Before long we started down a road not of my choosing—the “nap-free” road. Naptime was important for me—a little slice of heaven every day—but no amount of effort could turn the clock back. Caleb and Josh were determined to put naptime aside. Nevermore would I be able to sit quietly with a book or call a dear friend without being interrupted by running water or the crunching of dog food.

My daily time to recoup disappeared. Without this bit of R&R, my days seemed long and lonely. The boys were relentless in their shenanigans and I grew tired, alone and stuck in a rut. My husband worked 24-hour shifts as a firefighter and had a part-time job besides. My eldest, Julia, attended kindergarten. The boys’ temper tantrums grew in fury and duration, and so did mine! Each day presented a huge challenge for me and even now as I recall that period of our lives, I’m overcome with emotion.

Despite the challenges, I know now—in hindsight—that it was during this tumultuous year that I grew the most, as an individual, mother, and wife. I learned to reach out for help. I learned to communicate more deeply and openly with my husband. And as a result, I kept my sanity. I began working part-time at a local fitness center, a great outlet for me, getting out of the house a couple days each week.

I only had this job for a year, but it was an answer to a prayer. I met many women and carried on conversations about religion and politics and food—getting beyond diapers and tantrums and kiddos! It helped clear the fog in my head.

Reminiscing makes me all the more thankful for the present. Joshua and Caleb are 6 now and life has changed tremendously. They use actual hair gel now and



temper tantrums have ceased, for them and for me! I've come out of the fog.

My husband worked with me, my friends prayed me through it, my family offered babysitting services, my faith gave me the strength each day to live life to the fullest. I've learned to enjoy each moment. My sense of humor remains intact and has served me well—when I felt like falling to the floor, curling up into a ball and crying silently, laughter would bubble up within me and the special parents-of-twins mantra would spring to mind: "This too will pass!"

Coming out of the fog as a parent of twins is like experiencing a spring day after the rain: Refreshing, revitalizing and worth relishing!

Kim Bleich lives in Melvin, Ill., with her husband of 14 years, Bill, and three children— Julia, 9, and twins Joshua and Caleb, 7. They live on a farm where the boys love to explore, and are ordered by Mom to empty all pockets of creepy crawlies, dirt, rocks or nails before entering the house. When she's not inspecting the boys, Kim can be found writing, running or playing soccer with the kids.

## 10 signs the (mental) fog is clearing:

1. You don't mix up your babies in the middle of night while feeding them in the dark.
2. You can throw the feeding schedule away...you've had enough sleep and you actually remember what happened a few hours ago.
3. You're out in public and no one asks you the infamous "Are they twins?" question, and you actually miss it.
4. You're able to shower, dress and apply make-up in the same day, even the same hour.
5. You leave a room with books on a table/shelf/chair, and return later to find the books untouched. (Ditto, for kitchen utensils, plastic bowls, bathroom supplies, bath toys, dog bowl, dog food, toilet lid, sink and faucet, dresser drawers, dresser surface, bed and bedsheets.)
6. The only coat, hat, shoes and socks you put on are your own.
7. You've quit using latch hooks on all the doors.
8. You've moved on from toddler beds to twin beds.
9. You removed the lock from the refrigerator door. (And you've resumed buying syrup, chocolate and ketchup.)
10. Diaper bag, what's that??



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# Homeschooling: Searching for the perfect answer

By Beckie Dague



Brothers Calvin, 10, Elra, 8, and twins Jared and Josh, 6, are all homeschooled by their mom, Monica Schelfhout.

**B**efore I had kids, I envisioned homeschooling them. I had always wanted to be a teacher and believed I could provide the best education for my kids. But when my son was 18 months old, I delivered twin girls. Life became so hectic with three kids 18 months apart, I was happy when it came time to send my son off to preschool two days a week, at age 3. The girls, in turn, followed when they turned 3.

My children, AJ, Brianna and Jessica, all loved school so much that I had nary a thought of homeschooling for a long time. I loved my time during the day to do other things—like attend school myself to finish up my teaching degree.

I told myself that if my children weren't getting a good education, I'd pull them out and homeschool them. My three kids are extremely fortunate—all three are considered by the public school system to be gifted and talented. The schools have done an acceptable job challenging my daughters, but for the past year or so, my son—now 10—has been demonstrating by his behaviors the boredom he has

experienced to varying degrees since kindergarten. His birth date was such that he was held back a year, so he's always been ahead of the other kids in his grade in ability, knowledge and skill, but not age.

Behavioral issues are emerging to a greater extent because of AJ's boredom, so I'm taking another close look at homeschooling. I'm not prepared to completely homeschool him; it seems overwhelmingly complex to be fully responsible for all lesson plans and ensure he learns everything the Colorado standards dictate. So I have sought alternatives other than the bricks-and-mortar public school he attends.

I found an online school for AJ's 4th grade year, which seems to provide the best option. I fully expect AJ will finish 4th and 5th grades quite quickly—with in a single school year, and be at a level that will challenge him more. The school provides us with a computer and printer, along with all the books required to fulfill their curriculum. This program tests each child at the beginning of the year and structures lesson plans around each

child's individual level. I have a teacher who will give AJ his assignments, so he will finally be learning at his level. And with him out of the public schools, I'm expecting his behavior will change.

My twin daughters, meanwhile, are switching to a gifted-and-talented charter school next year, where they will have a chance to excel. They enjoy school and enjoy their friends, and they also benefit enormously, I think, from being in a brick-and-mortar school setting. Leaving them there seems best for them.

Undertaking research for this article helped clarify my decision to seek an alternative to public school for AJ next year. Hearing the positives of homeschooling from families I interviewed helped me understand my decision to pull AJ out of his current school was best for him and us. Parents who have homeschooled their kids alleviated most of my concerns about homeschooling, particularly the socialization aspect.

Homeschooling isn't for everyone, but it is a great option for those who can do it. While I'm not a real homeschooler for my son, I now understand clearly how and why parents interviewed for this article decided to homeschool.

Many people who choose to homeschool their kids are Christians, and are powerfully motivated by their faith. Yet many secular homeschooling groups exist, as well, for people who choose homeschooling as an option not necessarily because of religion or the desire for a more values-based education, but because they want a better education for their children.

## Reasons for this choice

The reasons people homeschool are varied. Many families do so because of their faith, believing strongly they can raise their children with better morals by teaching them at home instead of having them exposed to secular, hedonistic influences for many hours each day.

Monica Schelfhout, Black Creek, Wisc., believes that as a result of her decision to homeschool her twins, she has much more control over what her children are taught and the other children with whom they associate on a regular

basis. Monica was homeschooled herself from 6th grade through high school, and is comfortable with the challenges it presents. She has four children, including 5-year-old twin sons.

Some families homeschool for the freedom it offers. They are able to plan their days to easily accommodate doctor appointments and field trips, and family activities so children aren't being pulled out of school for these events. Still other families that homeschool have children with developmental problems—epilepsy, seizures, OCD, the aftermath of premature births—and became so accustomed to engaging in therapy with their kids that homeschooling followed naturally. Some also have children with special educational needs that weren't being met by the public schools, prompting parents to invest the one-on-one attention through homeschooling that would enable their children to excel scholastically.

Another reason given for homeschooling is even more straightforward: Parents wanted to encourage their children's natural curiosity at young ages and got a jump-start on their education at age 3 or 4. Once the kids started learning, the parents saw how great it was to be able to teach the child to their level, rather than to their chronological age.

### Can a parent maintain adequate objectivity?


Janny Adams, Manchester, Mo., mother to 6-year-old boy/girl twins, is one such parent. She began exposing her children to phonics and math while they were still in preschool. When they were tested for kindergarten, the children were way ahead of the grade level of other children entering kindergarten, and the tester told Adams she had "done a disservice" to her kids by having taught them so much so early. They would be "bored in school, become behavior problems to the teacher and be disruptive in class," Adams was told. After this experience, Adams and her husband had a long talk about continuing to teach the kids at home.

After reading "The Well-Trained Mind," Stacey Craig and her husband "could see that we could provide our children a superior education because we would be consistent in our philosophy and omit the 'holes and repetitions' that often occur in schools (as children progress) from one teacher to the next."

Most families start homeschooling before their children enter kindergarten. Most homeschooled children have never attended a public school. There is a segment of homeschoolers, of course, who've pulled their older children from public schools for reasons including bullying by classmates, inadequate attention paid to the child, special education needs, and general disappointment with the public schools, and then went on to homeschool younger children once they grew old enough.

I wonder how I, as AJ's mother, will be able to maintain my objectivity when grading my own child's work. Could I ever give my child a failing grade—even if he deserved it? How do homeschooling moms grade their kids, how do they do it objectively, and do they ever give their own child a failing grade?

Lisa Westfall, Rio Rancho, N.M., who homeschools her three kids including 10-year-old identical twin sons, says, "The goal is to learn the material, not to pass or fail tests." So she, like many other





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parents who homeschool, don't concentrate as much on letter grades as public schools do. Most parents who homeschool focus on making sure their kids comprehend the material presented.

Amy Simpson, Virginia Beach, Va., has avoided letter grades entirely until her children were older and requested them. Like Lisa Westfall, Amy homeschools all three of her children, including identical twin girls, 10. She says, "Evaluation is a better word to describe how I judge my children's progress."

Kathie Weihe, Lafayette, Ind., believes grades are relatively unimportant in the early elementary years. Kathie has four children who are all being homeschooled, including boy/girl twins, 3. Instead, she asserts, comprehension is most important in the early years. But as the kids get older, grades become necessary. She gave her son a failing grade at one point because it was obvious he didn't put forth the required effort; he had to repeat that class during the summer. She says if she "gave him a passing grade that was undeserved," in the end she "would be teaching him to be lazy."

### Flexibility, building on interests

Families that homeschool learn quickly the importance of staying on a topic, and not moving to a new one, until their children completely understand the material.

This opportunity to move faster or slow down based on an individual child's needs and learning style is universally hailed as a major benefit of homeschooling. Children can move at their own pace, taking longer on some topics and cruising quickly through easier ones. This just doesn't happen in the public schools. One mom whose son would be in 3rd grade in the public school, but is already at 4th grade level in some subjects and 2nd grade in others, teaches at his level in every subject and doesn't move on until she is sure he comprehends everything.

Homeschoolers like being able to teach their children whatever subjects they want in whatever order they choose. A child interested in learning about the Civil War can tackle that subject now, in-

stead of waiting until a syllabus says it's time to learn that history. Rachel Munk, for example, teaches topics when her children are interested in them, striking while the iron is hot as the adage goes. Munk, who lives in Indiana and has four children, including 4½-year-old triplet sons, reasons, "What better time to dive in to research and study things than when your children really have a genuine interest in a particular subject?"

### Varying instructional styles

Some people think twins each have the same learning styles and one lesson can be taught to both children the same way. Hence, homeschooling should be easy, right? Homeschooling twins, like dealing with twins in general, cannot be generic. Each child is different, even if they're monozygotic (MZ, identical) twins. One may be a visual learner and the other an auditory learner; one may need more hands-on activities (kinesthetic learning) while the other sits down with a book and doesn't need active help.

Families that homeschool vary their instruction to suit each child's individual needs. Most parents said their twins invariably have different learning styles. Lessons have to be differentiated and tailored to each child. Stacey Craig says, "Homeschooling, like classroom teaching, requires constant tweaking to meet the needs of all the students. The benefit is that with only two students, I can immediately see when they don't understand, and can adapt my teaching style on the spot." Stacey, who lives in Tulsa, Okla., was a high school English teacher for 11 years before she had twin girls, who are now 6.

One mom said she's had a hard time developing and teaching two variations on the same lesson, but she is learning to

do this comfortably after three years. Another mom bought two different curricula to ensure her children get an education based on their separate learning needs. She makes different lesson plans for each child, using different books. When her twins were both in elementary school, she used some of the same material, but assigned different tasks to each.

Curricula used by homeschoolers vary almost as much as reasons given for homeschooling in the first place. A lot of good curriculum programs exist if parents want to spend significant amounts of money. Jasmine Neil, Winter Haven, Fla., was initially so gung-ho she "wanted to buy everything in sight," but eventually started using books by E.D. Hirsch Jr., and many other free resources available. She checks the state's website frequently to follow the state standards for her 6-year-old twin sons' grade levels.

### Vast resources available

Many homeschooling families use a wide range of free resources including the Internet, the public library, books, field trips, workbooks, games and hands-on exploration. They also network within their homeschool co-ops, and they share resources. Some send their kids to another homeschool family for instruction in one subject, such as math, or even to a local recreation center for PE. They might use a local museum for a weekly homeschool Science class.

Families quite often use one curriculum for one subject and a different curriculum for another subject—whatever works best for their children. Stacey Craig uses "real" books instead of textbooks, "such as biographies and single-subject nonfiction books" to teach her children, except for math. For that she uses a standard textbook.

The following websites should tell you all you need to know about regulations in your state, or where to go to find specific regulations for your state.

[www.hslda.org](http://www.hslda.org)  
Home School Legal  
Defense Association

[www.neri.org](http://www.neri.org)  
National Home Education  
Research Institute

## Glimpsing a typical day

There seems to be no such thing as a “typical day” for families that homeschool. Days vary depending on the mood of the kids, appointments or other things going on, the weather, and different field trips.

Most lessons are done in the morning, and afternoons are reserved for the doctor, classes such as ballet, bowling, PE, science, playdates, library time, and catching up on what didn't get done in the morning.

Some families have a “school room” inside their homes with a chalkboard, desks and books, so they still “go” to school even though it is at home. Others try to avoid the appearance of the public school setting, and allow the kids to do their schoolwork wherever they are most comfortable—this might be at the kitchen table, or in the car.

Monica Schelfhout, the mom of 5-year-old twin sons in Black Creek, Wisc., encourages her children to start on their most challenging subjects first thing in the morning when they are “fresh” and save easier subjects for later in the day when they are getting tired.

Some families conduct school year-round; others give kids summers off.

## Social skills of homeschoolers

“Going to school” provides a social setting in which kids learn to cooperate, collaborate, negotiate and mature socially as members of a group. Homeschooled kids at home all day doing schoolwork aren't around other kids as often.

Yet homeschoolers are usually engaged in many outside activities. Some families I spoke to seem much busier than mine, and I'm a mom of three myself, running from activity to activity.

Lisa Westfall, whose ID boys are now 10, says there is no shortage of activities and opportunities in her hometown of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, for her twins' socialization. “We join other homeschoolers for field trips, park days, chess, game and poetry events, holiday parties, World Traveler Geography club once a month, scouts, PE, classes held by local museums, theater events at the university, Science

Club, roller- and ice skating, baseball/lacrosse/basketball games, music lessons, and on and on....”

Parents have more control and worry less about their children's friends, because they get to know the people well in this group of homeschooling families. There's much less bullying than in public school settings.

## Grade level and advancement

Cynthia Chan, Lexington Park, Md., sums up the thoughts of almost every parent critical of school settings when she says, “Where else in your life will you spend the majority of your time with people your own age?” She is confident her children “are well adjusted, capable children who possess the ability to have intelligent and interesting conversations with people of all ages as a result of homeschooling.” Cynthia's seven kids aren't all homeschooled. Three are in public high schools and two are in public elementary schools. Her 5-year-old twin sons, however, will be better off homeschooled, she's convinced.

Most children of homeschooling families seem more well-rounded than public schooled children, to me at least, probably resulting from the opportunities they have to talk to so many children of other ages, rather than just children their own age and a few teachers.

Most homeschooling families follow the public schools' grade-level system, based on age. So if their child is 5, they are in Kindergarten; 6, in 1st grade, etc. That makes it much easier for a child when someone asks what grade she is in. The child also feels more connected to peers who attend public schools.

Even though a parent may say their child is in 1st grade, the child may be working at a different grade level—higher or lower—since most homeschool parents teach their children based on learning level, not age.

Homeschooled children advance year to year to higher grades as long as they comprehend the material. Once in junior high (middle school) or high school, more structured tests must be

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To learn more about how you can submit information for possible inclusion, or to purchase a calendar, please visit [www.fetalhope.org](http://www.fetalhope.org).



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passed before advancing to a higher-level class. Most then graduate based on credit hours completed.

### Homeschool regs vary by state

Homeschool regulations vary by state, based on compulsory school age, attendance and how to track attendance, required subjects, teaching qualifications (regulations govern the education level a parent must have to homeschool), notification requirements of intent to homeschool, necessary recordkeeping (shots, attendance, what has been taught, etc.) and required testing each year.

Homeschooling is a very personal decision. But homeschooling has become mainstream. Pioneers of homeschooling since the 1970s have paved the way for a huge national trend. College admission is easier for homeschoolers now; some colleges now seek homeschoolers because of their ability to study independently and succeed on their own.

Beckie Dague lives in Aurora, Colo., with her twin daughters and son. She is a founding member of the Colorado Parents of Multiples (CPOM) and is an active member of the Littleton MOMs club. She was a member of the TWINS™ Magazine staff on a regular part-time basis, for a year.

## TWinfo

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Walgreen's around the country. Or take a look online and purchase it from the twin sisters themselves. [www.nothrow.com](http://www.nothrow.com)



## Resources for parents who homeschool:

### BOOKS:

*The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home*, Revised and Updated Edition, by Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise

*What Your Kindergartner Needs to Know: Preparing Your Child for a Lifetime of Learning* (Core Knowledge Series), by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. (K thr. 6th grade)

*Homeschool Your Child for Free*, by Laura Maery Gold & Joan M. Zielinski

*Home Learning Year by Year: How to Design a Homeschool Curriculum from Preschool Through High School*, by Rebecca Rupp

*The Complete Home Learning Source Book: The Essential Resource Guide for Homeschoolers, Parents, and Educators Covering Every Subject from Arithmetic to Zoology*, by Rebecca Rupp

*100 Top Picks For Homeschool Curriculum: Choosing The Right Curriculum And Approach For Your Child's Learning Style*, by Cathy Duffy

*The First Year of Homeschooling Your Child: Your Complete Guide to Getting Off to the Right Start*, by Linda Dobson

### CURRICULUM GUIDES:

Sonlight, <http://www.sonlight.com/>

Winter Promise, <http://www.winterpromise.com/>

Horizon, <http://www.aop.com/horizons/>

Saxon, <http://saxonpublishers.harcourtachieve.com/en-US/saxonpublishers.htm>

A Beka, <http://www.abeka.com/>

Right Start Math, <http://www.alabacus.com/>

Hooked on Phonics, <http://secure.hop.com/>

### WEBSITES:

Home School Legal Defense Association, [www.hslda.org](http://www.hslda.org)

National Home Education Research Institute, [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)

Treasured Time for Homeschoolers, [http://www.terriebittner.com/worthy\\_sites.html](http://www.terriebittner.com/worthy_sites.html)

Home School Families of Twins, <http://home.flash.net/~hsft/>

Over 4,000 Yahoo groups for homeschooling parents; curriculum ideas, textbook swaps, support, Christian homeschooling, secular homeschooling, homeschooling twins, boys, girls, for working mothers, many other topics.

### FREE RESOURCES:

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

[www.first-school.com](http://www.first-school.com)

[www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com)

[www.learningpage.com](http://www.learningpage.com)

[www.abcteach.com](http://www.abcteach.com)

[www.abeka.org](http://www.abeka.org)

[www.learningshop.com](http://www.learningshop.com)



Even little guys like Luke and Liam, 10 months, can dream...they think Halloween is full of fun as Batman and Robin superheroes.

### HireMyMom.com links SAHMs with corporate jobs

With nearly 5½ million moms putting careers on hold to stay home and raise children, Lesley Spencer Pyle's new HireMyMom.com aims to match professionals (minimum 1-2 years experience in field of expertise) who want to work from home with companies looking to outsource temporary and permanent projects. Neither employers nor moms pay fees to go through HireMyMom.com. SAHMs, however, pay \$99/year or \$29.95/quarter to join the online linking service (200+ women are members currently). Pyle also founded in 1995 Home-Based Working Moms, a national association with 450 members that provides networking and support for moms with home-based businesses.

### Meeting at 2006 Twins Days Fest results in double-double wedding

ID twin sisters Mary and Melissa Wood are extremely close friends—co-valedictorians of their senior class in HS, both summa cum laude grads from nursing school, both critical care nurses—and figured the only way they'd ever marry would be to meet twin brothers. In 2006 they attended Twins Days in Twinsburg, Ohio, for the first time. Their last evening before heading home to Rochester, N.H., they went to an all-twin bowling tournament and met fraternal twin brothers Jeff and Matt Lemke from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Cupid's arrows hit their marks. Jeff and Mary paired up, and Melissa and Matt made a couple. The two sets were married in August following a year of emailing, visiting each other and meeting families. The newlyweds have settled in a small community near Madison, Wisc., after purchasing a newly constructed duplex for privacy but continued closeness.



Melissa and Matt (left) and Jeff and Mary were married in Middleton, Wisc., where they've relocated and taken new jobs.

Catherine and Benjamin, 8 months



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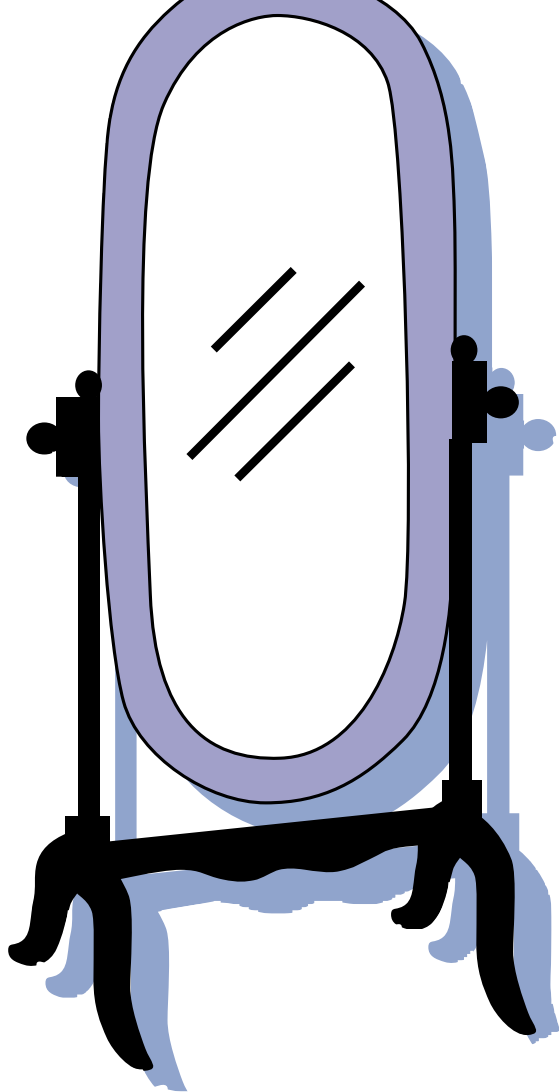


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## What's it like being a twin?

By Jennifer Pelly

“Hey, has anyone ever told you that you two look alike?” Throughout my life, I have heard this question about four billion times. No, that is not an exaggeration; it must be at least four billion. My identical twin, Elizabeth Marie Pelly, and I look exactly alike. And people tell us that all the time. (As if we didn't know!)

She was born seven minutes before me (probably the longest seven minutes of her life) on July 4, 1989. We have blonde hair, blue eyes, and many other matching traits. One day, I would really like to respond to this oft-repeated question with, “Do you really think you are the first one to notice?”

“What's it like being a twin?” Interesting question, heard about as often as the earlier one. But honestly, it's hard to answer, because I have no idea what it's like NOT being a twin. I've been one my entire life—my twin sister has always been there. Yet I think it's about time I finally answered that question: Being

an identical twin is ridiculous! (I mean that in the best possible sense, of course.)

When we were about 2, my sister would stand in front of a mirror thinking it was me she was looking at. She would ask mom why I was inside of the mirror. I did the same thing, not understanding at that age the concept of a reflection. Our parents explained many times that we were seeing a reflected image of ourselves, not our twin sister. It took quite a while for us to catch on.

Then, one day a few years later, Liz asked me to stand in front of her so she could see how she looked. Mom knew it was time to buy us each a mirror of our own. Things like this have always made me laugh; they're just twin things.

As we grew older, we finally started realizing that as twins, we had an advantage many other students in our classes lacked: We could share answers to homework. So I would tackle the math homework, Liz would complete the biology homework, and we'd swap. We thought we were so clever, cutting our workloads by half. We'd cleverly rephrase answers so our teachers wouldn't notice. (In reality, it probably took as long to reword each answer as it would have taken to do the assignments.) We quickly outgrew that habit, but as freshmen we loved this twinly perk.

That same year, we “shared” a picture in our 9th grade yearbook. Pictures for the yearbook were taken during lunch periods, but I was under pressure to complete a pile of social studies work on picture day. So after having her picture taken, my sister donned my sweatshirt, walked back and handed the photographer my form, and pretended to be me. He had no idea this was the same student who'd been there two minutes ago. My sister and I, and our classmates, thought it was hilarious the same person appeared in the yearbook twice that year. Our friends remember it still.

Is this a good or bad thing? Who knows? It's just a twin-thing.

Another thing: I've never known what it's like to be lonely. I've had a built-in best friend forever. Most friends come and go, I've learned; but not my sister. We've always been there for each other. We hear kids at school boast they've been best friends for nearly seven years, and we laugh, thinking, “Try seventeen years!”

Our friendship has translated into far more self-confidence for me in my everyday life than I would otherwise have had. I've rarely entered situations alone. And when I did, I've known that whatever the outcome, even if I fail, my sister will be waiting to let me know it's okay.

My sister and I took our first plane ride together, our first trip to Europe together, went to Disneyland together, had our first boyfriends together, and went into Manhattan by ourselves for the first time together. We were both published for the first time together, attended our first AP class together, took first violin lessons together and attended our first concert (and all thereafter) together. We started our first band together.

We obsessed over the Spice Girls and 'Nsync together, had our first jobs together, visited Aruba, the Bahamas, and Curacao together. We've been Girl Scouts together since kindergarten, and created our first website together; together we took ballet, visited



*Seventeen Magazine*, discovered a love of fashion and a passion for writing. An endless list of shared experiences. We probably haven't been apart for more than two days at a time in our lives.

Being a twin is ridiculous. On any given Tuesday, I know she'll show up at a certain time to have tea with me in the kitchen, while everyone else is fast asleep.

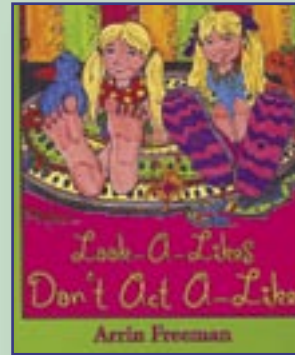
What's mine is hers; what's hers is mine. We've shared homework answers, a bedroom, and (though it resulted in endless bickering) clothes. We often start and finish each other's sentences.

Yet we don't share a brain. We're two individual brains who have been working together as a team since the second we were brought into the world (talk about synchronicity). Our bond is the strongest I have ever seen; together, we could take over the world. But I think we'll just stick to writing for now.

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Jennifer Pelly, 18, was a senior at Massapequa High School on Long Island, where she lives with her parents and two sisters, when she sent this to TWINS. She was Editor-in-Chief of her school newspaper, a contributor to *The Long Island Press*, a stringer for *CosmoGirl Magazine*, a Girl Scout, and an honor student. She has previously contributed to ELLEgirl.com, FashionWeekDaily.com, *TeenInk Magazine*, and *Newsday*. Jennifer dreams of being a fashion journalist for *The New York Times* and contributor to other publications. Jennifer received the New York Women in Communications Scholarship for 2007, and will study Communications and English at Fordham University.

## BOOK SPOTLIGHT



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# Living with a twin's Type 1 diabetes— coping when the roof caves in

By Heather Hopkins

When my husband and I decided to have children, our problems conceiving sent us to the fertility clinic. Our doctor said it would be best to begin the in vitro fertilization process right away. Overwhelmed, we agreed.

The fertility gods blessed us with twins, a boy and a girl. Thrilled, we slowly let our secret out, sharing with friends and family news of the two little miracles on their way. Complications led to complete bedrest in my 5th month. I developed preeclampsia and signs of gestational diabetes. At 31 weeks I was rushed to the hospital and had a c-section a week later. Jackson and Taylor spent three weeks in the NICU before coming home to begin our life together.

Life with twins proceeded normally, if life with twins is ever really normal. Before long, the babies held their bottles, fed themselves, entertained themselves. They asserted their individual personalities. Poof! Four years elapsed and suddenly we planned trips as a family. Taylor and Jackson had playdates and learned to go it alone. They clambered downstairs each morning and learned to get their own breakfasts...well, almost. Spilled milk happened. They dressed themselves and buckled their own seatbelts. Life was good. We were happy.

Our twins had potty-trained two years earlier. But my daughter began to have trouble. Taylor wet her pants and her bed and constantly asked us for more to drink. About every 10 minutes, she'd beg, "Mommy, just one more sip, please! Just one more sip of water." Then she'd have to use the potty just as often. Jackson was sleeping in underpants, but Tay-

lor was still wearing pull-ups. She'd go to bed at eight o'clock each night, but by ten her bed was soaked through. She'd never had this problem before.

In hindsight, I recall Taylor seemed tired at times, too, but it wasn't a serious worry we kept close tabs on. She'd be ravenous one minute and not hungry at all the next. I chalked all this up to her being 4 years old. Except Jackson showed

it was a Friday afternoon. I drove Taylor to the office for a urine test, which came back negative. I was relieved, but it felt wrong to me. The doctor said she would send Taylor's urine to the lab for more testing, and advised more blood work. Somewhat reassured, I went home and called the following Tuesday morning to find out where Taylor should go for additional tests. A minute passed as the nurses located the doctor.

"Mrs. Hopkins, I'm glad you called," she said. "I have the results right in front of me and it doesn't look good."

My heart broke.

I rushed to Taylor's school so I could get her to the hospital immediately for blood work, barely able to see through my tears as I drove. My husband arrived at the hospital to meet us; we looked at each other, tears filling our eyes. We knew what was coming even before hearing the results were in.

Within minutes of our arriving home, the doctor called. "Pack a bag for your daughter," she said. "Taylor has to come to the hospital now." We headed for Goryeb Children's Hospital at Morristown Memorial in Morristown, N.J. The second we arrived, an IV was started. Taylor wailed. We hit rock bottom.

For three days, doctors, nurses, and nutritionists explained facts and procedures. I barely heard them. My mind whirled. "My daughter has diabetes.... My daughter has diabetes." I didn't understand. We were good people. We didn't deserve this. I blamed myself. I blamed God. I blamed the fact they were premature by two months. I blamed in vitro fertilization. I sulked.

And all the while, the doctors and nurses kept talking. "You have to learn



none of these signs. As the days passed, my irritation turned to concern. Concern became anxiety.

I asked friends if their children, too, displayed these symptoms. Everyone shook their heads no. About two weeks later, my husband came home from work worried. Chris had talked to a co-worker about Taylor and learned that Taylor's symptoms sounded like juvenile diabetes.

Denial set in. I shook my head. She doesn't have diabetes, I told myself. That's not what's happening here. But my gut churned. Chris placed a hand on my shoulder, and my heart sank.

I immediately called our pediatrician;

this, Mrs. Hopkins,” they urged. I nodded and continued crying. Many times they stopped speaking, as my sobs drowned out their voices.

My parents and in-laws came to the hospital. We all needed to learn about the Type 1 diabetes and how to manage it. I spent sleepless nights in Taylor’s room, testing her blood every few hours and giving insulin shots. I never thought I would be able to give anyone a shot, let alone to my own child.



The Hopkins family celebrates with a special visitor who arrived to surprise Jackson and Taylor.

I learned, though, that it wasn’t difficult to give Taylor her insulin. The vials were very small. The lines on the tiny needles were difficult to see but once I got the hang of it, I could do it. I learned to pull air into the needle at the amount to be given and then push that air back into the vial of insulin; then I’d flip the whole thing upside down and pull down the lever to draw the insulin back into the needle.

The worst of it was having the nurse and me hold down my daughter, while I’d wipe a clean spot on her arm or leg and pop the needle in. She cried every time.

The caregivers gave Taylor a teddy bear called “Rufus, the Diabetes Bear.” He had diabetes, too, and had patches on his body where he’d had the needles and finger-pricks. Taylor loved Rufus and hugged him when she was given her shots. Later, my mother found a girl bear named “Ruby, the Diabetes Bear” who became Taylor’s new favorite to hold while given her insulin.

For Taylor to leave the hospital re-

quired more than a stable condition. Each of us had to grow in ways we didn’t want. I began to hear the doctors; my sobs eased. I read the manual on children’s diabetes cover-to-cover several times. I learned about the highs and lows. I learned the signs of trouble to watch for—when Taylor’s blood sugar drops too low she might appear drowsy and slur her words. If she’s having a blood sugar high she could become groggy and thirsty and have to urinate. I learned many people with diabetes lead normal and wonderful lives and there is hope for my daughter’s future.

After only three days, Chris and I were ready. Taylor’s IV was removed, and we awaited the doctor for discharge. I stood over Taylor’s bed. She’d lost a lot of weight and her eyes were sunken, yet, nonetheless, she looked healthier than when we had arrived only a few days earlier.

Taylor looked up at me and said, “Mommy, you’re not crying anymore. Does that mean I’m better?” I cried, this time because I was happy. She was better now, not cured, but improved.

Taylor’s and Jackson’s 4th birthday party was the following day. Twenty-five happy-go-lucky children were coming. Every bone in my body told me to cancel, but I couldn’t. Jackson was so excited. He hadn’t seen mommy in three days and he was lonesome.

I hadn’t allowed Jackson to come to the hospital to see Taylor and me, figuring that I didn’t want him to see me crying and carrying on. Plus, I reasoned, children with all sorts of illnesses, not just diabetes, surrounded us. Better to be safe than sorry.

That was a bad decision on my part. I should have let him come. It would have helped ease him through the changes in his sister and in our lives, especially at that age. Now, he needed a celebration—some-

thing that was for him. This is where having twins is difficult. If it had been a party for a younger or older sibling, I could have left Taylor with my mother. But it was “their” party. I had to go through with it, and they both had to come.

I fretted over it with the doctor and the nurses. “What will she eat?” I asked. “How much can I feed her?” I worried.

They tried to calm me. I grew defensive with my husband and relatives. “She has to eat at 3:00 o’clock sharp! So, whether the kids are ready or not, I’m feeding them!”

The party started at 2:30. As kids arrived, I clambered to seat everyone, handing out number-4-shaped donuts to each. I was a wreck.

My friends and family all helped. They were great. I breathed a little easier, and kept glancing over at Jackson, who was so happy. I looked at Taylor and she was happy too. She needed this just as much as he did. She had half of a donut and played with the rest of the kids. Watching her, you would never have known what she’d just been through.

A few hours later, they opened their gifts. Everything was normal. Jackson was ripping through gifts left and right, while Taylor played with each one individually. Then, suddenly, Jackson asked for a snack, and so did Taylor.

“It’s not time to eat yet,” I told Jackson. “Taylor can’t have anything right now, so we’ll wait until later.”

He thrust his little fists into the air. “No, Mommy. I’m hungry now.”

“Well, you can have a piece of cheese or chicken.” I said. Protein doesn’t affect Taylor’s blood sugar. Protein she can have at any time, if she is begging for food.

Jackson huffed. Cheese and chicken sufficed that afternoon, but Jackson saw the future. Meal and snack times were set now, and they would revolve around Taylor.

Since the children attend private school, the school is under no legal obligation to help manage Taylor’s diabetes. (Only public schools are federally mandated to take care of children with such diseases.) The director of the school,

however, immediately learned how to test Taylor at lunchtime and to give insulin when needed.

Still, managing juvenile diabetes requires more than knowledge about shots and insulin. Our nanny accompanied Taylor every day, and stayed with her until the teachers and the school's director knew what symptoms to look for, thus preventing an attack. Taylor has to eat all of her snack, and it has to be a pre-measured snack. She has to eat all of her carefully pre-measured lunch.

Jackson takes good care of her. He knows that she has to eat everything or her blood sugar will drop—not that he necessarily knows what that means. Jackson is determined to make sure Taylor eats when she needs to. Once, she dropped her yogurt on the classroom floor, spilling it, and Jackson ran over and gave his to her. That, right there, is the blessing of twins.

But after a while, Jackson began to withdraw. He'd always been the outgoing, laughable, cuddly child but now sat quietly, his face sometimes vacant, sometimes grim. We started to shower him with attention. We created Mommy-and-Son Day, when he comes to work with me. We also created Daddy-and-Son Day, when Jackson accompanied Chris to the office.

We talked to Jackson until we were blue in the face about Taylor and her condition. I think now, looking back, talking to him did the most good. He understood, as much as a 4-year-old can, that his sister was sick and we needed to prick her and give shots so she would stay healthy and be at home. I let both children give me a shot, so they could see it didn't hurt.

Jackson knew he didn't want Taylor to be sick anymore. He didn't like her at the hospital. But, most of all, he didn't like mommy there, either.

One day, as Jackson and I sat and watched television together, I asked, for the umpteenth time, "Do you have any questions about Taylor?"

He shook his head. "No Mommy, I don't want to talk about it anymore."

My brow furrowed.

Looking up, he smiled at me.

I knew that he was okay.

There were days when Taylor was great with her shots; other times, we had to pin her down. She asked me when her diabetes was going away. I held her close, telling her the truth. "It won't go away," I told her gently. She cried.

The blessing-in-disguise for Taylor, and for us, is that she is 4 years old. The average age for the onset of juvenile diabetes is 11 or 12 years. In Taylor's case, it's all she'll ever know—she won't miss the freedoms of childhood such as forgetting that you're hungry because you're playing so hard; the all-afternoon-romps with nothing more than imagination in your back pocket; the carefree overnights where friends' parents don't have to learn how to give insulin injections.

We can only hope a cure is soon to follow and that, maybe, she'll experience the freedoms of adulthood. We've been in touch with a few families in the area who have daughters with diabetes. We bring the children together to play. Even if they have nothing else in common, they have this. It's something my daughter needs.

We plan to go to Camp Neveda this summer, a diabetic camp in upstate New Jersey. Twice a summer, families can stay in cabins for three days and meet and learn with many other families who have children with Type 1 diabetes. We all look forward to this.

It's been almost seven months. Taylor takes her shots like a big girl now and doesn't squirm much. She knows she needs insulin and it allows her to eat food. We have a decent handle on things.

We still need Mommy-and-Son Days, or Daddy-and-Son Days, but Jackson's need lessens each month. We even have Mommy-and-Daughter Days sometimes when Taylor feels she needs one.

We make sure to give Jackson just as much attention as we give Taylor. But we encounter many bumps in the road.



Jackson Hopkins was pretty happy to have Taylor come home from the hospital.

When Taylor's sick, she doesn't want to eat. We've adjusted her levels of insulin many times. Just when we think we have it right, she'll go through a growth spurt and we have to adjust again.

Thankfully there are many advances in technology for the treatment of diabetes. There's talk of

perfecting the pancreas transplant, developing an artificial pancreas, and there's increasing use of insulin pumps to avoid daily shots. Pumps are becoming better each year.

I still cry when I talk about Taylor's lifelong challenge, but the situation is different now. I realize Type 1 diabetes is not the end of the world. It's manageable and not so hard to keep under control. It's time consuming, yes. And worrisome. But it is part of our life now, and it's part of Taylor's life forever.

That's what really breaks my heart. I can't fix it for her. She'll have to take over someday, and the burden will rest on her shoulders. I do know that, with the help of organizations like the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation ([www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org)) things will get better. Right now, Taylor is a normal 4½-year-old little girl. You'd never know by looking at her that she has this devastating disease. It's my job to keep her healthy and under control. It's my job to let her know how strong she is and how proud I am of her.

She's very happy and very sweet. She dances all over the house and is full of big smiles when she goes to school and sees her friends. Taylor loves birthday parties and playdates. She loves life. When I ask her what she wants for her 5th birthday, she says she wants a puppy dog. I suggested to her we'll probably start with a fish.

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Heather Richelson-Hopkins, CFM, works full-time for Merrill Lynch and is a writer on the side. She lives in Scotch Plains, N.J., with her husband and their 4-year-old boy/girl twins.

# Middle school teacher becomes a mompreneur after twins arrive

**E**rin Lynch works from home, operating the local Stroller Strides franchise in Camarillo, Calif., with a partner. She wanted to be home with her twins, Aidan and Molly, but she wanted to work, too. So she found the best of all worlds: an at-home business.

Before twins arrived in early 2004, Erin taught junior high English. “Some aspects of teaching junior high prepared me for this,” says Erin—learning to be punctual and prepared, manage a classroom, plan lessons, and work with large groups.

Erin and her husband, Bill, decided Erin should stay home with the twins. But, being a first-time mother, Erin admits she “had no idea what motherhood held in store for me! My husband is a fire department Captain, whose job requires 24-hour shifts and sometimes several days away from home.”

## Finding the perfect ‘fit’

Erin and Bill had befriended Wendy during a parenting class for first-time parents. Wendy and Erin attended some ‘Mommy and Me’-type programs together with their infants. “I shied away from going to these classes, because having two infants in a one-on-one type of class wasn’t easy,” Erin recounts.

Wendy approached Erin with the idea of purchasing a Stroller Strides franchise, and Erin was “simply elated at the idea, because not only do I love to teach and to work-out, but it was an ideal home-based job I could do with both of my children.”

They called Stroller Strides’ corporate office in San Diego and began their journey. Stroller Strides offers prenatal and postnatal exercise programs through “fitness franchises.”

They would need to invest about \$5,600 (total) to purchase a franchise and start the business. Erin needed to attend Stroller Strides’ training, pass exams for certification as an instructor, and obtain CPR certification.

Erin and Wendy teach hour-long ‘Strides’ classes three days a week (M-W-F) at 9:15 a.m. She offers a Family Day one Saturday a month to encourage families to workout and experience the Strides program together. She plans weekly playgroup activities for children of moms in her Strides group, plans once-a-month field trips for moms and their children, and coordinates a monthly Mom’s Night Out for her group to have a relaxing evening.

## Hard work, good role-modeling

“My children attended all training classes with me, and I do most of my planning, phone calls and emailing while they’re napping—or in the evening after they’ve gone to bed,” Erin told TWINS™.

Erin and Wendy purchased their Strides franchise when Erin’s twins were 20 months. Erin’s favorite aspect of her home-based business is she’s able to be with her children all the time. “I’m there to witness every milestone, and be a major influence in shaping their lives,” Erin says.

As a Strides teacher, Erin’s pleased she’s a positive role model for her kids. “My children are learning the importance of exercise and leading a healthy lifestyle, not to mention they’ve learned to count forward, backwards and in Spanish with the moms in our group, while we are counting repetitions,” she laughs. “And at only 3½, they’ve already learned their ABC’s and memorized numerous nursery rhymes that we sing to the children while exercising. Just from attending classes with me they have grown and learned a lot.”

Franchise-owners have to make a major commitment when they start a business. Even after a sleepless night, or with a sick or tired child, or if not feeling tip-top herself, Erin knows she has to show up for her classes—rain or shine.

Nonetheless, Erin has “no complaints,” and wouldn’t change a thing if she had it to do over again.

Stroller Strides, designed for moms

who have young child(ren) with them, is kid-friendly for moms as franchise-owners/instructors. That’s a huge plus for Erin.

After three years of doing this, Erin envisions herself operating her Strides franchise indefinitely, but her role may change as her twins begin school. “We’re in the process of hiring another instructor, which will enable us to offer more classes. As time goes by, I may function more as a manager of the business,” Erin said.

Other Strides franchisees repeatedly warned Erin and Wendy not to expect enormous revenues (i.e., sales) during the first couple of years of owning their franchise. But business took off very quickly, and Wendy proudly says she’s “brought in a paycheck every month since our startup.” She’s not had to invest any more money of her own in the business since their Stroller Strides began.

A typical class size for Wendy and Erin is 15 women; the smallest class they have had is seven, the largest, 22. Most moms attend their Stroller Strides classes three times a week, and remain active in their Strides group until their kids are about 4, says Erin. A fee of \$55 a month includes unlimited classes, so the value is good. ♥

## Stroller Strides®...

...has 200 franchisees in over 300 locations around the U.S. Founder Lisa Druxman has a master’s degree in psychology with emphasis in exercise adherence and weight control. She’s been in the fitness field since 1990, and created a weight management program called LEAN in use at health clubs. She has lectured and taught at The Golden Door and Rancho La Puerta. Her “Aha!” moment came after her son was born and she had no time to go to the gym. History was made.

Strides also sells clothing, equipment, publishes a newsletter for participants, offers recipes and was recently named one of *Working Mother Magazine’s* Top 25 companies to work for. [www.strollerstrides.com](http://www.strollerstrides.com)

# Ask the Twins Nanny!

by Michelle LaRowe  
Multiples-Nanny Specialist

## ...and Twininfants make four!

...or they will, come December.

As a nanny with more than a decade of experience in caring for multiples, I often receive frantic calls from mothers of multiples asking me to come to their rescue, literally. I always do my best to offer soothing words of encouragement, and I share some tried and true tips over the phone. But every now and then I'm able to schedule a personal visit and invest hands-on time with a family, providing practical guidance and support on managing multiples.

About six months ago, I was preparing to re-enter the world of full-time multiples-nannying after taking a short break. I had worked on writing another book, done some media tours, conducted parenting workshops, and consulted with families that have multiples. Planning a wedding and settling into my new role as a homeowner had temporarily been my full-time career. But I soon missed the daily grind of working full-time with twins.

I put the word out that I was looking for a new position—and my agent knew the drill. By now, “Must have multiples!” is probably stamped boldly and permanently on my file.

The phone rang at just the right time. My placement agent couldn't get the words out of her mouth fast enough. “I found you the perfect job!” she blurted. Knowing full well that I like a challenge, she was sure I'd be eager to tackle what she had in store. Family with baby girl born September, 2004. Baby boy born November, 2006. And twininfants due December, 2007! That's right friends—an almost 3-year-old, an almost 1-year-old, and twins due when baby #2 is barely walking or talking, and is still in diapers.

Recently, I've had the joy of working on several short-term consulting assignments with families that had singleton babies before having twins, as well. These projects have given me the opportunity

to hone my skills, adapt some of my techniques, and improvise in order to respond to the unique dynamics that exist in families as diversified as these. So I was really ready for this new assignment.

I rolled up my sleeves, dove in head first, and began helping prepare my “new” family for twins. I'm engaged in everything from nursery organization to preparing the parents and their kids for what's in store when December winds begin to blow.

Here's what I'm doing to make welcoming the multiples home and manag-

ing gifts for each of the twins, picking out nursery accessories or toys, and helping choose names.

We've been showing the children pictures of Mom's pregnancy with each of them, and talking about what life was like when each of them was “on the way.” This can help head off feelings of jealousy and insecurity. Talking about the ways you took care of them when they were tiny babies and viewing videos and snapshots of Mom and Dad feeding, bathing and changing them provide sin-



Like the family our TWINS Nanny is helping, this one has its hands full, with four kids close in age—Grace (far left), 6, came first, followed by Julia (far right), 4, and twins Ben and Sam, 18 months.

ing the older siblings as successful and stress-free as possible.

Preparing the soon-to-be siblings for the arrival of a terrifying-two-some can seem a doubly daunting task. But I want both kids involved from the start, to help promote positive feelings towards the twininfants. It'll help ease the children's transition into big-sister and big-brotherhood.

There are a hundred different ways to get your children involved so they play a part in welcoming twins into the family. Many of these are simple things, such as talking openly about the upcoming birth of the twins, reading books about twin babies, making

gletons with insights into the demands of caring for a new baby (or two!) in ways they can understand.

We've solidified the family's daily routine that includes daily alone-time with each child well before the twins arrive. This helps make the children's transition less chaotic when two new family members enter the picture and turn their little worlds upside down. Having as many unchanging aspects of each child's day-to-day routine helps keep little ones from feeling uncomfortable in the face of change. Have established meal times, nap times, bath times and bedtimes that give each child concrete check-points throughout the day. Chil-

dren feel better when they know that to expect—even when everything around them is in a state of upheaval.

Singletons who are already part of the household need extra reassurance that they are still special to Mom and Dad. Whenever you're with one of the children, doing something as simple as reading a short story, giving a bath or sharing a special good night moment, be sure to incorporate a few extra minutes of one-on-one time with the child.

Make a promise to yourself to let Big Brother and Big Sister come first—sometimes. Following the invasion of your house by twins, your singletons are going to hear a continuous chorus of, "Wait a minute!" whenever one of them asks for attention or assistance. But a family's older singletons don't always have to hear that their needs come second or third. When Big Sister asks for a cup of water, she'll feel quite special if she hears Mom tell her two screaming babies, "They'll have to wait a minute while Mom gets Big Sister some water," at least part of the time. Your older kids quickly learn that their requests are constantly being bumped to the back of the line, so be sure to meet their needs first, every so often—if and when the safety of your twins isn't an issue.

Have your singletons help out with the twin infants to make each older child feel as if he's playing an important part in bringing up babies. Even a 2-year-old can bring you a diaper and, surprisingly, can hold up a bottle. Seeking ways for them to perform as Big Brother or Big Sister will help your kids feel a sense of accomplishment for the contribution they make, and understand all the activities that make being a Big Kid special.

Ease up on your expectations. A good day will no longer mean that your kids had a wonderful trip to the zoo, followed by a three-hour nap and a healthy homemade dinner. When the twin infants are with your family, a good day will mean everyone is alive and accounted for. You will have one priority—safety. Everything else can be considered secondary.

Practical steps can make home life easier. Are few of these are: Buying only white socks, undergarments, sheets, bibs, towels and face cloths (easy to bleach!). Having extra clothes and laundry baskets (one for the twins, separate one for the older children's clothes) on each floor of the house. Setting up diaper-changing stations in the nursery and on the main floor of your house (for your "secondary station," a basket to hold diapers, wipes, and a towel to lay babies on works great!). Creating kitchen cabinet space dedicated to baby foods and formula (and a separate drawer for kids' utensils). Having a safe place on each level of your house where you can put the twins (a bouncy seat or a pack-and-play) makes it easier to meet the needs of various family members.

And with twin infants + two, every little bit counts. ♥

Michelle LaRowe, recently married, lives on the East Coast and is assisting the fourth family in which she's helped care for twins. Michelle is author of two *Nanny To the Rescue!* books (available at [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com)) and was named 2004 Nanny of the Year by her peers.

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# TWIN TAKES

from the horse's mouth

■ by Jennifer Jordan

## Twins' little 'twin-clique' often excludes everybody else...it's normal, and it usually ends!

### PARENTS ASK:

I have noticed that my twins exclude everyone else from play. Though they sometimes associate with other kids, they usually end up going off by themselves. Should I be worried about this?

### JENNIFER'S TAKE:

Twins often have a passport to another world: their own world. This world not only involves looking like someone else and sharing the same birthday, but it also involves feeling more comfortable with your twin than you do with anyone else. For these reasons, twins can sometimes be found isolating themselves from other friends and excluding other neighborhood kids (or even other siblings). It's nothing they do on purpose—it's not as if they have a secret club governed by a mantra, "Proud to be Monozygotic." It's just something that happens.

Twins, from conception onward, are built-in companions. This makes it almost expected for them to play with each other more than they play with other kids. From playing a game of checkers in the womb (I swear that this kind of thing happens) to playing house as 2-year-olds, twins know that they can always rely on each other for play, and that is where their efforts tend to focus.

When my sister and I were younger we could be found excluding our peers. We played with other kids from time to time, but we ultimately played with each other the most. To us, it just seemed more natural. Part of this lay in the fact we were the exact same age, whereas other kids in the neighborhood were either a bit younger or a bit older. Hence, we automatically had more things in common with each other.

The other factor is that twins are family, and it's sometimes easier to play with family. This is true if for no other reason than that a fight between family members isn't usually the end of the relationship, whereas a fight between friends can be. When my sister and I fought, as we often did, we knew we would make up, no matter what, which removed pressure from the relationship.

Even if we grabbed each other's hair, called each other names, and vowed to never speak to each other again, chances are we would see each other very soon, probably at dinner time.

Still, this kind of thing isn't forever. Twins may seek comfort and companionship in each other in their younger years, but they will eventually snap out of it and seek association with other people.

As for my sister and me, playing in our own little world came to an abrupt end when she proclaimed herself our world's dictator.

After I became irritated and bored with her style of governance (iron fist, absolute power) and always getting to be the teacher whenever we played school, I sought companionship elsewhere.

Chances are, this will happen with most twins. Even if one twin isn't bossier than the other or the twins don't fight, twins will eventually graduate from playing exclusively with each other. Once they realize there's a whole new world out there offering other kids with whom to play, they will likely venture onward.

For the time being, while your dynamic duo is content to become isolationists and limit their social forays to the two of them, my advice would be to enjoy it while it lasts, because it won't. Twins will eventually begin to quarrel. If you don't believe me, try buying both twins one car on their 16th birthdays and telling them to "share." ♡

Jennifer, 27, lives in Aurora, Colo., and works in graphic design. Her twin, Kimberly, lives nearby, and the two remain close friends.

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## Our twins are regressing! **HELP!**

*Michelle LaRowe, super-nanny to twins, comes to these Moms' rescue, suggesting ways to keep potty-trained twinkles from backsliding—and keep them in their own bed(s) at night:*

**Q.** We've got twin daughters, Alexis and Riley, who were born June 24, 2003. Riley learned quickly to go on the potty, but Allie hasn't done so well. Allie has regressed from potty training—she is going in her pants (pee most of the time) and will usually fight sitting on the toilet when it is time to go. She doesn't care about rewards, incentives, punishment or anything, it seems. My husband and I are at our wits' end. When we got tough with her (making her wear diapers again) her twin sister, Riley, immediately regressed as well, almost as if she was trying to take some heat off of her sister. We responded to both girls by giving them adequate attention, one-on-one time and we downplayed encouragement for the potty while trying to play up all things "big girl." We've had moderate success with this approach, but still don't know what to do to motivate Alexis to stay dry, without de-motivating Riley from doing so well—HELP!  
Megan in Telford, Penn.

**A.** Keeping a low-pressure attitude in a high-pressure situation is key here. I would set up a routine where Allie is scheduled to sit on the potty, for example, right when she wakes up, after breakfast, after lunch, before nap, after nap, etc. Adopt your "This is just what we do" attitude, and simply put

her on the potty. Don't ask Allie if she wants to sit on the potty—because her *not* wanting to sit there isn't an option. Tell Allie she can go sit on the potty by herself or you can carry her there—these are the only two options you can provide. Be consistent and don't bribe, negotiate or beg. In a loving but firm voice, state your request and expect it to be followed. This method almost always works for me.

**Q.** My twins are 13 months old. I cannot get them to sleep through the night, unless they are in bed with me. What can I do? This is becoming a problem with my married life: To make room for the kids my husband has started sleeping on the couch. We are very strained. Any ideas? I didn't have this problem with my other children, and I am at a loss. People without multiples just do not understand.  
Julie in Kentucky

**A.** This is certainly a tough issue that many parents of multiples face. Unfortunately, this is truly a mind-over-matter phase. Once you make the decision that you absolutely are ready to transition them into their own beds, you need to buckle up for a short but



bumpy ride. By 13 months, children who have met certain physical and emotional milestones are quite capable of sleeping through the night.

Unfortunately, yours have been conditioned not to. You have also learned to identify their cries and can distinguish the "I want Mommy!" distress signal from the "Help, I'm hurt!" sobs. For these reasons, I believe this is a case for "Ferberizing." (Referring to the book, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems: New, Revised and Expanded Edition*, by Richard Ferber.) I would put the kids in their cribs, and let them cry it out. If you're afraid they'll crawl out, invest in crib tents and let them be. If their crying persists, go in, tell them you are there—but do not pick them up. Keep the lights dim; create a sleepy atmosphere. Try a white-noise maker, no lights and set the thermostat no higher than 68 degrees. It's going to take a few nights and lots of tolerance for tears (on your part) but this habit can be broken. ♥

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**Dear Dr. Josh,**

My husband sometimes scolds our twins and I don't like it. I grew up in a home where there was violence and it scares me when he raises his voice. However, I'm also worried that he's damaging our kids. Do you think I'm right or am I over-reacting?

*Concerned Mom*

**Dear Concerned Mom,**

The fact that his raised voice and scolding makes you uncomfortable is enough reason to ask him to consider changing his communication style. However, giving feedback to your partner—who's also your kids' parent—regarding his or her parenting often requires great tact. Bearing this in mind, here are some recommendations:

- Tell your partner you have something important that you'd like to talk with him about, and ask for about 15 minutes of his time
- Ask if this is a good time. If he says it isn't, ask him to suggest a time when it would be good to talk so that you'll have his undivided attention
- Tell him how important this issue is to you, using a scale of 1-10
- Start with a compliment. In this case, say something like, "I think you're a great dad and I love how much time you spend with the twins. I notice when you're feeling frustrated you raise your voice at them sometimes and I find myself feeling nervous when you do. As you know, I grew up in a home where there was abuse—I'm not saying you're being abusive, but a raised voice in the home brings up those memories and that's hard on me. So, I'm wondering if I could ask you to work on that a little?"
- Ask him if there's anything you can do to help him with this
- Give him time to respond
- Try to express empathy and under-

standing for his position, even if it's at odds with yours

- If you can't come to an agreement, calmly agree to disagree. Thank him for taking the time. And re-visit it in a month.

Fairly frequently, I hear spouses accuse each other of verbal abuse for behavior that I would simply call obnoxious, or (sometimes) just LOUD. While I don't think children like being scolded or having parents raise their voices at them, a raised voice doesn't necessarily constitute abuse. Rearing twins is a stressful activity and parents should be forgiven for occasionally scolding their children. However, there's a difference between the occasional scold and behaving in ways that are truly harmful. Behaviors that parents should avoid are:

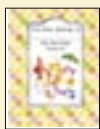
- shaming or name-calling
- screaming
- threatening with violence
- sarcasm
- humiliation
- any form of physical punishment.

If you have reason to believe your husband's behavior is stressing-out your twins, and your communication with him doesn't work, then you should have him go with you to a parents' class, a meeting with the pediatrician, or a couples' counselor. ♥

Joshua Coleman, PhD, is a dad of twin sons and an experienced family counselor with offices in San Francisco and Oakland, Calif. He's written four books including the newest, *Married With Twins: Life, Love, and the Pursuit of Marital Harmony*, available from the TWINS™ Bookshelf. You can sign up for Dr. Coleman's free monthly e-zine at [www.drjoshuacoleman.com](http://www.drjoshuacoleman.com).

A frequent guest on the Today Show, Dr. Josh has also appeared on ABC's 20/20, Good Morning America, the BBC, and numerous news programs for FOX, ABC, and NBC television. **Send us your questions** for Dr. Josh's future columns—[twins.editor@businessword.com](mailto:twins.editor@businessword.com)





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# You never would'a thunk it! ID twin sisters create incredibly cute and educational 'Dittydoodle Works' show

A sweet and goofy-cute TV series featuring twins and written by identical twin sisters who also compose and perform all the music in the shows is becoming a big national hit. It capitalizes on the theory that parents have to capture and use every possible "teachable moment" in children's lives.

Identical twin sisters Sheira and Leora (nicknamed Loli and pronounced low-lee) Brayer were Brooklyn-born, moving around a lot with their family while growing up. As young women, they returned to Long Island after a year in Israel and have spent most of their adult lives in and near New York City. Along the way, Sheira and Loli earned college degrees in business (Sheira, State University of New York, Albany) and communications (Loli, Cornell University).

The Brayer household was always filled with music of all kinds, from classical to pop and jazz to ethnic. Their mother, born in Israel, and their father, born in Poland and emigrating here after surviving the Holocaust, were constantly playing music and singing. Sheira and Loli both took piano lessons, and Sheira says she harbored a dream of being a musical performer some day.

Along the way, Sheira and Loli discovered they loved music enough that they took songwriting classes together, and from that, new careers sprang. They'd compose songs and perform what they composed, at one point winning several *Billboard* Magazine National Songwriter Awards for a pop piece called "I Am."

They married—Sheira to a creative producer who owns an entertainment production studio—and had children. Sheira has a daughter, 13, and a son, 10; Loli has two sons, 12 and 10, and a daughter, 6. Shortly after Sheira's daughter was born, her husband Cory connected with

the local PBS affiliate one day, and came home to suggest to Sheira she write children's songs.

"Ten minutes later I had my first song, 'My Teddy Bear,' and kept on going from there," she laughs. For more than three years, Sheira and Loli collaborated



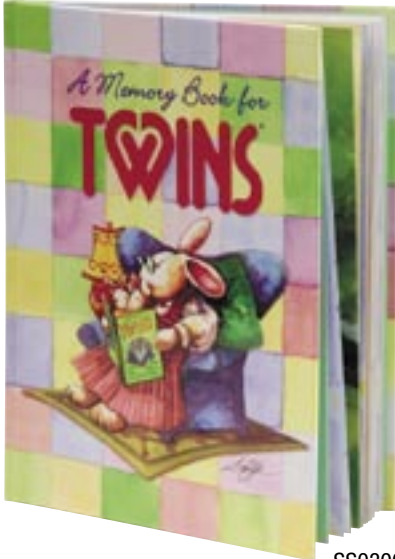
on songs, performance and production of children's original music "shorts" and skits that aired on PBS in the New York market in the minutes between bigger children's shows, which the local PBS affiliate, Channel 21 WLIW funded in part. Audiences responded, and Sheira and Loli were asked to produce full-length animated episodes for PBS about the mop-headed rag-doll twins Sheira and Loli that would mix fun, energetic characters and catchy songs with life-lessons about self-esteem, relationships, teamwork, feeling and communication, exercise and health, and nature, among other topics.

The two couples quickly bought a building on Long Island, renovated it into a production studio, and produced a whopping 26 episodes within six months. "We had to write all the songs for each show at the same time. We only had a handful of ready-made songs that we could use from the shorts we had done. We needed to write and complete music and lyrics for four to five songs a week," says Sheira. "Now we have over 180 songs in our portfolio."

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TWINS<sup>TM</sup> 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.

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TWINS<sup>TM</sup> Exclusive! Created especially for families with twins. Vibrant colors and adorable critters adorn this chart designed to hang on the wall.

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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.



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### 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.



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

SS05002 Unframed Art \$16.99 each  
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## "The Twins Room" Door Hanger

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





## 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"Hx15"W.

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



A. 12"-x-15"



B. 12"-x-15"

## Twin Blessing Photo Frame

Show off your darling twins with this charming photo frame from Laura Leiden Calligraphy. The rich mahogany-colored frame includes an oval opening in a moss-colored mat for your favorite photograph of your twins, plus a thoughtful verse that celebrates the differences in your children. Their arrival is a true blessing in your life! A wonderful gift to celebrate the birth of your twins for yourself. 10" x 12" frame holds one 6" x 4" photograph.

SF06004 \$24.99 each



*Melissa and Doug*

## Noah's Ark and Circus Train Photo Frames

Popular children's toys and accessories manufacturer Melissa & Doug has created these colorful hand-painted Noah's Ark and Circus Train solid-wood table-top frames. These beautifully crafted frames will compliment any nursery or home. (Overall size of Noah's Ark is 11" x 9 1/2". Circus Train is 14" x 10 1/2") They each hold three, 2 1/8" x 2 1/8" photographs.

SF05001 Noah's Ark \$19.99 each

SF05002 Circus Train \$19.99 each



## "Discover Wildlife, Raise Twins" Ceramic Wall 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. 5 3/4"H x 7 1/4"W.

SF90092 \$17.99 each

## Twice as Nice Photo Frame

This unique ceramic frame from Russ Baby will look fabulous on your dresser, bookcase, shelf or fireplace mantle. The frame has glass insert and is flocked backing, providing an unique opportunity to show off your twins. A beautiful, wonderful

gift to celebrate the birth of your twins for a close family member or even for yourself. Frames are individually boxed. Twice as Nice Photo Frame is 4 1/2" x 6" and holds two 1 3/4" x 2 3/4" photographs.

SF04002 Stars and Hearts \$12.99 each



## "Two Peas in a Pod" Personalized 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.*

## Personalize it!

Most families with twins have two of everything... and most times it is two of the exact same thing! It's often impossible to tell which mittens, jackets, caps, life preservers, toys, shoes, bookbags, backpacks, lunch carriers, etc. belong to whom. A cute, easy and inexpensive (!!) way for twins to identify their personal stuff is use a circular key ring containing a colorful lettered bead—or a whole name—that you picked up from your local craft store. If your duo wants their full names on their "ID rings" the round ring may need to be larger in diameter. Slide the lettered beads onto a key ring to spell out each twin's initial, full name, nickname or other special word. Round silver key rings are available at Home Depot or Lowe's, as well as other big-box discounters. When the ID-ring is ready, simply thread it onto jacket zippers, backpacks, suitcases or lunch bags to help your twin identify her stuff. These ID-rings grow with your kids, too... when larger sizes move in, transfer the rings to the new items.

## FLAT HEADS

Does your twin infant have a flat spot on his or her head? If so, your little one isn't alone; a flat spot—called plagiocephaly—is common among multiples, usually resulting from a cramped gestation in utero. Sometimes the flatness results from spending too much time on the back in bouncer chairs, cribs or on the floor as infants. Usually plagiocephaly is nothing serious—most of the time the flat spots naturally round out as a baby's skull grows. If your twin infant has a significant flat spot that seems to be staying the same and not disappearing, he may benefit from cranial remolding with a helmet or band. Your pediatrician can answer your questions and also refer you to a craniofacial specialist for further information. Most remolding devices are worn 23 hours a day for two to six months, depending on the degree of reshaping required. The best time for cranial reshaping is during your child's first 9 months.

Don't worry that the helmet or band will cause discomfort—an infant quickly adjusts to the new cap or band and rarely does it interfere with a baby's daily activities of rolling over, crawling and playing. Helmets can be decorated to add a bit of fun and whimsy.

## Keep it together

Moms of multiples are kept plenty busy, especially during the twin infant and toddler-twin stages. Changing diapers, doing laundry and feeding two babies at once leaves parents with little time (or energy) to clean the house, pay bills or even take showers. Putting laundry away is a very low priority and keeping the twins' closet organized is even lower. (Doesn't it seem they outgrow their clothes the day after you finally have everything on hangers?) To help stay organized while putting laundry away, keep a box on the floor in your twins' closet into which you can toss clothes they've outgrown, right when you've laundered and folded them. This opens up space in the closet, keeps you organized and eliminates the overwhelming task of cleaning out the closet. When the box is full, label it and store for later use, or donate it. Put a replacement empty container in its place for the next batch of barely-used and outgrown clothes!

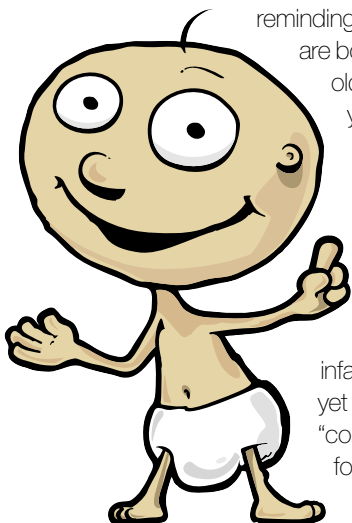
## Did you know...?

A toddler can drown in only 2 inches of water within a minute. And half—that's right, half!—of all infant drownings occur in bathtubs! Play it safe: Always supervise your twin infants and toddler-twins if they're near any fluid-filled containers—including toilets. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests latching your bathroom doors when the bathroom isn't in use, emptying buckets and bathtubs immediately after use, securing hot tubs (spas) with child-proof locked covers, keeping a phone nearby when at the swimming pool or beach, and staying alongside toddlers when near fish ponds, birdbaths, fountains, irrigation ditches, creeks or canals. Children need constant supervision in water—wading pools, swimming pools and bathtubs. Toddlers should be taught early to swim and perhaps most importantly, parents need to know CPR.



## Orthopedic tidbits

Two of the most commonly asked orthopedic questions by moms of toddlers are about flat feet and bowleggedness. Orthopedic surgeon Dr. John Geiser reassures parents by reminding them that many healthy toddlers are bowlegged until they're 18 months old, and many children ages 3 to 6 years look "knock-kneed." These are variations of normal and don't require treatment unless significant deformity is diagnosed. Children's legs don't actually begin to look "normal" until age 9 or 10. Flat-footedness, also called pes planus, also is a variation of normal for most toddlers! Most infants and toddlers are naturally flat-footed yet rarely require treatment. So-called "corrective shoes" usually aren't necessary for young children because the arch inside the foot doesn't even begin to develop until a child is 3 years old. Be sure to talk with your pediatrician about questions



you might have regarding your twins' flat feet.

Send Growing Stages questions to mom of twins Kelly Woods, kwoods@lightblast.net. Kelly is a pediatric and family nurse practitioner with identical boys, Aidan and Bailey, 2. They live in central Minnesota.

## As tricky as learning to tie bowknots on shoes...

Twinnies have equal trouble learning to buckle and unbuckle a belt on their little trousers or bluejeans. Especially when your twinkles are potty training, teaching them to doff their clothing quickly enough to avoid accidents is a major challenge. Along comes a patented product that is the cat's meow: Myself Belts™ stay on your kid's pants but come undone quick as a wink, using one hand! These belts are made of cute fabrics (so they're washable!) in designs that are very boy-o and very girlie.

They snap onto a front belt loop on the pants, and kids easily undo and redo the belt using Velcro closures.

The belts retail for \$14.50 (fabric) and \$15.50 (leather) and

size according to age and weight of the child. Our TWINS™ art director, Karyn Sader, has these belts for both of her young boys and attests to how wonderful they are! Find a retailer near you at [www.myselfbelts.com](http://www.myselfbelts.com).



## Pleasure Reading

For your little twinkles

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⇨ **Any sign of the Great Pumpkin?**



# 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?

**1::** Lauren and Kevin  
11 months  
Mt. Sinai, NY



**2::** Keira and Chloe  
4 months  
Sterling, VA



**3::** Lexi and Jakob  
2 1/2 years  
Rockville, MD



**4::** Kale and Owen  
5 years  
Bellevue, NE



**5::** Gordon and Mahle  
8 months  
Spokane Valley, WA



**6::** Isabella and Marisol  
8 months  
San Jose, CA



**7::** Karleigh and Kayleigh  
21 months  
Tullahoma, TN



**8::** Anthony and Vincent  
2 years  
Wilmington, DE



**9::** Paige and Erica  
6 months  
Tewksbury, MA



**10::** Ethan and Emma  
4 months  
Durand, WI



**11::** Kevin and Tommy  
3 years  
Newark, DE



**12::** Henry and Margaret  
15 months  
Seattle, WA



**13::** Erin and Scott  
3 years  
Jacksonville, AL



**14::** Carter and Chase  
3 years  
Wayne, PA



**15::** Dominick and Vincent  
7 months  
Rockford, IL



**16::** Jadon and Chaya  
6 months  
Jacksonville, FL



**17::** Joe and Lilly  
11 months  
Bellevue, NE



**18::** Andrew and Ethan  
2 1/2 years  
Wading River, NY



**19::** Kaleigh and Rori  
2 1/2 years  
Marshfield, MA



**20::** Ty and Caroline  
2 months  
Denison, TX

**Photo Tips**  
*What we are looking for:*

- Sharp focus
- Crisp, clean, vivid color (no red, 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. [Go to www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com) for a release form.

**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.*

ZD - 02	ZW - 15	ZD - 10	ZD - 5
ZD - 01	ZD - 14	ZD - 9	ZD - 4
ZD - 13	ZD - 13	ZD - 8	ZD - 3
ZD - 12	ZD - 12	ZD - 7	ZD - 2
ZD - 11	ZD - 11	ZD - 6	ZD - 1
ZD - 10	ZD - 10	ZD - 5	ZD - 0

Based on parental reports:

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## Twins Say the Cutest Things!

### Learning the 'consequences'

Molly and Anthony were playing out back in their wading pool with their toys.

Anthony reached for Molly's boat, and she said to him, "If you take my boat, I scream you, and I take you to time out."

He didn't take the boat.

The next day, after Anthony had taken a toy from Molly, and she was crying, he said to her, "Don't scream me."

Beth, Mom of Freddie, 21; Janelle, 19; Gregory, 16; and twins born March, 2004, on the TMMB

### My boy has manners ... but

I was so proud of my two for a while—they always said "please" and "thank you", and I never even had to remind them.

They've been slacking lately, though. I've had to prompt them a lot.

John Raymond came to me yesterday and said, "Mama, can I have more juice?"

I looked at him and said, "Can I have more juice ... what?"

He looks right back at me and replied, "Can I have more juice ... NOW!"

Christine, Mom to Rosalie and John Raymond, on the TMMB

### My kids are stinky...

My boys had just awakened from their nap and I was watching and listening to them talk on the video monitor. Invariably, one or both does a poop during naptime every day. I was guessing that this particular day it was Spencer who had done his business, because Kyle was holding his nose, pointing at Spencer and yelling "Stinky!"

Jill, Mom to Spencer and Kyle, born 9/05, on the TMMB

### Eye exam, twin-style

We went to our family healthcare provider to have the boys' eyes checked, in preparation for kindergarten.

Matt and Luke stood in a hallway looking at an eye chart that had pictures rather than letters for very young patients. I was covering Matt's left eye and the nurse was asking him to identify the different im-

ages. He said, "A circle, a square, a heart..."

When he paused at one of the images, Lucas, who was standing behind him on the right side, quickly whispered in his ear, "It's a cup."

Kendra, Mom of Matt and Luke, on the TMMB

### Airplane talk

In our household, we use the expression "private parts" to identify some parts of our bodies, but my twins overheard a friend use "penis" with her DS, and quickly picked up on it.

Not long afterwards, we were on an airplane, and our DD was getting a bit loopy. She piped up, in her moderately loud voice, with, "I have a penis!" and started giggling.

At first I said, "What?" then quickly realized what she'd said, and quickly changed to, "You have peanuts?" (I was hoping everyone on the plane didn't hear and understand her.) Then I added, "Do you have a banana and an apple, too?" That distracted her!

OurTwinMom on the TMMB

### Cute...but embarrassing!

Yesterday at Vacation Bible School the kids (3- and 4-year-olds) were playing games with a large nerf ball. All were having fun and a ball hit the leader in the front and my 4-year-old son blurted out, "It almost hit her in the penis!" I was wearing a red shirt and I think my face matched my shirt's color! I was horrified.

A nearby parent laughingly said, "Chalk that one up to a memorable moment!"

(The one word I wish I would not have taught my boys at a very early age is penis.)

Brenda, wife of Chris (for 22years)  
Mom of Logan and Noah, on TMMB

### Peanut butter and sprinkles

This past weekend was a rough one in our house. Riley had a head cold and her eyes were a watery, itchy mess. She'd come up to

me and complain, "Mommy, I have peanut butter in my eyes."

Then Maggie fell and came to me crying, "I hurt my sprinkle, Mommy! I hurt my sprinkle!" (It took me a while to find out she meant ankle.)

Heather, proud Mom of 3-year-old TTTS survivors, on the TMMB

### Outtakes from Literal Land

On Saturday, the summer season of our girls' baseball league ended. They attended closing ceremonies, a picnic and the kids all received trophies. The girls were so excited. They've been itching for a shiny plastic trophy for a while now.

While I oohed and ahed over their awards, I said to Abby, "We'll have to show Daddy this when we get home. What will Daddy think about your trophy?"

She replied, "That it's not breakable."

Earlier, while driving to the baseball game, I listened to the traffic report on a local radio station. I usually turn down the volume when the news comes on so my girls don't hear all the terrible stuff. I guess I spaced out—suddenly the girls were in hysterics in the back seat. I tried to calm them and determine why they were freaking out, asking them what in the world had prompted them to be so worked up.

Abby was tearful, trembling, and frantically waving both arms out in front of her, bawled, "I am scared! I don't want fire arms! I don't want fire arms! Mommy, what happens for someone to get fire arms?"

Nonplussed and unable to imagine what the heck Abby was talking about, suddenly it hit me—I had forgotten to lower the radio's volume and a news report mentioned criminals being apprehended who had firearms.

Ergo, an impromptu gun safety lesson was had in the van on the way to baseball.

Never a dull moment. What I wouldn't give for a dull moment.

Supposedly Susan, on the TMMB ♡

# Searching everywhere for the greatest twin stroller?

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Here's what readers are saying about the

## Urban Double Mountain Buggy:

---

"I bought mine when my boys were 6 mos. My boys will be 3 in October and we still use it. Words cannot express how much I love this stroller. Worth every cent."

---

"I have had mine for a year and a half and absolutely LOVE IT. It pushes so easily through anything...sand, grass."

---

"The MBUD is an amazing stroller and is so incredibly easy to push. It is a side by side stroller that easily fits through doors and aisles. I also have a kiddy board attached to the back for my 2 yr old. This is a dream stroller and well worth every bit I spent on it!"

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"The Mountain Buggy is so easy to use and get in and out of the vehicle. It is definitely worth the purchase!!!!!!!!!"

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