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**Weighing
in on the
issue...
when
one twin
is much
heavier
than the
other!**

7 Ways to Avoid

**PARENTING
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Spring 2010 Print Edition

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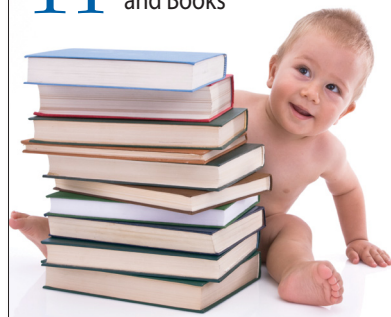
On the Cover:



These adorable 2-year-old identical twin boys, Camden and Kian are from Kearney, Nebraska and were the winners of the national online photo contest and named "Cutest Twins for 2009" as voted on by the CuteKid™. Proud parents Dan and Heidi were excited and honored to have their twins win the contest. Read more about these guys in our Center Cover Feature on page 28.

Cover photo taken by Katie Arndt of Katie Arndt Photography (www.katiearndt.com) on location in Kearney, Nebraska

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Today's Women Not Above Cleaning... They Simply Lack Time (duh!)

Have you seen the new consumer research study that probes busy women about housework, germs and work/life balance? "Necessary", "time-consuming" and "important" are the most common terms women use to describe housework. Is that why one in four women seek assistance from a cleaning service or an independent cleaner on a regular basis? It's not that these women don't like house cleaning or they feel they aren't good at it. The number one reason women have cleaning help is because they do not have enough time to keep up with housework and when you have twins (or more) it makes it even more difficult! But how many of us can actually squeeze one more thing into our monthly budget and make it work?

According to recent research conducted by Maid Brigade and Mom Corps, 71% of women who have cleaning help do so because they are time-starved. This is in sharp contrast to the meager 4% of survey respondents who said they weren't good at house cleaning or the surprisingly low 15% that said they pay someone else because they don't enjoy it. Wouldn't that be great to proclaim to your husband... "Honey, let's get a housekeeper because frankly, I just don't enjoy it like I used to!"

The study stated that the percentage of dual income homes in the US has doubled in the last forty years. More and more women juggle the demands of career, family, community all while managing a busy household. The survey found that women overwhelmingly felt that having cleaning assistance helped them achieve greater balance in their lives. Oh, okay, so in the name of balance we can hire a housekeeper—I like this way of thinking already! Of those using a maid or cleaning service, 98% said it helped with balance and 92% of the women that didn't have cleaning help believed that it would help them achieve better balance. Does this include doing my laundry because our mountain of dirty clothes never ends?

Okay, parents you heard it here first... Hiring a housekeeper gives you the necessary balance you need and when raising twins (and more) and your personal happiness is on the line here so having help with the housework can make a world a difference in all aspects of your life! What a great conversation starter with your significant other, right? Do you have a housekeeper? Would you recommend this for other busy parents of multiples? We would love to hear from you on this topic... unless you are too busy cleaning your house!

Spring has sprung here at TWINS™ Magazine and this edition is packed with so much great information! This issue in our "Raising Twins through Every Age & Stage" section we cover topics like: Pregnancy after age 35 and Newborns and Books; we explore "How do Emotions Affect Learning"; "Are you Teaching your Twins to be Sick?" and we discuss the "Facts of Life for twins." Read the article about managing multiples in the military while also weighing in on the childhood obesity issue and discuss what to do when one twin is much heavier than the other! Another great article is "7 Ways to Avoid Parenting Burnout" and we introduce you to the "Cutest Twins of 2009" as voted by CuteKid™. Be sure to look for our next issue (*Summer 2010 Digital Edition*) to be available online around the first week of June. If you haven't already registered as a user on our website, as a subscriber, that is the very best way to get access to all of our magazines right away!

I say, forego the housework and spring cleaning for now and take some time to enjoy spring and all that this season brings with your kids—it's much more fun anyway and another great way to achieve life balance! Be sure to take lots and lots of pictures and shoot lots and lots of video, too, because time passes by so fast and you will be very glad to have these treasured moments to look back on some day.



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa D. Reed, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

TWINS™

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PUBLISHERS

Christa D. Reed
Aaron J. Reed

publisher@twinsmagazine.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Christa D. Reed

twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com

ART DIRECTOR

Michelle Kenny

artdirector@twinsmagazine.com

NATIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Christa D. Reed

advertising@twinsmagazine.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Ellen Brey

customerservice@twinsmagazine.com

TWINS™ SHOPPE MANAGER

Aaron J. Reed

aaron@twinsmagazine.com

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Christina Baglivi Tinglof; Dr. James Byrne; Joshua Coleman, Ph.D.; Natalie Diaz; Mike Dikos; Patricia Edmister, Ph.D.; Holly Engel-Smothers; Janet Gonzales-Mena; Theresa Halvorsen; Judith O. Hooper; Crystal Kupper; Patricia Maxwell Malmstrom, M.A.; Lisa Panish; Jenny Peterson; Emilia Zs Rak; Christa D. Reed; Nancy Segal, Ph.D.; and D.B. Zane

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Take Two Enterprises, Inc. dba TWINS™ Magazine

P.O. Box 271924

Fort Collins, CO 80527-1924

Tel: 970-377-1392 Fax: 970-377-0140

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New Product 'Hold It Baby' hits the market and makes life much easier for you!

Say Goodbye to "Uh Oh!" Best-selling twins author Elizabeth Lyons has invented a must-have parenting product that's already earned the nickname "Sanity on a String." As a mom of 5, Elizabeth certainly knows what works and what doesn't. The Hold It Baby! On-the-Go Toy Organizer is the *only product on the market* that holds up to 6 items at a time; holds board books, small blankets, stuffed animals, toys, and snack cups as well as sippy cups; and has adjustable and removable lanyards. The



NOTE: the products featured in the photo (sippy cup, book, etc.) do NOT come with the product and are there for illustrative purposes only.

Hold It Baby keeps a child's items within reach (and off the germ-covered floor) whether he's in a car seat, stroller, high chair, shopping cart, or airline seat. The product is machine-washable and dryer-safe, and it is fully safety tested and CPSIA compliant. Visit www.holditbaby.com to buy this brand new product and to learn more!

My Child's Locket is a new website designed to help parents!

My Child's Locket, helps parents keep their children healthy and safe by storing medical, contact, and identifying information at their fingertips on a convenient, secure website. Instead of digging through files or having to place frantic phone calls, parents can retrieve and share informa-



tion on medications, blood type, allergies, height and weight, distinguishing features, even photos with the click of a mouse. "Using My Child's Locket website is like having a file cabinet for your children at your fingertips," says Jay Osterholt, creator and CEO of My Child's Locket. "We've created a one-stop shop for parents with a user-friendly, secure site that parents can pull up wherever there is internet service," adds Osterholt. "This is meant to simplify busy parents' lives." To that end, one of the site's features allows busy parents to print out contact information, bedtimes, medicines, etc., for the evening babysitter or the grandparents watching the kids for the weekend. In the coming months, My Child's Locket, LLC will introduce valuable messages to parents such as AMBER alerts, consumer/product alerts, and sexual predator alerts by text message or e-mail to the user of the website. My Child's Locket services cost \$21.95 per year for a family with up to four children; \$24.95 per year, families with five or six children; and \$29.95 per year, families with seven or more kids. My Child's Locket's Web site is a state of the art secure web site for any parent that wants a one stop shop for all their children's information at one convenient place. Please visit www.mychildslocket.com to learn more.

Woman expecting twins lends help for Orphans International to build orphanages in Haiti!

Ragan O'Reilly, mom, CEO of "In the Loving, Inc.," hospital coordinator at Art of Elysium charity, and daughter of the very successful O'Reilly Auto Parts empire founder, has financially partnered with Help For Orphans International to build an orphanage and give aid to children in devastated Port au Prince, Haiti, after the earthquake devastated the country in mid-January. Despite the fact that Ms. O'Reilly is only days away from delivering identical twins, she is one of the driving forces behind the scouting team that left for Haiti on February 24, 2010. The team's goal was to help build awareness and hope, and in turn raise additional funds to erect an orphanage named after In the Loving, Inc. This is one company who strives to put its money where its heart is. Ragan O'Reilly, soon to be mother of three, is the co-founder and president of In The Loving, Inc., creator of Baby in Bliss, a CD and DVD designed to help babies, children, and their families more deeply connect with each other through optimistic emotional stimulation and messages of universal spiritual unity. "Our conscious loving 'family-team' of six are committed to world peace, love, harmony, spirit, emotional support for all, freedom for all,



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and authenticity of Self - starting with our beautiful babies," says President and Co-Founder O'Reilly.

Natalie Diaz to give Keynote presentation at the Northern California Association of Mothers of Twins Clubs Spring Convention

The Northern California Association of Mothers of Twins Clubs spring convention "Paris in Springtime" on April 16, 17 and 18, 2010 at the Fountaingrove Inn in Santa Rosa, California will feature keynote speaker, Natalie Diaz, founder/creator of Twiniversity and director of the Manhattan Twins Club. She will give the talk "How to give your club an extreme club makeover!" that weekend. For more information visit: <http://ncamotc.homestead.com>. Read more about the new nonprofit organization called Twiniversity in this issue in our 'Resource Round Up' section on page 36.



Dear Ms. Reed:
I'm humbly writing to you today as a father of twins and the author of the

soon-to-be released book, "**The Kid-Dictionary Volume 2: More Words Parents Need To Describe Their Kids.**" It's a glossary-style humorous gift book of words I created to give terminology to the many and varied oddities of life in the company of children. Here are just a few examples:

STOCKTEASE (n.): A child who lets you buy large quantities of their favorite food at the grocery store and then immediately decides that they don't like it anymore.

TOYPHOON (n.): Routine recreational activities of children that leave their playground looking like it was decimated by a hurricane.

TWIRPLE (v.): When a child playing baseball gets to third base on a hit that didn't make it out of the infield.

PUPPYMOON (n.): The short period of time during which your child lives up to their promise of caring for the new pet they begged you for.

WOUNDOGGLE (v.): When a child pretends to be hurt after hurting someone else with hopes that it will prevent him from getting in trouble.

GARBOFLAGE (v.): To hide a piece of your child's artwork under other trash in the waste basket so they don't catch you throwing it away.



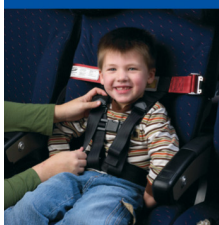
gift book that promises to be loved by anyone who has kids, knows kids, knows someone who has kids, or ever was a kid—a sizable demographic. Thanks in advance for helping me to spread the word to your readers about this new volume from a fellow father of twins!

Sincerely,
Eric Ruhalter
Via email

Dear Ms. Reed:

I am a long time subscriber of TWINS™ Magazine. I recently received the latest print issue. I really enjoyed reading the article entitled "Our Twins Were Born Yesterday and Today!" I currently have four-year old twins and I have a very unique story. I have severe endometriosis; I never knew I had a problem until I tried to get pregnant. Five years and six failed invitro-fertilization attempts later my husband and I were ready to give up. My cousin, Joanna Seeber, who has three children of her own, offered to be our surrogate. She said that she could not imagine not having her children in her life. We did not think she was serious since this was so much to ask of one person. On February 14, 2005 we went and signed all of the paperwork to begin our surrogacy cycle with my cousin. On April 15th the day of the implantation, we had three embryos that made it to day five. My reproductive endocrinologist did not feel it would be wise to implant three into my surrogate, as triplet pregnancies can be very risky so the third embryo was going to be destroyed. I said "no, put it in me!" He said, "I cannot guarantee anything!" My husband and I have been doing this for over five years with no guarantees and it was not covered by insurance. Please put the embryo into me as well, so we were both implanted on April 15th. On April 29th I found out that

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Volume one got great reviews and great reader response and the second volume promises to be even funnier and more relevant with 90 new KidDictionary terms, their KidDefinitions and quaint accompanying black & white photos. Please visit www.TheKidDictionary.com to learn more about the books. This is a humorous



my cousin and I were both pregnant! We both had a due date of January 1, 2006. My cousin was actually pregnant with two-but one went away-which I was told was very common. I felt God would only give us what we could handle. My daughter, Catherine Rene was born December 26, 2005 (she was breech so I had a c-section) in Indiana. My other daughter, Sophia Marie was born January 6, 2006 in Michigan. They are eleven days apart-born in two different states and two different years! We are very blessed! My doctor told me that they are considered twins because they were developed from the same cycle. My cousin did this out of the goodness of her heart. She said that it is because she felt she needed to do this for us so we could have a family. She will never know how blessed we truly are. It was really nice because I had a pregnancy buddy, too. I never missed an ultrasound appointment for Joanna. Joanna said it was all in God's plan. We never found out what we were having...they would always ask and I would always say no! I am attaching a photo of my girls...have I mentioned that they are the best? I know some people may not consider my girls twins...but after years of infertility everyday to me is a blessing and I love my girls very much. I want to send the message that it only takes one so never give up on your hopes and dreams-anything is possible. I loved your article. There are many ways to become a parent. Our story is very unique.

Thank you,
Leann Johnston
Via email

Dear Twins™ Magazine:

I have identical boy twins, they are 17-months-old. Their sister who is 4-years-old has taken almost 15-months to finally not try to kill them. She really didn't want them but I think she is finally realizing that they are not going anywhere. We love our kids and wouldn't have it any other way... I love the Twins™ Magazine. It helps me feel like there are other people like me out there with the same problems and concerns raising twins. Thanks, Twins™ Magazine for enlightening me!

Sincerely,
Julie Giaquinto Pinner
Via Twins™ Magazine Facebook page

Dear Twins™ Magazine:

Being first time parents to beautiful fraternal twins is the best thing to ever happen to us however being parents to twins can also be scary (yet rewarding). We had a lot of questions on how to raise not only one baby but two at the same time...Twins™ Magazine became a helpful tool that has answered a lot of our questions. For instance we had no idea if we should put them together in one crib or separate them until we read Twins™ Magazine and learned that there are dividers that can be placed in a crib to separate them without having to use two cribs. This not only made it easy for first time parents who are constantly



checking on their children in the middle of the night but still gave our kids the comfort of having someone nearby. Now of course our twins are 8 months old and are in their own separate cribs but we continue to learn new tricks of the trade from Twins™ Magazine. The next milestone we look forward to is their first birthday. We had no idea about how we should celebrate it or what to do regarding birthday cakes and singing the birthday song. Twins™ Magazine provided tips and suggestions to deal with twin birthdays that not only helped us but gave us ideas and suggestions on what to do. Thank you Twins™ Magazine!

Craig & Bianca Myers
Hereford, Arizona
Proud parents to twins, Ethan & Alessandra



GET TO KNOW KEVIN & GREG PARROW
OF THE POP ROCK BAND,

Transmit Now...

By Christa D. Reed, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Have you heard about the new 'pop rock' band from Orlando, Florida called TRANSMIT NOW? Two members of this band are fraternal twins, Kevin & Greg Parrow and we thought it would be fun to find out a little more about these dynamic musicians. The band has been touring extensively across the US during 2008 and 2009 and during that time besides having their music featured on various MTV shows (as well as ESPN and more recently on the PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS), the band is now gearing up for their first major release called *Downtown Merry-Go-Round* later this Spring on Silent Majority Group/ILG/Warner label.

TWINS: What are your Names, Ages & Birth date?

(KEVIN) Kevin, age 26, and Greg, age 26 and 2 minutes. We were born on March 5th, 1984

TWINS: What type of twins are you? (Identical or Fraternal?)

(GREG) As fraternal as twins come!

TWINS: Where did you grow up?

(KEVIN) We were born in Durham, NC but spent most of our childhood in the Wilmington, NC area. We later moved to Central Florida at the age of 15.



TWINS: Do you have any other siblings?

(KEVIN) No, it's just us two.

(GREG) Thank God!

TWINS: Did you share the same classroom when growing up?

(KEVIN) Not early on. School always tried to keep us separate as a way of making sure we socialized with others I guess.

(GREG) I remember we shared the same Band, JROTC, and Spanish classes to name a few.

TWINS: Did you share a bedroom?

(KEVIN) Well we shared a crib when we were babies. But not until we were probably 12 or so did we ever share a room. That was a bit of an adjustment. Neither of us liked doing that much at all. I'm not sure what our parents were thinking with that one.

(GREG) Yes, we were probably not yet teenagers but had reached the point where girls start to become a serious interest in a young boy's life... I was fortunate enough to benefit from Kevin's collection of pinup models posted all over our walls without spending my own money on such things...

TWINS: Were you typically involved in the same activities or did you tend to enjoy separate activities?

(GREG) We were both heavily involved in baseball, boy scouts, and the school band early on. In high school it was JROTC. I do remember we spent a lot of time in our earlier years playing video games or just being boys in general outside causing mischief.

TWINS: What was the strangest question you have ever been asked about being a twin?

(KEVIN) "If one of you gets hurt, does the other feel your pain?" You would not believe how often I get asked that (or maybe you would). If that was the case, Greg would constantly be in the hospital just like me.

TWINS: How would you each describe to others what it is like being a twin?

(KEVIN) It's certainly cool to have it as an icebreaker. Ladies love a good set a twins! It's tough though when you're growing up and there's a constant comparison to someone else. I mean there's no excuse for why I didn't or couldn't do as well in social studies as Greg did. There's a lot of self-applied pressure with that.



(GREG) Growing up with a twin means matching outfits, duplicate toys (typically in another color), and a never-ending rivalry to outdo the other. In our case, I think our personalities have evolved from trying to carve out separate identities from one another, but there's obviously a shared bond that comes from years of driving our mom and dad crazy!

TWINS: Do you feel that you were competitive with one another when growing up? Do you find yourselves still competing in some ways as adults?

(KEVIN) Yeah, I would absolutely say we were competitive when we were young but it was good when we were doing something constructive like team sports and whatnot. I always tried to be better than Greg early on. Now though, we're really two different people. I don't have the same passions as he does outside of the band so we don't compete over that.

(GREG) Haha oh ya. That's putting it mildly. Both of us were constantly looking to be the superior twin growing up, no matter how trivial the activity was. Although it's no where near as bad as back then, we still find our selves in heated debates from time to time if we both think we know more then the other on any given subject.

TWINS: What is the very BEST thing about being a twin? What would you say is the WORST thing?

(KEVIN) The best thing for me about being a twin is knowing that I got an extra kidney just waiting for me over there!

(GREG) The worst thing about being a twin is knowing Kevin might ask me for my kidney.

TWINS: Who were your major musical influences along the way?

(KEVIN) Aerosmith was the band that really made me want to pick up and play the guitar.

(GREG) I started drumming after watching a marching band in 2nd grade, so that was probably my biggest 'influence' musically! I'm also a fan of many genres from Rock to Country to Classical.

TWINS: What else would you like to share with our readers about being twins in the entertainment industry?

(KEVIN) If you're fraternal like us, always make sure you have your driver's licenses at the ready. You'll get a lot of doubters and that's the easiest way to quiet them!

TWINS: What are any future projects/performances you would like to include?

(KEVIN) Transmit Now will be starting a tour in mid-May with our brothers from other mothers, Framing Hanley. We couldn't be more excited to go out with them again. It's going to be so much fun for everyone! So grab your genetic equal and head on out!

(GREG) Our Album "Down Town Merry-Go-Round" will be out this April and we couldn't be more excited! Just be sure to get two copies if you have twins of your own... they'll appreciate it! You can stay in touch with our band at www.transmitnowmusic.com!

(KEVIN) On a side note...I just want to say I that I just found out that TWINS magazine first came out in 1984, and my mom subscribed to it. It made her day to hear that her sons were going to be in it. So thanks for the fantastic timing TWINS! ❤️



A Father's Reflection of raising his Twins



by Mike Dikos

Mike Dikos has been employed in the aviation field for twenty five years. His wife of almost twenty five years is also in the aviation field which is how they met. He currently resides in Indiana along with his three daughters (including twins) and a grand daughter.

"Twins! Are you sure?" Of course he was sure. He's the one they call for the high-risk births at Loyola in Chicago. He couldn't be wrong on something like this. Then, grasping my hand in a congratulatory handshake that I would never forget, spoke the words that are known by everyone, "Stuff (insert French word here) happens!" I'm glad that he was my wife's doctor; he was very good, and his sense of humor helped me with the initial shock of having twins.

Driving home from work, that's all that was on my mind... Two babies! At the same time! We already have a baby, one baby. I

didn't realize that you could have more than one at the same time. I knew you could, but that happens to other people. Would I have to work a ton of overtime? Would I have to get a second job? Maybe I would need the second job just to keep my sanity.

Weeks turned into months. My wife's belly turned into this huge thing. I didn't know that the human body could stretch that much. I even thought of calling Sigourney Weaver to ask her how to stop this alien-looking thing from growing. Hmmm, what would Ripley do? In space, no one can hear you scream. Well, what about here on Earth?

The comments at work didn't taper off as my wife's pregnancy progressed. I wouldn't say that they were relentless, but more like good-natured to crude. Being an aircraft mechanic, you could probably imagine the remarks from my cohorts. I contributed precision, accuracy, and the proper tooling, all of which are critical

in the field of aviation, to the manufacturing of the twins.

Another thought that kept my mind busy was the idea of all the logistics that would soon be involved. Supplies... like diapers, formula, baby wipes. I'm sure it would be far less expensive to have a supply line of rations, ammo, and fresh water than diapers and formula. I realize now what stocks I should have purchased years ago.

The day finally arrived for the delivery of our twins. My wife was getting pretty sick, and the babies were far enough along. They were going to be delivered by C-section, and I was allowed to be in the delivery room. I likened it to a biology lesson.

The process moved along rather swiftly. An incision was made, and the first baby was removed. The second baby must have been





hiding because the doctor's arm disappeared up to the elbow. Out came her sister. Yes, two girls. Identical twins! In the very near future it will feel like triplets because their sister is only fifteen months older than them. Yes, three girls.

The doctor and nurses finished up with my wife. The babies went to the hospital nursery, and I stepped out of the delivery room. Relief and joy finally entered my mind. Everybody was fine. Feeling a hand on my shoulder, I turned around to the outstretched hand of my wife's doctor. "Congratulations", he said.

"You have two car seats don't you?" the nurse asked me. I was told many times that the babies cannot go home unless they are both in a car seat. I remembered that from our first baby. Thankfully, we only had to get one more seat. After strapping them in, we were on our way home for the first time.

That first night home was like many more to come, little to no sleep at all; and all the crying, diaper changing, feeding, walking and pacing the floor. Naturally, there seemed to be some sinister plot involved. When one would finally fall asleep, the other would wake up and the process started again. Maybe twins have the power of telepathy. When one would be ready to doze off, the other would receive telepathic waves to wake up. I'm not sure how logical my theory was... I'll have to ask Spock.

I can also remember when they first started walking. That is literally a big step for a baby but with two babies walking, two little human beings were going on their own natural path (opposite directions of one another!) Have you ever noticed that when a baby learns to walk, the parents learn to run? I'm sure my wife and I logged many miles, all in the comfort of our own home.

Contrary to all of the scientific research out there, the Cheetah is not the fastest animal on Earth. I'm sure if I had to, I could back up my findings with millions of testimonials. The human infant, having discovered how to walk, is the fastest creature on the planet. When they are working in a pack, the parent has to even be much more wary. Especially when one goes upstairs and the other one heads downstairs. Or when one twin is dashing out the front door to follow mom to work, just far enough apart to make capture extremely difficult! In their previous life, my girls must have fought bravely along side of one of history's greatest military leaders, Julius Caesar. One of his battle plans was to divide and conquer. That's what they did. They divided, and I got conquered.

My advice to all of you just starting out, the years will pass swiftly so enjoy every moment you can. Before long, you will have to deal with two first report cards, two first dates, two first years of college, two first job interviews, and many others. The list will never stop. In fact, this past year, I had to deal with another first for me... my first grandchild.

And YES...it was a girl. ♥





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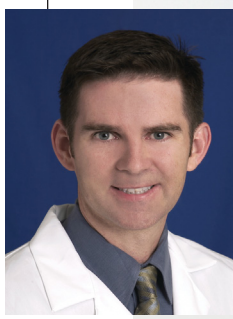


PREGNANCY

Over 35 and Expecting—What Should I Know?

Your health guide to
expecting multiples

by Dr. James Byrne



Dr. James Byrne is Chief of Obstetrics and Maternal-Fetal-Medicine at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and is an affiliated clinical associate Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine. He has cared for hundreds of women with twins and preterm birth and is widely recognized for his clinical skills, teaching, and patient advocacy work.



Congratulations! You're embarking on what is arguably the most challenging and rewarding experience of your life. Just as you would not go into the wilderness unprepared—it's important that you prepare for your upcoming adventure. By learning about possible medical challenges, you can better participate in obtaining the safest pregnancy possible for you

and your new bundles of joy. Two major areas to explore are your health and common pregnancy complications.

MATERNAL HEALTH FACTORS

Ideally, women actively improve their lifestyle including a healthy diet and exercise to lose any excess weight even prior

to getting pregnant. Given the obesity statistics in the U.S. you can see the value of pre-conception care and getting into the best physical shape possible. Pregnancy, particularly with twins, is a significant physical demand on your body including the heart and muscles. Unlike exercise, this demand continues around the clock for many months. Another reason to improve your overall health is that being overweight is associated with increased risk of high blood pressure and diabetes. Lifestyle modifications often create the safest possible environment.

Especially for women over the age of 35, pre-existing health conditions can result in increased medical problems during twin pregnancies. The most common are high blood pressure and diabetes. It's important to recognize these risks and work proactively with your doctor in order to have the healthiest children. OB/GYN's and other pregnancy professionals watch for signs of pre-existing hypertension and for new onset of pregnancy hypertension conditions (such as preeclampsia). These occur in about 1 in 5 pregnant women over 35 with twins and OB/GYN doctors are well skilled at this aspect of care.

Diabetes is also very common in women over 35 who are pregnant with twins. In fact, diabetes affects approximately 1 in 3 women in this group. Diabetes may have existed prior to the pregnancy or it may develop as a new condition (Gestational diabetes). Even Gestational diabetes can harm the unborn child if not identified and managed appropriately. Risk to the child can include being too large and result in birth injury. Poorly controlled diabetes can increase the long-term risks of pediatric and adult obesity, which harm your child for decades into the future. Fortunately, this common condition is typically managed successfully with proper diet and self testing of blood sugars at home. Occasionally some women will need to be on medications to control their blood sugar and protect their child. This can be achieved by taking oral pills or by injections of insulin. For women who need this special care, their OB/GYN doctor will usually work with either a Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) doctor or an endocrinologist. While this is a lot of work for most women, this additional care clearly benefits unborn children now and into the future.

All medical conditions become more common as we age and pregnant women are not immune from this. So, it's important to be proactive and be sure to have your health care provider check your overall health including your thyroid function. Also, let your provider know immediately if you have medical conditions such as lupus, asthma or any heart conditions.

COMMON PREGNANCY FACTORS

It is well known that women carrying twins or other multiples are more likely to deliver prematurely. This rate is even higher in women who are over age 35 and in women with any of the medical conditions noted above. More than half of women with multiples who are older than 35 will deliver prematurely. Fortunately, the majority of these births occurs after 34 weeks and is associated with only minor risk to the children. Their care can usually be provided in local community hospitals and consists of helping the newborns cope with issues such as jaundice and problems with feeding. However, there is also risk for births prior to 34 weeks. Twins born this early often need more advanced levels of medical care found in level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU). Due to prematurity, these babies face more challenges including risks related to their

lungs and brains. Fortunately most will do well with modern medical care even though it is emotionally challenging for their parents.

Fortunately, preterm labor can often be predicted by several factors including the mom's medical status as well as with special tests. These tests include special ultrasounds of the cervix and a test for fetal fibronectin. The fetal fibronectin test (fFN Test) is performed much like a pap smear with a special swab and results are usually available within four hours. A negative test result means there is less than one percent chance of delivery from preterm labor in the next 14 days. If the test is positive it allows the OB/Gyn doctor to prepare for possible preterm birth. One of the most important interventions to protect preterm children involves medications (such as beta-methasone) that are given to the mother and then cross the placenta to strengthen the babies' lungs and blood vessels. Preparation may also involve your doctor coordinating care with other physicians or hospitals skilled in the care of preemie babies. The March of Dimes is one organization with excellent website resources regarding preterm labor assessment tool kits as well as wonderful materials to help educate and support families with preterm birth (see www.marchofdimes.com).

While this medical information can all seem overwhelming at first, the most important thing for any woman expecting twins is to be aware of what can occur and be proactive working with her doctor to improve the health outcomes for her children. After all, you are your best advocate for your health and the health of your children, Be proactive, educated, and enjoy! ♥

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Newborns & BOOKS



Holly Engel-Smothers is the author of *Boosting Your Baby's Brain Power*.

My literacy mantra is, "You can never start too early." Experts agree that the earlier a baby is read to, the better. Research shows that your babies can hear muffled sounds of the outside world while still in the womb beginning at 7 months. Your baby can hear and remember a song or story heard several times in utero up to a year after birth! So begin reading when your babies are still growing inside your womb. Read just a few books. In this early stage of literacy, it is more fun to read your heart-felt favorites or from a magazine, than the bills. It is the sound of your voice that matters during this early, early period of your twins' lives.

As newborns, keep reading time with your little bitty ones short but frequent. A goal time to shoot for is five times a day for about five minutes if your sweethearts are alert. You can change the reading time as you pick up on your babies' cues: fussing and looking away are an

indicator that reading time is over. Calm breathing, focusing on the reader's face, quietness are indicators that reading time can continue. During sleepy times, go ahead and read from *Mother Goose's Big Book*, or another book you love.



by Holly Engel-Smothers

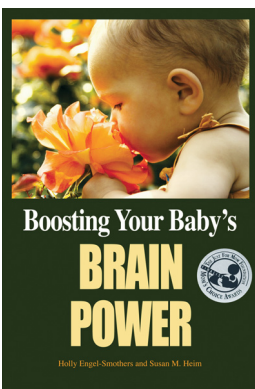
Once your family has settled in a bit, set up a routine that includes snuggles, smiles, and serenity during reading time. Turn off the music and TV so your babies can focus on the lilt of your voice, the joy you express while reading, and the sounds and rhythms made in your particular language. Turn off the phone as well. (Picture a tender time with your baby that suddenly gets interrupted by the shrill ring of the phone. What a way to ruin the mood!) Before starting, change your little sweeties' diapers, wrap them up in a warm blanket. You can hold your twins during story time or set them in their bouncy seats and sit or lay by them. This teaches your babes that book time is "love-y" time, cozy time, happy time, and the ever important bonding time.

It is not true that babies can only see black and white. What they see is contrasts in vivid colors. Some examples: a bright green frog on a light blue background, a brown cat on a yellow background, a ceiling fan against a white background. Keep this in mind when choosing books.

As well, newborn babies can clearly see faces and items that are 8-12 inches from their faces. Nature has this built in as the distance between your face and your twins' faces during feeding, which allows for one way to bond. Let's take this cue from nature: when reading, hold the book slightly away from their faces. You do not necessarily have to hold the book so the twins can see the picture at this early age. In fact, the thing that young babies stare at the most are faces that are in their "sight zone," 8-12 inches from their faces – that usually means mom, dad, grandparent, or caregiver.

When visiting the library, ask for help finding the "Board Book" section. Since your babies are simply listening and not manipulating or chewing the book, the library is a super way for you to get to know what kinds of books are available before you buy books that your babies will eventually chew on, bang, and sleep with.

Your newborn twins have no idea what you are actually reading to them until several months later, but don't let that deter you or con you into thinking that reading is unnecessary at this time. Reading to your little cutie-pies lets them hear a



lot of human speech. Each time your babies hears a particular word or song, their memories are built up in the brain. Eventually these memories, or "brain connections," become strong enough to create a skill and move the twins forward to achieving another language milestone.

Looking down the language development timeline, if a baby is not spoken to directly, or read to frequently and early, she may miss the opportunity to reach each continuous timeline skill. Missing one milestone

backs up the language advances your baby should be making.

Although you may have heart connections to a few certain books (i.e., *The Runaway Bunny*, *Bunny my Honey*, *Guess How Much I Love You*, *Goodnight Moon*) there are tons of Board Books. These books are "stiff as a board and light as a feather." While feeding your babies, simply lay the book beside you and read. The pages are easy to turn and are actually made so that when you read one page, the next page pops up slightly to ensure that little ones with little fingers can grasp and turn it. The objective in this case is to allow your babies to hear your voice repeating the same few books. When the next literacy stage comes along, the books you read to your muffins are the ones that will be their favorites.

Gather some Mother Goose or Nursery Rhymes books. The sing-song, rhyme structure is another way to "turn on" your babies'

brain. The more language your babies hear in diverse ways, the better. Sing-song, tickle songs, lullabies all fall under the category of developing early literacy because these are all ways your baby hears and comprehends language.

There is no need to rush to build your own army of books. As with all things twins, easy does it. Request bookstore gift certificates, books, or nursery rhyme CDs for gifts. Pick out books that you like, because, as your twins grow, they will want their favorite books read over and over again. And their favorite books will soon become your favorite books! ♥



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TODDLERS

Janet Gonzalez-Mena of Napa, California, has taught early childhood education at Napa Valley College. She is author of the book *Dragon Mom*, and the mother of five children.



by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

How Do Emotions Affect Learning?

I sat in a filled auditorium waiting for a lecture on “The Link Between Thinking and Feeling.” The lecturer did not begin on time due to problems with the slide projector. The minutes crept by, and the audience grew restless.

Finally, the speaker walked to the lectern and commanded “Slides!” to his assistant.

The lights went out, but nothing happened. Tension grew. A light flashed on the screen and quickly flickered out... darkness again. Suddenly there was a loud crash as if 100 slides had spilled out onto the floor. The house lights went on, revealing a distressed assistant in the back of the room.

But our attention turned back to the front when the lecturer threw his notes down and stomped into the wings. The audience gasped and held its collective breath. Before we could let it out, the lecturer returned to the podium and asked, “Well, how are you feeling, and have you learned anything yet?”

I got the point immediately. The emotional overtones of the session had completely obliterated anything I might have gained from his lecture. He gave us a firsthand demonstration on how emotional climate affects the ability to take in and understand information.

Think of toddlers in the bathtub faced with a furious parent trying to teach a lesson about keeping the water inside the tub. What lesson do the children remember? It’s hard to tell. Think of toddlers who live in a household where angry feelings between parents are the rule. How does it affect them?

Even a little lesson like staying off the coffee table changes when emotional overtones in the house are present.

Of course, all parents get upset about their children’s behavior and about each other’s behavior sometimes. However, it’s good to be aware that these feelings affect learning. If you’re furious about what your child did to her co-twin, for example, let her know that you won’t allow that behavior – but wait until you calm down to help her understand the situation. If you’re upset about rough treatment of the cat, stop it – but save the lesson on how to pet the cat for when the emotional climate is right.

It’s not easy for parents of toddlers to continually create an emotional climate that is conducive to learning. Toddlers can challenge their parents in ways that trigger emotional responses in even the most mild-mannered person.

A big shock for me as a parent came when I discovered how different toddlerhood is from fantasy. Those sweet, innocent babes that just lie there become walking balls of fire once they get up on their feet. And by 2 years of age, there’s no stopping them! Toddlers demand a different kind of parenting from what they needed as infants. They need parents who set limits and enforce them in a firm, but calm, way.

THE POWER OF FIRMNESS

Being firm is a real switch for many parents. Infants don’t call for firmness – but rather, responsiveness. Reading their

signals and meeting their needs are the primary concerns. The question is, what are my babies trying to tell me, and how should I respond? Toddlers still have needs, of course, but those needs often lead them into behaviors their parents never even thought of! And besides having needs, they also make impossible demands. The best parental response in the face of a good deal of toddler behavior is firmness.

A firm but calm response is easier said than done. It's very difficult to keep from losing one's temper in the face of some 2-year-old behavior. How many parents are able to face toddler defiance and negativity calmly?

It's hard, but important, to create an emotional climate that is conducive to learning. If you understand that whatever you're trying to teach the child is probably lost when you blow up, it may help keep you calmer. And worse – it isn't just lost for the child who is the target of the anger, but probably for his co-twin as well.

I think of myself in the lecture hall. The speaker wasn't furious with me, but with the assistant; however, the emotional climate between the two of them affected every single person in the auditorium in some way.

If you grew up in a family that saw fear or anger as a way to teach a lesson, remember that the emotional overlay of a situation is taken in along with the instruction.

For example, my first day as a community college teacher, I was quite nervous. I sat down to memorize my telephone extension and my office number. The numbers were similar; and in my confused and fearful state of mind, I never got them straight. After five years at that college, I was still looking up those numbers. When I tried to remember them, the feelings came back and got in the way.

So if you're trying to get your toddlers to remember to hang-up their coats, don't put an emotional overlay on the situation that brings fear or confusion. They may look at the hook, forget the coat, and recall only the feelings. At that moment, the lesson you intended to teach is lost! ♥

DON'T CRY OVER SPILLED MILK

So what can you do to help keep the emotional climate at least neutral, if not positive? Here are four suggestions:

- Keep your perspective. It helps to remember that toddlerhood is a stage and it will pass. The negativity and defiance come because toddlers are working on issues of autonomy. They are trying out their power. Keep your perspective on the matter, and it may help you keep your temper.
- Save the lessons if you get too angry. Just get through the situation. Sit down afterwards with your child or children and reflect back on what happened. Talking about things when you have all calmed down helps.
- Keep out of power struggles. Sidestep a power struggle when you perceive that you're headed into one. Don't be as stubborn as your toddler; use your adult intelligence to figure out how to keep from bumping heads.
- Be aware of the possibility that your child (or children) may be seeking negative attention. Some children find that they can get parents to spend plenty of time and energy on them only if they misbehave. In a sense, they learn to misbehave. When that happens, parents must demonstrate that attention comes from positive behavior more readily than negative behavior.

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PRESCHOOL

Are You *Teaching* Your *Twins* To be *Sick?*

Patricia Edmister, PH.D., of Sherman Oaks, California, was the director of developmental psychology and children's study at the California Family Study Center. She is the mother of twins.



by Patricia Edmister, Ph.D.

During the preschool years, many behaviors become regular responses to specific situations. In the case of childhood hypochondria – the imagining or exaggerating of medical symptoms – it’s important for parents to decide if their twins are reacting to one of several different situations in which “acting sick” brings them some type of positive feedback. Complaining of feeling sick is certainly not only a twin-specific problem, of course. (See “Twin-Specific Watchwords”) Many toddlers and young children go through periods of voicing physical complaints as signs of anxiety about something going on in their lives. In children, just as in adults, this anxiety can lead to the physical sensation of muscle tension, headaches, stomachaches and nausea. Such symptoms may be found more frequently in children whose nature seems to classify them as ‘worriers’.

Sometimes, too, children will use physical problems to avoid certain types of situations, such as being punished for something, having to take swimming lessons or visit someone they don’t like. They may also use them to get attention, if they feel they are being ignored.

Some highly sensitive children may use ‘being sick’ as a diversionary technique when they have a problem and don’t know how to solve it. They may also employ this technique when they are upset about something which they realize isn’t likely to be important enough for a parent to warrant a lot of attention. Rather than cope with handling the real problem, they will use an illness to buy time to avoid the problem and calm them down.

Finally, some children seem to have learned ‘sick’ behavior by watching parents or siblings get attention or get ‘their way’ by acting as if they were sick. Unfortunately, some adults use this behavior for many of the same reasons mentioned above. Preschoolers learn this lesson quickly if they see the behavior reinforced for others.

LESSONS IN GOOD HEALTH

Regardless of the reason for children’s complaints of symptoms of illnesses, you may want to try these suggestions to increase the chances that your multiples will not artificially create aches and pains:

- Look at your own behavior and attitudes about being sick to be sure you aren’t

modeling illness as a pattern for getting attention or avoiding situations.

- Develop certain ‘rituals’ for determining if an illness is feigned or real – taking the child’s temperature, feeling her forehead, etc. Then, if she persists in complaints of illness, put her to bed; darken the room; and be kind, but don’t over-reward.
- Don’t reinforce the ‘sick child’s’ role – all children seek to have a separate identity, but you don’t want to make the sick role seem attractive.
- Don’t over-do the care giving and kindness, even when the child is truly sick. It is easy for caring parents to get caught up in making the child’s convalescence as pleasant as possible; but giving extra favors, new toys and special foods can reinforce how nice getting sick is. Show your caring equally, whether your child is healthy or ill.
- Analyze the time or situations which surround the occurrence of your child’s illnesses. Can you identify particular stressors which may be causing the symptoms? If so, then focus your attention on alleviating those stressors rather than on the physical symptoms. If, for example your child has a stomachache right before swimming lessons, maybe the message she’s trying to send is not that she’s sick, but that it’s too early for this particular youngster to accept this activity, even though her co-twin might do just fine adjusting to the lessons.
- Watch for the occurrence of illness in one twin when both co-twins are engaging in a competitive activity in which one is either more confident or competent. Again, this may be an indicator that a particular activity isn’t appropriate, developmentally, for both children.

- Be careful not to accuse your child of lying or making up his illness. To a child experiencing stress or anxiety, the physical feelings of illness are very real, not imagined, so parents need to look for the underlying causes rather than to deny the symptoms.
- Never ignore a child’s complaint of illness, even if she has a history of having exaggerated or imaginary illnesses. The illness may, in fact, be real, and medical attention may be needed. If, however, you repeatedly encounter these complaints, your child’s physician sees no illness upon exam and you have not given the child a lot of positive attention for her illnesses in the past, you may want to consult a mental health specialist to assist you in determining the cause of the behavior. ♥

“Twin-specific Watchwords” Some twins may be especially prone to imagined illnesses in two commonly encountered situations.

Situation #1

If one (or both) twins have had significant medical or health problems during his or her younger days, he or she may be prone to feeling some ongoing anxiety about her symptoms, worrying that if some of the symptoms continue even after his/her release from the hospital, he/she may become ill again.

Situation #2

One co-twin may decide that feigning illness is the only way to get a little extra tender, loving care for herself because so much has to be shared between her and her co-twin, especially her parents’ time.

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SCHOOL-AGE

Judith O. Hooper, PH.D., of Guadalajara, California, is a freelance writer and former marriage and family therapist.

The Parent Booster Club!

by Judith O. Hooper



Several years ago, my husband and I observed a cricket match being played by the ‘lower form’ boys at a beautiful school set in the countryside of England. As we watched, we were struck by the response of the crowd of parents and teachers. In England, apparently, one does not display too much emotion over cricket.

The well-dressed spectators, seated on lawn chairs, occasionally gave two or three polite claps and called out, in carefully modulated voices, to mark good plays. After a while, though, I became aware that, unlike some American spectators, these fans also applauded good effort. Along with “well played” and “well struck (batted),” we also heard “well tried.”

At the end of the game, I noticed that the losing team did not slink off the field in defeat, but went to mingle with the spectators just as the winners did. By this time I was shamelessly eavesdropping and was interested to hear comments that focused on the positive aspects of play of both the winners and losers. Nowhere was there the rabid parent, red in the face, neck veins distended, yelling about a “stupid play” or “dumb mistake” or “not playing as well as so-and-so” – at least one of whom, it seems, is nearly always found where American children play sports.

I often think of that ‘cricket experience’ when working with parents of middle-years children. It seems to me that many children are so competent and successful at the tasks of the middle years that we parents sometimes forget that they are indeed still children. We forget that their lives are constantly changing, that their self-confidence is still developing, and that they continue to need the support and encouragement of all adults, especially their parents.

By the late middle years, most children will begin to have more unsuccessful experiences. Their tasks continue to become more complex and difficult; their lives are broader and involve relationships with more people; expectations may be higher; and competition is growing.

COMPETITION WOES

Some parents of multiples find that self-confidence can be a problem for one or more of their children because of the extra pressure of the constant comparison of “the

twins” or “the triplets”. Many singletons also face comparison with a sibling, and this can certainly be problematic when one is conspicuously more “successful” than the other. Never the less, there is not usually an expectation that singleton siblings will be equally good at everything.

Unfortunately, despite every effort to educate them to the contrary, many people, sometimes even family members, continue to view multiples as duplicates or clones. If there is an expectation that they will be alike in every way, then when they are not, the differences are regarded as problems, not just differences.

One member of my parents of multiples group shared her story: “My 12-year-old son has great difficulty with spelling, while

his twin sister is an excellent speller. When they were in the same classroom, my son refused to even study spelling, because the teacher

would tell him, ‘Your laziness is showing again. Your sister scored 100; you scored only 60.’

“The message that my son heard was that he was supposed to be able to spell as well as his sister, and the reason he did poorly was because she tried and he didn’t. Once they were in separate classrooms, my son began to improve because he wanted to and because no one was telling him that he should be a perfect speller because his sister was. When the goal became trying and improving, rather than being like his sister; my son did much better.”

During their middle childhood years, your children may need your help and support even more than earlier. Here are some things to keep in mind as you try to foster self-confidence in your middle-years multiples:

- Let your children know that many people, even some family members, have mistaken ideas about multiples being ‘duplicates’. Remind them often that, although they are alike in many ways, they are, nevertheless, unique human beings who need not be compared. Let your children hear you remind other adults of this fact: “Yes Kelly is a wonderful musician, just like her father. David has outstanding mechanical abilities, which are often a big help to us. Last week he

saved us a big plumbing bill by fixing the kitchen faucet.”

- Don’t hesitate to talk with your children about their problems and failures. Encourage them to think about what they need to do differently the next time they try. “Jim, I know you’re disappointed about losing the tennis match. But I thought your net game looked much better. Did you think so? What else do you think you need to work on before your next match?”
- Share stories of your own failures. Don’t be afraid to let your children know that you have disappointments, anger and hurt feelings. Show them that a successful person continues to try. “I am so angry that we lost that account. If only Mr. Olsen had let me present my new ideas, I think the company would have stayed with us. I am going to work that idea up and see if I can’t convince him to let me go and present it to the company on my own. All they can do is to say no, and maybe they’ll say yes!”
- Work hard to be aware of your children’s special characteristics and openly express your admiration and respect. It seems to me that characteristics such as empathy, compassion, humor and love, which certainly ought to be fostered and encouraged, are often overlooked in favor of talents and skills like athleticism and academic or artistic prowess. Sometimes you may need to explain to one of your children that her peers may be too immature to appreciate those special characteristics of hers right now, but that they will be very much appreciated when she is an adult.
- Even though your children may say they don’t care whether or not you attend various events in their lives, they do. Many young clients of mine have complained that “my parents don’t care about me” when their parents are missing from games, plays, concerts and other events. What they don’t say is how hard it is to care about yourself, and have confidence in yourself, if you think your parents don’t care about or have confidence in you.
- All humans need to know they are loved no matter how badly they mess up. Work within your family to separate moments of “failure” from definitions of “self.” Express to your children that if they continue to try, they will surely have failures. But, in fact, the only true “failure” is that of failing to try! ♥



TWEENS

Patricia Maxwell Malmstrom, M.A., of Berkeley, California, is the founder and director of Twin Services, Inc., and the mother of four daughters, including identical twins.

The Facts of Life for Twins



by Patricia Maxwell Malmstrom

Several years ago, Twin Services hosted a lunch hour discussion for twins and triplets attending Berkeley High School. We had anticipated an interesting discussion about twin relationships. What surprised us were the questions such as, "Is there something wrong with me because I don't feel his pain?" and, "Are we supposed to read each other's minds?" We were astonished to discover this group of multiples' interest in information about basic twin psychology and biology.

Like everyone else, teenage twins have the usual challenges that come with puberty – adapting to their physical changes and evolving adult identity. But unlike other teens, a twin must also cope



with constant comparisons with his or her co-twin and balance two essential parts of his own self-concept – being both an individual and a twin.

Children absorb information about the facts of life gradually during childhood. Little by little, as a child's understanding deepens, parents add information – sometimes casually in answer to a question; sometimes more formally when the parent believes the child is ready for a serious discussion.

Parents must take care to update their twins' understanding of twin biology, so that by their teen years, they will have a good grasp of the basics.

FIRST THE FACTS

Before multiples can understand the biology of their own conception and its influence on their bodies and lives, they need to know the difference between identical and fraternal twins. Identical or monozygotic twins result when one fertilized egg divides into two. These twins, therefore, have identical genes. As a result, they look very much alike and may have many similar interests and talents.

However, this does not mean that they are exactly the same. There are always differences, as family and friends who know identical twins well, will testify. Nor does it mean that the differences between co-twins are under their control. For example, I remember when one of a pair of teenage identical twins began to wear glasses, the kids in his class thought he had gone 'soft.' They believed that if wanted to, he could see as well as his twin brother.

Fraternal or dizygotic twins have different biological makeup. Fraternal twins, form when two eggs are fertilized by two different sperm, are far more common than identical twins; they may or may



not look more alike than any two brothers or sisters. And like any two siblings, they may or may not have similar interests and talents.

Both identical and fraternal twins have so many shared experiences during childhood that whether or not they have similar interests, they usually have a very close relationship. However, 'close' doesn't always mean 'friendly.' It means that they know each other so well that it isn't surprising when they do say or think similar things at the same time.

Kevin Alexander, 16, reports that he and his twin sister "have had eerie experiences, like thinking or saying the exact same thing at the exact same time, which never happens between me and my older brother."

Dr. David Hay of the LaTrobe Twin Study in Australia, observed that teenage twins 'can become ever more sensitive to attempts to compare them, something that parents, teachers and other adults would do well to remember. They may be able to work out the differences between them, and the last thing they need is someone else emphasizing something that they have already resolved.'

Another important fact of twin life is the heritability of twinning. Teens may wonder about their own chances of having twins. They should know that genetics does play a role in the probability of a woman's conceiving fraternal, but not identical, twins.

Parents can help their twins work through the challenges of their teen years by ensuring that they have accurate information about twin biology, giving reassurance when needed, advice when asked and lots of moral support all along the way. ♥



Managing Multiples

& THE MILITARY

by Crystal Kupper

When her husband landed in the hospital with a severe case of heatstroke, Sara Robinson was thrilled.

Her happiness had nothing to do with revenge or marital strife, however. LCpl. Leo Robinson, a Marine deployed to Afghanistan, had never seen his children's faces before. So his stint at Camp Leatherneck's hospital turned out to be an unexpected blessing when he was allowed to use the facility's webcam.

There, in the middle of a war zone, LCpl. Robinson saw his

Her husband would not meet the twins in person until they were six months old, leaving the third trimester, birth and half of the first year's care to the 23-year-old first-time mother.

With lengthening tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan for America's soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen, the Robinson

family's situation is no longer rare. According to U.S. military data, 48,820 babies were born on military installations in 2009 alone, including 1,190 twins and other multiples. Though military wives often take on heavier

responsibilities when their husbands are deployed, giving birth to and raising multiples alone is a decidedly unique and growing trend since the war's start in 2003.

It is a statistic the Laskey family of Jacksonville, N.C. experienced for over seven months. When Cpl. Jared Laskey, a 29-year-old Marine Corps radio operator, got his deployment orders, he knew his departure coincided closely with his wife's scheduled C-section for their twins. Thirteen days after Jared, himself a twin, left for Afghanistan, 28-year-old Rochelle gave birth to Lydia and Malachi on May 27, 2009.



LCpl. Leo Robinson with Abi first night back



LCpl. Leo Robinson with twins

son Leo Jr. and daughter Abigail for the first time. The twins, born prematurely on June 7, 2009 and now five weeks old, had not heard their daddy's voice since he left in Sara's sixth month of pregnancy.

"It was great to see his face light up with joy and pride when he saw his little babies," Sara Robinson, a Jackson, Mich. native, says.



Laskey Family

"I was actually thankful for the C-section, because he knew what day they were to be born," she says. "He was able to call that day and pray with me. That was the first time I cried since he left. It really hit me that this sucked not having him here for the birth."

BIG FEARS, BIGGER DREAMS

Like Laskey, the feelings of nervousness and inadequacy over the upcoming birth of twins combined with deployment anxiety initially seemed insurmountable to Air Force wife Lindsey Kemp.

The 21-year-old breezed through a two-month engagement to A1C Jack Kemp III, getting married a week before he left for basic training. Just five weeks later, doctors told a stunned Kemp that she was pregnant with twins. Because of her husband's technical school schedule, the first-time mother knew he would miss the entire pregnancy.

"As a military wife, I went into this knowing my challenges ahead and preparing myself to be a strong wife and mother," says Kemp, who now lives at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. "Jack being deployed at some point did terrify me, but I knew that if we could make it seven months without seeing each other we could make it another six if needed."

Thanks to an Air Force recruiter-assistance program, A1C Kemp was granted three weeks' leave around his wife's due date. On May 22, 2009 and with video camera in hand, Kemp watched Lindsey give birth to Madison and Jack IV. One week later, he left again for training.



A1C Jack Kemp III, and twins

"It was hard not having Jack there and emotionally rough on him," she says. "He missed [the twins] so bad."

Despite this less-than-ideal introduction to parenting multiples, wives who weathered the infant storm times two see the big picture.

"I strongly believe it worked out well that he was not there for labor and delivery," Robinson asserts. "My husband is a strong, courageous man, but when it comes to his family, he has a soft heart."

Laskey echoes that sentiment. "I definitely had a big cry around day four and then I knew I had to be strong for [my four-year-old son] and the babies," she says. "No more pity parties for me. We just had to get through the deployment and then we'd be a family again."

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

When physically separated from their husbands, many military wives use whatever communication available to introduce new family members to their fathers. Affordable technologies like webcams, digital cameras, instant messaging, blogs and social networking sites help, but some imaginative thinking is in order when computer access opportunities are sparse for those on the battlefield.

Cpl. Laskey, for instance, recorded videos of himself reading children's books before he left, which Rochelle then showed daily to her twins. She also taped an enlarged photograph of Jared inside their cribs. Similarly, Sara Robinson lightly misted the babies' receiving blankets with their father's cologne so they would know his scent upon his return, while Kemp kept her husband's mailbox full of photo albums and video recordings.

The actual absence of one parent was also not the only obstacle to overcome. Sometimes, the homecoming proved just as challenging.

"I had to learn to back off when [my husband] came home," Laskey explains. "I have to be super-mom when he's gone, so when he's home I need to let him be a father again."

Robinson agrees. Within days of Leo's return, they discovered a tentative parenting routine, though not without adjustments.

"I have to admit I overstepped [boundaries] a lot, but we have great communication," she says. "He just asked me to walk away and let him learn. I still have my moments, but we make it work."

Mothers managing both multiples and the military often discover extreme inner strength and even experience an upswing in their marriages, despite the distance separating themselves and their husbands.

"There are some days where I look at Leo and wonder how I ever did this without him," Robinson says. "It's almost like we are dancing a dance we've never seen before, but it works because we trust each other." ♥

Crystal Kupper is a freelance writer, classical pianist and Air Force wife living in Salem, Oregon. She has a two-year-old son named Jack and loves watching her best friend's twins.



By Christina Baglivi Tinglof

Weighing in on the Issue... When One Twin is Much Heavier than the other one

As parents of twins we've all gotten used to constant comparisons tossed around at our twins' expense. You know what I'm talking about. "Which twin was the easier baby?" or "Who's more athletic?" Or, my personal pet peeve, "Which one is smarter?"

Over the years we've learned to ignore these well-meaning busybodies who think they're simply making a joke. But there's one comparison that as parents even we can't ignore—what if one twin is much heavier than the other?

Childhood obesity is a national epidemic where nearly one in three American children is considered overweight or obese. It has such serious long-term health implications including an increased risk for heart disease and diabetes, that First Lady Michelle Obama has launched Let's Move, a national initiative to help fight the problem.

"With the rollout of the First Lady's campaign, we have the opportunity to shift our focus on what's wrong to what we really need," says Dr. Michelle May, a family physician and author of, *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle*. "And that's tackling the unhealthy relationship

most kids have with food, whether they are overweight or not." Dr. May believes that young children naturally tune into their personal hunger and fullness cues but with America's fondness for large food portions and parents' plea for a clean plate, kids quickly lose touch with their internal signals. Many gain too many pounds as a result. For parents of multiples, however, helping an overweight twin get on the fast track to a healthier lifestyle can be doubly tricky—how do you help your twin lose weight without it affecting his relationship with his thinner co-twin?

For Deb Greenway of Van Nuys, California, a 15-pound difference between her 13-year-old fraternal twin girls put an enormous strain on their inner-twin relationship. "Lizzy needed to adapt better eating habits and get more exercise," says Greenway. "But I think she felt she couldn't compete with her co-twin Suzanne who was thinner and really into sports, so she gave up." As a result, the girls grew distant with Lizzy's self-esteem suffering in the process. It's only been recently, Greenway says, that the girls are slowly reconnecting. "My husband and I have made a huge effort to get everyone outside together. We do a lot of hiking and bike riding as a family on the weekends." With the increase in exercise and better food choices at dinner, Lizzy is losing weight and feeling better about herself and her relationship with her twin sister. "The other day, they were hanging out together on the couch laughing. It's been awhile since I've seen that."

THE ROLE FAMILY PLAYS IN WEIGHT GAIN

Although twins are born on the same day and raised side by side, they often receive different messages from their parents when it comes to food. Family dynamics and early childhood experiences with eating and body image shape our future relationship with what's on the table. "Even twins can receive different verbal and non-verbal messages from the same parent," says Dr. Marilyn Ann Migliore, University of Michigan Psychotherapist, Obesity Expert, and the author of, *The Hunger Within: A Twelve Week Guided Jour-*



ney from Compulsive Eating to Recovery. "If one of the twins is viewed as overweight and he receives this message by having his food more closely monitored or restricted more than the other twin, that twin can begin to feel resentful or 'less than,' and may withdraw or rebel." Furthermore, some will begin to crave and sneak food that is considered "off-limits." This pattern or "life script," Migliore says, can continue well into adulthood.

"Ideally, families should not treat their twins differently because everyone in the family benefits from healthy eating and physical activity," adds Dr. May. "On the other hand, comparing twins, restricting foods, forcing exercise, or shaming an overweight twin will backfire and may leave lasting emotional scars."

WHEN PRAISE HAS UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES

Each twin is unique, both physically as well as emotionally. As a result, we parent each twin differently depending on his or her temperament. And when it comes to food, we sometimes focus too strongly on each twin's food choices or style of eating. "A parent may encourage or reward a picky eater. Ironically this can lead to even more resistance or eventually overeating to please the parent," says Dr. May. "On the other hand, a twin who enjoys food and has a more robust appetite may overhear and passively absorb these messages from the parent and begin to eat even more."

It's a dilemma that mom Delia Bechert knows firsthand.

"When my seven-year-old fraternal twin girls, Abby and Ally, were five they were both very thin," she remembers.

"Abby was a good eater and cared about pleasing people. Ally, on the other hand, was a picky

eater, more defiant and didn't care as much about pleasing people." At dinner time, when Ally turned her nose up at what was on her plate, this Carmel, Indiana mom did what any parent would do, she focused on co-twin Abby instead. "We would praise Abby for eating all her food," says Bechert. Because she enjoyed the positive attention, Abby continued to clean her plate at every meal and often asked her mom for another helping. Eventually Bechert noticed that Abby was putting on weight a bit faster than she felt was appropriate so Bechert began to rethink the messages she was sending her daughter about food. "We started to teach her about letting her stomach settle before she asked for seconds," says Bechert. Recently Abby's weight gain has slowed. Bechert is also careful not to compare her twins' weight or withhold dessert from Abby. "I don't give Ally a treat without giving one to Abby," she says. "I just make sure that their treats are in moderation."

MAKE HEALTHY EATING A FAMILY AFFAIR

Families should work together to create a healthy lifestyle. When it comes to dinnertime, for example, let your twins have a voice in the weekly menu planning, grocery shopping, and even meal preparation. Get the kids in the kitchen with you and cook together. "This is a great opportunity to teach them about nutrition," says Dr. May. "And they're more likely to try new foods that they picked out." Make mealtime a pleasant experience where family members get together and share the events of the day, not a battleground where food becomes the enemy. Furthermore, avoid strict food rules such as insisting they clean their plates in order to get dessert. And avoid labeling food as either "good" or "bad," or using food to reward or even punish your kids. This, the experts say, could lead to rebellious eating. Instead,

lead by example by modeling healthy eating and providing your children

with a variety of good food from which to choose.

"We don't use the words 'fat' or 'heavy' in our home," says Helene Gaither. This Stockton, California mother to two sets of fraternal twins chooses her words very carefully since learning about a year ago that daughter Bella was considered obese based on her body mass index (BMI). "At her 4-year-old check-up, I was stunned to learn she weighed 45 pounds," says Gaither. "And it turned out she had high cholesterol. At four years old, her level was already 233, higher than most adults."

Gaither didn't want her daughter to feel that she was singling her out so she encouraged all her twins to eat healthier. "I bought tons of apples and encouraged them to eat at least one a day," she says. "I also started cooking less red meat and more poultry and fish." But what really made a difference, she says, was increasing their level of activity. She enrolled Bella and co-twin Cole in soccer and gymnastics. "I bought a membership to a kid gym with a jumpy house. We'd go two to three times a week where they'd burn off some serious energy."

Recently Bella has hit a growth spurt and Gaither is noticing that she's thinning. "She recently had her cholesterol and glucose levels checked and everything's back to normal," says Gaither, "but it's definitely something we need to keep an eye on."

START TODAY

Making small, subtle changes to the family diet (forgoing soda and processed snack foods is a great start) as well as getting everyone up and off the couch for a bit of outdoor recreation will make a huge difference.

Remember to lead by example because in the end, all children look up to their parents for guidance and direction. "Teach and role model messages that revolve around eating to live," adds Dr. Migliore, "not living to eat."

And that's good advice for every family. ♥

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including 14-year-old fraternal twin boys and a 11-year-old singleton. She's also the author of *Double Duty: The Parents' Guide to Raising Twins*, and *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*. Her website is www.talk-about-twins.com.



Meet the Winners of the CuteKid™ “Cutest Twins of 2009” Photo Contest Camden & Kian



Photographer Katie Arndt

By Christa D. Reed, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief



In 2009, the CuteKid™, the internet's largest and most respected child photo contest & parent network partnered with TWINS Magazine and has recently announced their “Cutest Twins of 2009” photo contest winners. One of the offerings included with their grand prize was to be featured on a cover of TWINS™ Magazine, so this issue we are getting to know the 2009 winners, 2-year-old identical twins, Camden and Kian from Kearney, Nebraska.

It all started after everyone in her close knit family kept telling mom, Heidi, that her twin boys were so adorable and that she should enter them into a photo contest. She just thought to herself, ‘yeah, that’s what families are supposed to tell me...’ but even strangers would stop to tell her how cute her youngest boys were.

So to stop the constant requests by her family and friends about entering her twins in a contest of any kind, she did a Google search for “Kid’s Contests.” The CuteKid™ contest was the very first one to pop up and she then found the “Cutest Twins” page and went ahead and submitted their photo for the contest. She then proudly informed everyone that she finally entered them into an online photo contest to make everyone happy and never really dreamed that her twins would be selected as a monthly winner, let alone the winners for the entire year.



So after entering the photo contest online in early summer this busy mom to five boys moved on and didn’t think much more about it. In August she received an email from the CuteKid™ informing her that Camden and Kian had been selected as the “Cutest Twins” winners for September 2009. She was so excited when she heard the news since each twin received a \$200.00 savings bond from the CuteKid™ and they were also featured in the

fall 2009 edition of TWINS™ Magazine in our CuteKid™ “Winners Round Up” section.

Monthly winners as well as the winners for the entire year are selected by talent and casting agents specializing in working with twins/multiples along with a professional team from the CuteKid™.

Heidi really wasn’t sure when the 2009 winners would be announced and started looking online to learn more in January. But then she heard from the staff at the CuteKid™ in late February 2010 that her twin boys, Camden and Kian had been selected as the “Cutest Twins of 2009!” She was completely shocked and amazed! “I was jumping up and down screaming and running around like a mad woman. I was so excited I ran outside into the street and was jumping around and screaming “they won, they

FAMILY FACTS

Parents:

Heidi and Dan—married eight years

Children in family:

Jackson, age 8; Kaden, age 6; Maddox age 3; and Camden and Kian, age 2 (yes, all boys!)

The family lives in:

Kearney, Nebraska

It's Twins!:

Mom Heidi said that she and her husband Dan had just decided that they were happy raising their three sons and their family was complete. So when Heidi wasn't feeling well and went to her doctor, she was surprised to learn she was pregnant with baby #4. It wasn't until her 18 week ultrasound appointment when she was told she was pregnant with twins! She was so shocked and surprised to learn she was now carrying baby #4 and #5, she immediately called Dan in tears, sobbing and asking him to drive over to the doctor's office right away. Dan of course thought that something terrible must have happened and rushed over to meet with Heidi, not knowing what she would say. When he got there, she immediately started sobbing again and said "we're having twins!" He thought, "Oh, is that all?" and was extremely relieved that everything was okay with his wife and twin babies.

When they arrived:

They were born healthy at 39 weeks gestation on April 10, 2008

On raising twins:

"The boys are such a blessing and a joy," said Heidi in an interview at their Kearney, Nebraska home. "They are extremely close and do everything together. It's really fun to see their twin bond and watch them grow and develop."

Are you going for a girl?

As a mother of four boys myself, I asked this energetic mom of five boys (all under the age of 8) if she also gets asked that same question by people "are you going to try for a girl?" She smiled and said "all the time, but we are now officially done and our family is complete!" With five adorable and active boys, I wouldn't be surprised to see this family with their very own basketball team.



won!" She immediately called her husband of eight years, Dan to share with him their big news. Then she started calling all her family and friends, too. After all, it was with their prodding and pushing that she decided to enter them into the photo contest in the first place. To date, each of her boys has received a \$1,000.00 cash bond, additional exposure from national casting agents as well as being featured on the cover of TWINS™ Magazine. They certainly are sweet and adorable 2-year-olds and we congratulate the entire family on being named winners of the CuteKid™ "2009 Cutest Twins".

Interested? It's not too late to enter your twins in the "Cutest Twins of 2010" contest by visiting www.TwinsMagazine.com/cutekidcontest for your chance to win prizes and have your twins featured in an upcoming edition of TWINS™ Magazine! ♥

HOW TO ENTER THE CUTEKID™ "2010 CUTEST TWINS" CONTEST:

First go to www.TwinsMagazine.com/cutekidcontest to learn more about how to enter and a link to take you directly to the twins/multiples photo contest registration page.

The CuteKid™ offers twins/multiples the following:

- A Fun Place to Share & Store Photos
- Exposure to National Talent & Casting Agents
- Chance to be Selected for Prizes
- Discount and Special Offers
- Free Gifts from CuteKid™ Sponsors
- Share in the CuteKid™ Community
- Monthly winners photo featured in TWINS™ Magazine

Winners Round Up



the
CuteKid



of the Year Contest!

February 2010 CuteKid
"Cutest Twins" Winners



Anthony & Aiden from
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Meet the 2009 Cutest Twins
Winners...Kian & Camden
from Kearney, NE



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photo contest or to enter YOUR
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Feeling overwhelmed, overburdened, strung out, and stressed out—

7 Ways to Avoid PARENTING BURNOUT

by Joshua Coleman, Ph.D.



Burnout occurs when our normal methods of coping become overwhelmed. It is a physical and psychological state that results from extreme stress and exhaustion. Parents of twins are more vulnerable to burnout because there is more to our physical and mental workload. More diapers, more nursing, more bottles, more laundry, more toys, more crying, more talking and more fights to settle. There is also quite a bit less with our dear twins and that can lead to burnout... less sleep, less money, less downtime, less quiet, less order and less predictability.

BURNED OUT BEFORE THE KIDS ARRIVE?

A pregnancy with twins makes mothers more vulnerable to gestational diabetes, gestational hypertension, pre-term labor, Caesarean section, increased nausea and exhaustion in the first trimester, increased chance of bed rest from week 20 on, hospitalization and prematurity. Thus, mothers of twins may begin their child rearing years burned out from the stresses of carrying a twin pregnancy.

Many parents of twins have suffered through years of infertility before they have children. While the birth of children is a relief from the sadness and trauma of infertility, it can also leave parents feeling guilty if they feel burdened and exhausted. As one mother said, "We spent so much money and time trying to have children and now I'm too burned out to even enjoy them. I feel ridiculous complaining or saying I need more help because I know we're lucky to even have kids."

Parents today are more vulnerable to burnout because they're much more anxious about being parents. In part, this is because they are better educated than any other generation on how their

behavior advances or inhibits their children's physical or emotional growth. In the past 30 years, there has been a cultural shift from an adult-centered household to a child-centered household. On the one hand, this has led to many positive changes in our society. We have an increased awareness that we can do a lot to increase the self-esteem and long-term well being of our children. There is a ready source of information on the causes of alcoholism, drug addiction, delinquency, learning and attention problems. The cultural shift towards recognizing the rights and needs of children have resulted in important policy changes, such as the laws against child abuse which were first enacted in 1964.

At the same time, the world has become a more dangerous place. The increase of drugs and guns makes raising children seem more fraught than it once was. As a result of the increased awareness about children's needs and the increased dangers, parents of today are much more anxious about being parents. In my work, I constantly hear parents express fears that their children will feel neglected or that a small mistake or misjudgment will have lasting consequences. There is enormous anxiety that their children will miss out on an opportunity that will place them at a social or educational disadvantage. These are conscientious, dedicated parents. Yet, this need to protect their kids from harm coupled with a desire to make them happy, increases their vulnerability to burnout.

This guilt and worry leads to burnout because it means parents aren't taking the kind of time for themselves or their marriages that would protect them from stress. They believe they should give to their children, no matter how exhausted or needy they feel. And often we do have to give, no matter what. But we also have to know when it's OK not to give to our children and when to give to ourselves.

7 WAYS TO AVOID PARENTING BURNOUT:

1. Manage your guilt. Strive to understand your beliefs about how you should parent. Do you have problems leaving your children with babysitters, taking naps when they're napping or finding time to nurture yourself and your marriage? Do you worry constantly that some ill will befall your children? If the answer is yes to any of these, you may be burdened with irrational guilt or irrational worry about your kids that could lead to burnout.
2. Take down time (anyway). Beg, borrow or barter with your partner or friends, but make sure you get time to replenish yourself. Children benefit when parents take care of themselves. Even if your kids object through tears or complaints when you leave the house, they will nonetheless benefit from your taking time to recharge your batteries. Don't be so tuned in to their needs that you ignore your own.
3. Make sure your down time isn't spent with errands or busy work. Try to make your down time special. In *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron suggests people take "Artist's Dates." This is where you do something that replenishes you creatively and spiritually.
4. Manage your stress. A solid body of research now shows the benefits of exercise, yoga and meditation in combating stress. Most cities have community centers where you can learn how to meditate or do yoga. Even 20 minutes a day of exercise,

meditation or yoga can make an important change in your mental outlook and well being.

5. Take time with your partner. Your relationship can either be an ally against stress or a major contributor to it. Try to have one night or afternoon a week with just you and your partner to nurture your marriage. Don't lose sight of the things you used to do before kids. Don't be such a dedicated parent that you become a neglectful wife or husband.
6. Ask for what you need. Whether it's with friends, family or spouse, burnout happens fastest when we don't ask for what we need from those who can help us.
7. Get help and support. Isolation can lead to depression, shame and anxiety. Stay in touch with the people you like and care about. Tell them what you're going through. Many parents (mothers in particular) felt embarrassed or ashamed if they feel overwhelmed by their children or resentful of them. This makes it harder to reach out for fear of being criticized or condemned. Try not to compare yourself to other parents who seem to be able to parent effortlessly and do a million other things. Strive to have as much help as you can to feel good. Parenting twins is hard enough; it is hardest when you don't get the help and support you completely deserve. ♥

Joshua Coleman, Ph.D., is a psychologist in private practice in Oakland and San Francisco, California. He is the father of twin sons and a daughter. Visit his website at: <http://www.drjoshuacoleman.com>.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS:

Burnout is characterized by feeling chronically overwhelmed and exhausted. It can also cause depression, anxiety, irritability and anger. In addition, burnout can lead to feelings of shame and isolation.

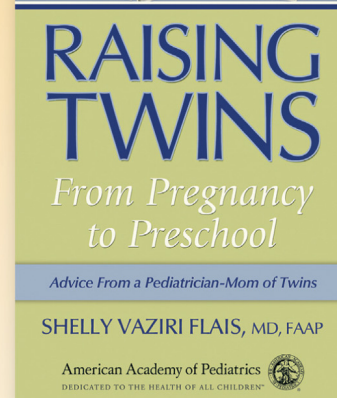
PHYSICAL SIGNS:

Burnout may cause decreased immune function; increased blood pressure; increased heart rate; insomnia; and appetite disturbance.

Raising Twins is a must for anyone raising multiples!

It's filled with huge amounts of advice from both an experienced pediatrician and a fellow mom of multiples. I highly recommend it.

DENISE M. ANDERSON
President, Illinois Organization
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Even with years working as a pediatrician, Shelly Vaziri Flais, MD, FAAP, was nervous about what lay ahead when she was told she was pregnant with twins. Now, several years into parenting her twin boys, Dr Flais is sharing her wisdom and experience as a mom and her expertise as a doctor to help parents prepare for and raise twins with confidence.

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There IS Such a Thing as a DUMB Question

Jenny Peterson is a reporter for a suburban newspaper outside of Charleston South Carolina, a blogger and identical twin. You can read more from Jenny on her blog "Jenny Says" at: <http://jennysays-hellofools.blogspot.com/2010/01/there-is-such-thing-as-dumb-question.html>

by Jenny Peterson



Do y'all have the same mom?

An old, Southern man interrupted our dinner this week to point at my sister, Joy, and ask me, "Are you 'kin to her?"

With a polite smile. I said, "Yes, we are twins."

While the rest of our dinner party laughed aloud oh, yes, haha, of course you are twins with your same blonde hairstyles! What a funny old man! Joy and I didn't bat an eye.

This exchange was nothing new. After almost 27 years, everywhere we go, strangers approach us in public to point out that we are, in fact, twins.

Some people get so excited about it, like it's a big secret they had just discovered.

"Are y'all TWIIIIINS?" exclaim many excited grocery store cashiers (who always want to get our first names and squeal when they hear that they both begin with the letter J).

"Ya'll are twins right? You know, I thought y'all looked like twins," said a gas station attendant in Nowhere, Alabama on a long drive from New Orleans to Charleston.

"You know, I have a frieend and we loook alike and when she borrows mah clothes to go into town, people think we're twins."

Oh that's fun, we said. Really great!

Other people use it as a pick up line. "You are one of the twins, right??" Joy was asked as she left the stage from singing karaoke last night.

"Right." "Where's your sister?" "Who are you?" "I own the liquor store next to the Food Lion. I remember you were both in there the other week...Vodka right??"

Another fine stranger, terribly drunk, stopped us on our way out of a bar a long time ago and flung his arms around each of us, hanging in the middle like a monkey.

"So, yur've telling me that if I date one of you and then I date the ofther one of you, then I wun't know the differenss?" he asked, slurring.



"That's very hypothetical," Joy said, as we slinked out from under his arms.

Joy and her ex-boyfriend, who I took a college class with, even started dating after he mistakenly thought she was me and struck up a conversation.

Some people get "freaked out" by twins. "You know, every set of twins I've ever known have been weird," people have told us. "They've got, like, weird hands or something." (This is also a big thing, people like to tell us how many other sets of twins they know...from elementary school.)

"Every person in the whole world has different DNA!," exclaimed Joy's LSU professor in a 300-person lecture class. The poor man was trying to pump some life into a generally boring subject.

"Imagine!" he said. "Every single person has different DNA...except for identical twins." "Ew," Joy heard a sorority girl say from two rows behind her.



By far the most absurd part of the whole twin thing is the dumb twin questions we get. Are you

ready for this? The number one most common question we get about being twins is:

"Do you have the same mom?"

I am not joking. People — adults — are actually curious about this. To make it worse, that question is usually followed with, "Do you have the same dad?"

Is this an indication of the failure of our schools? Did a large percentage of the population miss the lesson about human biology?

"We have the same mom, dad and brother," we say. "We are just like sisters, only we were born at the same time."

"Wait, so y'all were born on the same day??"

One unfortunate gas station attendant in New Orleans still holds top honors for Dumbest Twin Comment of All Time.

She noticed that we were twins, despite the fact that I had dyed my hair red that summer. "Y'all are twins?" she asked us. "Yes."

"But you have blonde hair and you have red hair," she observed.

Before we could answer, she exclaimed, "Oh, y'all must have different dads."

Half-sisters? To be fair, not all twin questions are dumb. But people just have burning questions about it - Do you like the same food? Can your friends tell you apart?

THE MORE INTELLIGENT COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ARE:

- 1.) Who's older?
- 2.) By how much?
- 3.) Can your parents tell you apart?
- 4.) Even from the back?
- 5.) Have you ever dated the same guy?
- 6.) Have you ever switched classes?
- 7.) Can you feel each other's pain, like if Joy burns her hand, does your hand hurt too?
- 8.) Do you have a secret language?
- 9.) Did your parents dress you alike when you were younger?
- 10.) Are you the good twin or the bad twin?

My favorite question to date, asked by a five-year-old boy when Joy and I were camp counselors was, "Do you ever wake up in the morning and think you are your twin by accident?" "Not that I know of," I said.



But, aside from the nuisance of dealing with often incompetent, yet curious strangers, I highly recommend being a twin. I'm actually convinced that it's the reason why we are overly social and outgoing people. The cure for shyness! Being forced to make small talk with strangers on a daily basis!

But seriously, with a twin, you always have someone to talk to, borrow clothes from, bitch at about life without needing to apologize later and generally find the same things funny...Like dumb twin questions.

You just have to learn to be able to share birthday presents. We do have the same birthday after all.

Jenny Peterson is a reporter for a suburban newspaper outside of Charleston South Carolina, a blogger and identical twin. You can read more from Jenny on her blog "Jenny Says" at: <http://jennysays-hello-fools.blogspot.com/2010/01/there-is-such-thing-as-dumb-question.html>



Lisa Panish is a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner and a single mother living in Georgia with her twin boys.

Canine Assistants Offer Love, Support and Friendship to Twins With Cerebral Palsy

by Lisa Panish

My identical twin boys were born on January 12, 2003 in Nashville, Tennessee. They were premature due to being mono-amniotic twins and were born at 31 weeks, 4 days gestation. The risk of fetal cord compression and strangulation was too high since they were in the same sac, and the doctors encouraged us not to wait much longer. When they came home from the hospital on Valentine's Day weekend, we always knew the risks for prematu-

ry, but hoped for the best. As we watched them not meet any of the typical milestones, a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy (CP) was given when they were 15-months-old. Since they were 18-months-old, I have been a single mother and I also work full time as a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner. I have an amazing group of friends and family and thankfully my parents live in the same area because I could not do it without them... my parents are true angels on earth!



My boys mean everything to me. Every night I lay in bed and I am thankful they are in my life. It is amazing how many doors have opened and how many people have touched our lives and how many lives my boys have also touched in their seven years. I know I am truly a better person because of them.

In November 2009, I was blessed with two more children. But these children have four legs and a lot more hair. My twin boys received service dogs from Canine Assistants in Milton, Georgia. I applied approximately two and a half years ago, with the anticipation of a five year waiting list for the dogs. I filled out the application and references, and then completed (along with five people of my choice) personality profiles on my boys. Even though they are identical twins, they are really quite different. Needless to say, the service dogs we have are also two totally different dogs, but match my twins perfectly.

When we first were told we were selected to receive dogs, we attended a two week camp in Georgia. The first three days we met many dogs in a rotation. The trainers also completed personality profiles on the dogs and recommended dogs that were a good match for my boys and their needs. Canine Assistants was so patient in finding the perfect fit for my boys, and our family as a whole.

Connor's dog, Nadia, is a Black Labrador/ Golden Retriever mix. Chase's dog, Oakley, is a Standard Poodle/ Golden Retriever mix. After the matching ceremony, we spent the rest of the camp in training and classes. I learned more about dogs than I ever thought there was to know and my boys expected me to get perfect grades and they were scared that if I did not, they could not take their dog's home (I think secretly, they liked that I was in school again.) The dogs spent the rest of the camp back in our hotel with us. We went on organized outings with the staff to prepare us for different settings, such as the mall, Wal-Mart and restaurants.

My son, Chase is moderate spastic diplegia. He wears braces and walks with a walker, but is emerging to quad canes soon, and then one cane and his dog, Oakley on the other side. My other son, Connor has mild spastic diplegia and wears only a low brace on one side and insert on the other shoe at this time. As toddlers they were both in high braces and walkers. They are now in 1st grade and cognitively equal to their peers; and in a regular classroom with an aide to assist.

Nadia is the perfect fit for Connor since she pushes him to run safely, and is there when he falls. Oakley is a "steady" for Chase. We are training Oakley to allow Chase to pull stand on him, and then

walk with the dog on one side, and his cane on the other. Since we have been home, Oakley and Nadia have been out to eat a lot, to the grocery store, to school, to my job as a Nurse Practitioner in the nursing homes seeing patients, and even to Disney World at Christmas. The dogs know many basic and advanced commands. If the boys had it their way, the dogs would be running all over cleaning up their clothes and toys. Chase and Connor really get a kick out of the fact that the dogs will open the doors, pick things up, and turn on lights.

I contacted Canine Assistants for Chase and for just one dog and what has come out of this experience has been two amazing additions to our family that give unconditional love and have changed all of our lives forever. I have met so many amazing people during this experience and I am humbled at the many illnesses so many families live with everyday. Canine Assistants is an amazing organization with so much heart and passion for what they contribute.

My goal with seeking help from Canine Assistants was for my boys to be safer and more independent. As a single parent, I am relieved my boys have each other and their dogs when I am not around. My twins have received another best friend, increased self-esteem, and people now see past the disability of glasses, braces and a walker, and see a child and his dog. Thanks Canine Assistants for a truly life changing experience, and our newest additions to our family. Canine Assistants is a nonprofit organization, and is funded only through donations. Nadia and Oakley were free to my boys, and anything I am unable to financially pay for, they are willing to assist me. Any donations are tax deductible.

Please check out the website to learn more at: (www.canineassistants.org.) You may know someone who could use a dog, or help another recipient receive a dog. Recipients were of all ages, with many different disabilities. ♥

Check out the PBS documentary airing April 21st, called "Through a Dog's Eyes" with Neil Patrick Harris as the narrator. Chase and Connor will be featured in this article along with other recipients receiving dogs from Canine Assistants that were followed going through this amazing process.





Once Upon a Twiniversity...

by Natalie Diaz

Natalie Diaz is a mother of 5-year-old fraternal boy/girl twins, and in addition to being the creator/founder of Twiniversity, she is also the director for the Manhattan Parents of Twins Club.

Once upon a time there was a girl named Natalie. Natalie dreamed of growing up, getting married and having a huge family. She pictured how sweet her children would be and all the adventures they would take together. Then one day Natalie finally grew up, married her Prince Charming and tried and tried to make the rest of her fairy tale come true. There was only one problem, she couldn't conceive!

Finally one day the happy couple had enough. Natalie and her Prince Charming visited the large hospital on the hill and begged for the wizard of the IVF kingdom to assist them with their trials. The wizard figured it out after many tests of his own, and Natalie and her Prince Charming finally conceived.

Weeks went by and Natalie and her Prince Charming visited the hospital for a magical view into her belly. Sure enough, the happy couple was not only blessed, they were doubly blessed! Two tiny heartbeats were found and their family had doubled in size in a matter of minutes. This is where the magical fairy tale ended and reality set in...





Photo Credit—Lara Magzan

Ok, so I tried to make my story a fairy tale. It is, if you think about it. I can't be the only one who dreamed what her family life would be like as a little girl... but life with twins? I never imagined it. To be honest with you, I was more freaked out than excited about the prospect of being a twin mom. Sure I knew the chance, especially after going through IVF but I never thought I would

get pregnant, let alone twice in the same day!

I quickly realized that I needed to know as much about twins as I could, and I needed to know it NOW. I immediately googled "New York City Twins" and found the Manhattan Twins Club.

Even at that time back in 2004, the Manhattan Twins Club was one of the largest clubs under the umbrella of the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. (NOMOTC). I started attending their meetings like it was my job. I had to be prepared for these kiddos at all costs.

I went to meeting after meeting after meeting. I asked questions, I took notes. I was the best student of multiple parenting that ever existed (I'm sure you were/are too otherwise you wouldn't be reading this magazine).

After months of "studying" the big day finally arrived. My little Anna and Johnny were six weeks early due to preeclampsia. I adjusted quickly, using all the tips and tricks I learned from past twin club meetings and got into my twin parenting groove.

When our twins were nine months old, I was getting the itch to go back to work. The problem was that I didn't want to leave my twinnies. So instead of working part time, I started volunteering for the Manhattan Twins Club. The club was happy to use my past



Photo Credit—Lara Magzan

work experience in marketing and event planning to help them grow. In 2006, I was given the title of Director, and I haven't looked back. I've been thrilled to help my local parenting multiples community and grow our club into the largest local twins club in the nation under the NOMOTC.

While serving my local twins community, there was a life changing event that occurred for me personally. My son, my little baby B, was diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder. He was three-years-old, when the therapist at an evaluation for speech therapy asked if he had ever been evaluated for sensory issues. Me, not knowing what the heck she was talking about, just said no. She said "You should get him checked; his issue is so obvious his face could be on the cover of the textbook." To her, they were just words, to me, my world was crashing down.

The moment I got home I sent an email out to all the Manhattan Twins Club members. To my surprise I received eight phone calls within thirteen minutes; all moms who had been in similar situations telling me everything was going to be ok. They advised me on which therapists to call, what paperwork to file and what options were open to me. These moms sincerely went above and beyond, and most didn't even know me from a hole in the wall. They were just there for me in my time of need, no questions asked.

After time passed and my life balanced out again, I began to think about how lucky I am to live in a city where the support I need is just a click away. With our large group being online 24/7, I was spoiled to get all the support I needed when I needed it. It occurred to me that not all parents of multiples were as lucky. It was that thought that sent the light bulb off over my head, and Twiniversity was born.




I created Twiniversity as an online meeting place to connect parents of multiples throughout the United States and the world. Why shouldn't all parents of multiples be under one virtual roof so we can share each other's

successes and failures? Why should anyone have to reinvent the multiple parenting wheels on their own?

They say any revolution starts with one person, and folks, I'm your one person. It's my mission to connect us all so if YOU should ever have a life changing event and need support, your fellow parents of multiples will be there for you.

I've created Twiniversity to be THE site for parents of multiples. It will contain product reviews, newsletters, a weekly TGIF contest (Thank God It's FREE Day) and most importantly connection and support. The only admission requirement for Twiniversity is that you must be a parent of multiples! Dads are as welcome as moms!

Since I've launched Twiniversity I've educated hundreds of expectant parents of multiples locally here in New York City with a Twiniversity parenting class, I've created videos for About.com. I am the Twin Parenting Expert for both New York Family Magazine and the New York Examiner AND I've held webinars for Big Tent on helping your local multiple parenting clubs grow.

I am happy to lead the charge in finding all parents of multiples a place to call home. This story doesn't end here; my fairy tale continues, and so does yours. Every day, new joy is brought to my heart when parents connect with each other. So please join me on a journey at www.Twiniversity.com to happily ever after. 

Somehow She Found a Way to Give New Life to Others by Surviving the Tragic Loss of Her Beloved Twin Sister, Stacey

by Emilia Zs Rak

Tracey Gerald had already been through a lot by the time she reached the tender age of 33. She and her twin sister, Stacey had somehow managed to grow up with their loving bond and good-nature intact despite a difficult childhood. They were affectionately dubbed *"The Barbie Twins"* by their peers at Colonial High School in Orlando, Florida because of their blonde hair, blue eyes, statuesque beauty and out-going fun-loving personas. Though they were identical twins their natures were quite a bit different, yet perfectly complimentary. Stacey was the life of the party. She instantly lit up any room that she entered while Tracey was the more shy and reserved twin happy to soak up and support her sister's never-ending enthusiasm and zest for life. They were a perfect team and completely inseparable.

On a whim they decided to join the United States Marine Corp shortly after graduation because Tracey now jokes, "It seemed like a good idea at the time." The look on her face, priceless as she retells the day they made the trip to Paris Island, South Carolina where they began their military careers in the United States Marine Corps. Stacey had retired a Lance Corporal and become a flight attendant for Air Tran Airways while Tracey chose to stay on a bit longer to serve.

On May 13, 2002 their mother had died quite suddenly of lung cancer before either one of them had the chance to say, "Good bye." They missed her by only moments. This loss weighed heav-





ily on the twins. Stacey began her descent into a depression from whence her sister could not pull her out regardless of how hard she tried. To further complicate matters Tracey got orders that she would have to go overseas to serve in "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in February 2003. She landed in Kuwait on March 9, 2003. The war began two days later. There Tracey served as an ambulance driver for the next five months.

Nothing that she encountered during this time, (no matter how gruesome) would prepare her for what would lie ahead.

Once Tracey returned to her home in Florida not only did she have to deal with the stress from combat but she found that her twin sister Stacey had finally descended into a depression so dark that she was barely recognizable. Tracey was simply too overwrought to recognize that when Stacey called her because she wasn't feeling well, she was actually crying out for her sister to come and save her life. It wasn't until Tracey hadn't heard from her sister for over a week that she decided to make the hour long drive to Stacey's apartment. The first indication that something was amiss, were all the flies that were inside the apartment. She recalls, "I could see them through the window. There seemed to be thousands of them and they were everywhere." And then finally in the bathroom, facedown she found her sister's decomposed remains. She tearfully describes what she found as something that "no longer resembled a human being." She remembers clawing her way out of the apartment screaming for help.

And so began Tracey's descent into her own personal hell of depression and self-destruction. In 1993 Tracey had been honored for being base camp female athlete of the year by the Marine Corp. Now she weighed 172 pounds at 5'6", drinking heavily and smoking, on a cocktail of anti-depressants and psychotropics. She was so enmeshed in her grief missing her mother and her "life", as well as her twin sister, Stacey that she could barely muster the strength or desire to get out of her recliner.

On June 6, 2009 while online looking for different resources to regain her health and sense of well-being, Tracey felt her sister finally touch her heart by putting the thought into her mind, "You NEED to take back YOUR life." It was at that moment that she signed up to get her ACE certification and AS in exercise science while beginning her Facebook fan page in her sister's honor. It's called Tracey Gerald's Fitness Boot Camp. This page is chock full of everything from healthy recipes, to different types of work-out routines and a



wealth of FREE information regarding how to lead a healthier, more active lifestyle safely and effectively. Soon her fan page grew to nearly 200 members who support one another and share their successes as well as their struggles. The invaluable information she provides is available to millions of people all around the world.

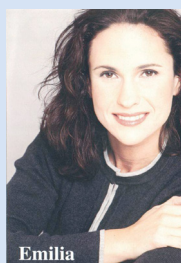
Tracey was also hired as a Controller for Jan Tana, one of the world's most prominent resources for many competitive athletes and celebrities regarding a safe alternative to tanning beds and exposure to the sun. She personally helps hundreds of bodybuilders, figure and fitness competitors a year when they are at their most vulnerable; just before they step onto the stage. Most thank her personally, saying they couldn't have made it onto the stage without her reassurance.

I asked Tracey if she had any words for those who are considering suicide. She said, "I know it's difficult for someone who is in such deep pain to understand how their loss will forever affect the loving family and friends that they will leave behind. I do hope that I will be able to impress on anyone who reads our story just how devastating the impact of their loss would be, that they would keep reaching out to get help to stay with us instead of making the decision to leave us."

I asked her what words she wanted to relay to other twins. "Be good to your twin. Love your twin. Revel in your twin-ness. Be patient with one another because you never know when one of you will lose your other half. Live each day to the fullest and with the utmost love and respect for yourself and one another."

In closing our interview I asked her what advice she can offer the surviving family members when they lose a twin. "Expect a personality change in the surviving twin. Please do not compare that twin to who she/he was before they lost their twin. It is personally exhausting for that individual because it only serves to highlight the fact that we are now twinless and magnifies our loss. We don't need to be constantly reminded that our beloved twin is gone. We bear that burden every minute of every day. Please allow the surviving twin to grieve as they see fit for as long as they feel the need."

I asked Tracey what it was that ultimately keeps her amongst the living so that it can now be passed on to other twinless twins as they struggle on their paths alone. She said, "I heartily pursue the activities that Stacy loved. As I pass those passions on to others, she keeps on living and so do I." ❤️



Emilia

Emilia Zs Rak is a former fitness/swimwear model and certified fitness professional she has been writing various articles and essays on the pursuit of health, wellness and fitness and fitness modeling both online and in print for nearly ten years. Additionally she provides weekly articles for dad-blogs.com about an array of issues related to parenting, family and relationships. Emilia is also a mother to four young girls, president and founder of the non-profit organization "The BikiniMom Network".

**Photos are Tracey and Stacey Gerald and a recent photo of Tracey



For more information about twinless twins visit the **Twinless Twins Support Group International's** website at <http://www.twinlesstwins.org/>



by Nancy Segal

Nancy L Segal, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology and Director of Twin Studies at California State University, Fullerton.

TWIN STUDIES OF SUICIDE

The bases of suicide and suicidal behavior are, understandably, of considerable interest to psychological and medical professionals. A genetic influence on suicide has been demonstrated by a growing number of twin and adoption studies.

Three recent twin studies have been completed by researchers at California State University, Fullerton; the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; and the Catholic University of Rome. These studies include an analysis of suicide, a study of suicidal attempts among living twins whose co-twins committed suicide, and a study of suicidal attempts among twins whose co-twins died due to causes other than suicide. Findings from these three studies provide additional evidence of a genetic influence on suicidal behavior.

TWIN TYPES AND TWIN RESEARCH MODELS

Identical twins form from the splitting of a single fertilized egg between one and 14 days after conception. Members of identical twin pairs share all their genes in common and are always of the same sex. Environmental factors (such as birth history events or treatment by others) explain behavioral differences between identical twin partners.

Fraternal twins occur following the fertilization of two separate ova by two spermatozoa. Fraternal twins share 50 percent of their genes, on average, and may be of the same or opposite sex. Behavioral differences between fraternal partners may be explained by genetic and/or environmental factors.

Accurate assignment of twins as identical or fraternal is an important first step in the research process. Comparison of a series of blood groups between pair members provides a very accurate index of twin type; blood group differences indicate fraternal twinning with certainty, while blood group similarities indicate identical twinning with a high degree of certainty. (On rare occasions, fraternal twins may share all measured blood groups and be wrongly classified as identical.) Physical resemblance questionnaires can be substituted for blood-typing analysis when this procedure is not possible.

The classic twin method compares resemblance between identical twins to resemblance between fraternal twins, with reference to a particular behavioral or physical trait.

TWIN RESEARCH PROGRAMS ON SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

Building upon previous studies, a classic twin analysis was reported in 1991 by Dr. Alec Roy, Nancy L. Segal, Brandon Centerwall

and Dennis Robinette. This project examined genetic and environmental contributions to suicide. A case history analysis was also conducted to see if a predisposition for suicide may be genetically transmitted, independently of psychiatric disorder.

Participants included 176 pairs, 62 identical and 114 fraternal, in which one, or both, co-twins had committed suicide. They were located through the California State University Twin Loss Study (formerly the Minnesota Twin Loss Study), referrals from colleagues, and participants in the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council Twin Registry. Life history information was available for 11 of the pairs.

Similarity for suicide was compared between the identical and fraternal twin pairs. These data were also examined in combination with twin data from three previous twin studies of suicide. Dr. Roy conducted psychiatric interviews with surviving co-twins and family members in 11 cases to determine the circumstances surrounding the suicide and family history of suicidal behavior.

The findings show that a significantly higher proportion of identical than fraternal twin pairs had committed suicide. This was true in the new sample and in the combined sample. Psychiatric interviews revealed that 11 of the 13 twin suicide victims had received treatment for a psychiatric disorder. In addition, twins in 10 of the 11 pairs had a close relative who had received treatment for a psychiatric disorder.

Researchers concluded that a genetic influence on suicide was demonstrated by the greater resemblance between identical than fraternal twins. Life history information confirmed the well-known association between suicide and psychiatric disorder. However, the nature of the mechanism underlying the suicidal behavior (what exactly is transmitted in families) requires further study.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AMONG LIVING CO-TWINS OF SUICIDE VICTIMS

This study was conducted by Dr. Alec Roy, Nancy L. Segal and Marco Sarchiapone to determine if a greater number of identical than fraternal twins whose partners had committed suicide would themselves have attempted suicide. Evidence to support this

finding would be consistent with a genetic contribution to suicidal behavior.

Participants in this study included a new group of 35 living twins whose twin partners had committed suicide. Twins were identified through the California State University Twin Loss Study and referrals from colleagues. The sample included 26 identical twins and nine fraternal twins, who were between 22 and 58 years of age at the time of participation.

Information about suicidal attempts was obtained by telephone interviews administered to twins whose co-twins committed suicide.

In this study, suicidal attempts were reported by 10 of the 26 identical twins (38.5 percent), but by none of the fraternal twins.

The researchers involved concluded that a genetic influence on suicidal attempts was demonstrated by the higher frequency of this behavior reported by the identical than fraternal twins. A higher proportion of female than male twins had attempted suicide, a finding that agrees with previous studies of gender-related differences in suicidal behavior. It is important to note, however, that females were somewhat more highly represented in the sample.

SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS AMONG LIVING TWINS WHOSE CO-TWINS' DEATHS WERE NON-SUICIDES

A Third study, published in 1995 by Drs. Nancy L. Segal and Alec Roy, compared suicidal attempts among identical and fraternal twins whose twin partners' deaths were not due to suicide. If suicidal attempts were higher among identical twins, this might reflect the increased social closeness that has been observed among identical twins, relative to fraternal twins. In contrast, an absence of twin group differences and a low frequency of suicidal attempts among this group of twin survivors would be consistent with a genetic contribution to suicidal behavior. That is to say, these twins (especially the identical twins) would not be expected to have a predisposition to suicidal behavior, given that their twin partners' deaths were non-suicides.

Participants were bereaved Twins in the California State University Twin Loss Study. They included 245 twin survivors: 166 iden-

tical twins (55 males and 111 females) and 79 fraternal twins (13 males and 66 females), 41 of whom were from opposite-sex pairs. Age at the time of participation ranged between 16 and 94 years.

All the twins completed a comprehensive Twin Loss Survey. They were asked to indicate "true" or "false" on items concerning the occurrence of attempted suicide during the first one to two months after the loss of their co-twins.

Attempted suicide was indicated by six, three of whom were identical and three of whom were fraternal, of the 245 twins. The six twins who attempted suicide were female and all but one had experienced the sudden loss of her co-twin. The frequency of attempted suicide was considerably lower than that reported in the earlier study by twins whose co-twins had committed suicide.

Findings from this study support interpretations of twin, family and adoption studies which have found a genetic contribution to family resemblance for suicide and suicidal behavior. It is suggested that the loss of a close relative may be associated with suicidal behavior in an individual with a genetic predisposition.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: SURVIVOR TWINS WILL HAVE MORE SUPPORT AVAILABLE

The need to consider the relatedness between a survivor and the deceased in future research and counseling concerning suicidal behavior is highlighted by these studies. Specialized support groups for bereaved twins are becoming increasingly available and should offer needed assistance to those whose twin partners' deaths were due to suicide. It is critical to point out that the rate of twin similarity is still quite low, so that suicidal behavior in one identical twin does not guarantee that the twin partner will also display this behavior. It is, however, suggested that parents and others be aware that the risk of suicide to close relatives of suicide victims is somewhat elevated, relative to the general population. ❤️

**This article was originally published in the Sept/Oct 96 edition of TWINS Magazine*



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“Which One of Your Twins is the Evil One?”

by Theresa Halvorsen

Theresa Halvorsen is a certified childbirth educator, a writer and mother of twins. Her book for men about supporting a laboring woman is due out early 2012. She's the owner and operator of TheOnlyBabyStop.com. Her house is filled with sports equipment, art supplies, weird science experiments, bug habitats and boy smells. She lives in California with her twin sons, husband and too many pets to count.



"Your boys must be twins," a woman said to me in the Target check-out line. "Yep," I said. I kept my focus on unloading my cart and watching my eight-year old twins. One of them pulled a yo-yo off a display and begged for it (promising to clean the whole house if only he could have the toy), while the other ran up to push buttons on the registry kiosk.

"How old are they?" the lady asked.

"Eight," I said stacking the two loaves of bread, four containers of juice, eight boxes of cereal, ten cans of peas and corn, and four packages of boy's socks onto the conveyer belt. I sighed. They weren't even teenagers and I could barely keep up with the food shopping.

"They're so handsome."

"Thank you," I said automatically. This was nothing new. Older people often liked the looks of my identical tow-headed sons with their gap-toothed smiles.

"Which one is the evil one?" the lady asked.

"Excuse me?"

"You know, which one is the bad one?"

Of all the comments twin parents get from complete strangers, this is the one I hate the most. I can handle the identical or fraternal question (identical, even though their hair is cut differently—yes, they can still be identical twins with different haircuts), if I used fertility drugs (nope), if they're in the same classroom (yep) and comments about how high-energy they are. But I can't handle strangers asking me if one of my sons is evil. What parent could?

But is one of my twins more of a challenge to raise than the other? Is there one I discipline more or is in more trouble at school? And the answer is yes, with a big asterisk next to it.

One of my sons, Alex, does very well at school. He gets good grades, does his homework and is adored by his teachers and sports coaches. He's rarely in trouble and if he is, he's in trouble with a group of other kids. Conversely, my other son, Hunter, doesn't like school. It's a battle to get him to do homework and if he doesn't enjoy a subject, he's not going learn about it. In addition, if he doesn't understand a rule, or why the rule's in place, he's more likely to break it. According to this woman at Target, Hunter would be the evil one.

But it's not that easy. Alex is a people-pleaser. He follows the rules because it makes people happy with him. He works hard in school and on sporting teams because the adults like him better when he does. While this is a great trait, I'm concerned when he's in high school he may want to please his friends more than teachers or his dad and I. As a teenager will he end up as the 'evil' one? And what about when he's an adult? Is he going to be able to think outside the box and see things from different angles? Or is he going to be trapped in that box trying to make everyone like him? Is Alex going to be miserable as an adult because of his need to please everyone?

Hunter, on the other hand, is my non-conformist. He's the class clown, the weird one and he doesn't care what anyone thinks about him. He's swallowed a quarter (and gotten in lodged in his throat), needed stitches in his forehead after tying his jacket around his head so he couldn't see where he was going and flooded the bathroom doing a science experiment. In school, his teachers find him challenging and his sports coaches tend to 'forget' he's there and not put him in during games. But Hunter has an amazing imagination and a unique way of looking at the world. He loves art, music and telling outrageous stories about places he's never been

(one time when I was sixteen and on Mars...) If he can get through school with that imagination intact, I know he won't be doing drugs in high school because all of his friends are doing them. If I can get him through school as a non-conformist I'll know when he tells me he's dropped out of college to play his guitar, it was his choice and he's doing what makes him happy.

As I write this, I realize how happy I am they have each other, because they need the traits the other twin offers. Alex needs Hunter to help him use his imagination and see things outside of society's rules. And Hunter needs Alex's structure to help him learn about rules and the importance of obeying them. They're the perfect twin team. So to answer that lady, neither of my sons are evil, but they do have traits that present challenges to their father and I. ♥



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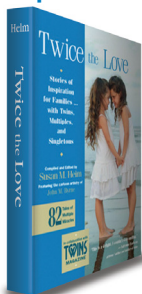


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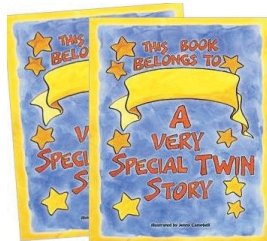
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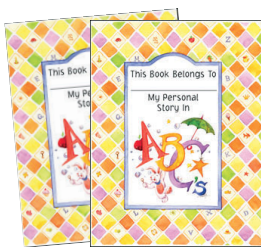
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By Joan A. Friedman.

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The Multiples Manual—Preparing

and Caring for Twins or Triplets / 1,002 Tips for Expectant Mothers, Second Edition by Lynn Lorenz and Published by JustMultiples.com. \$17.95

Author Lynn Lorenz is an identical twin herself, and the mother of triplets and a singleton. She's an accountant by profession, and developed this wonderful handbook in her spare



time (yikes!) to help simplify life for other parents when they're expecting twins or triplets, and after they have their babies. This updated second edition is loaded with tips, and tells you all the things you need to plan for and think about ... everything from the perfect shower gifts (and what to steer clear of!), breastfeeding issues, to safety-proofing your house and sleeping peacefully through the night. This is a great guide for parenting twins from pregnancy to preschool.

Ready or Not ... Here We Come!

The REAL Expert's Cannot-Live-Without Guide to the First Year With Twins by Elizabeth Lyons Published by Finn-Phyllis Press \$16.00

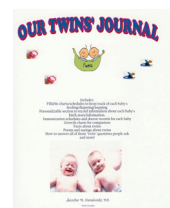
The mother of twins Jack and Henry, author Elizabeth Lyons recognized that raising multiple children would not be easy. In her multiples birthing class, she met a group of women who not only survived their pregnancies, but grew to be close friends as well. In her first book, Lyons and her "multiples sorority" will survive the hardships of their first year with twins. They also learn and appreciate the fun and humor associated with raising multiple children. Ready or Not... welcomes the reader into that supportive circle of friends. 165 pages, softbound 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 x 1/2"



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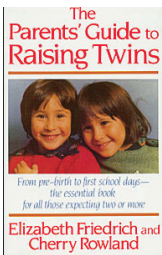
Jennifer M. Nevadomski, M.S. has just published this brand new baby journal just for your twins, with everything you need to keep track as your babies are growing and changing! This Journal includes fillable charts/schedules to keep track of each baby's feeding/diapering/napping; a section that you can personalize to record information about each of your twin's birth story and other information about their birth day and immunization schedules and doctor records for each baby. Journal also includes growth charts for comparison, facts about twins, poems and sayings about twins, and a funny section about how to answer all of those "twin" questions people ask—and more! Created by a family counselor and mom of twin baby boys!



The Parents Guide to Raising Twins

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From pre-birth to first school days- the essential book for those expecting two or more by Elizabeth Friedrich and Cherry Rowland. Published by St. Martin's Griffin. Now in its eighth printing, "The Parent's Guide to Raising Twins" has been a favorite of new parents of multiples for many years. Authors Elizabeth Friedrich and Cherry Rowland are mothers of twins themselves, and offer personal experiences as well as helpful and enlightening stories from other parents and medical personnel. Carefully researched, the authors include chapters on pregnancy, the birth of twins and the months immediately after birth, adjustments in the family to the arrival of the twins, parenting from their early months to their toddler years, and treating twins as individuals. All in all, this book delivers a bounty of useful guidance.



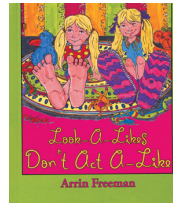
Twin Tales—*The Magic and Mystery of Multiple Birth* by Donna M. Jackson.

\$10.95

Published by Little Brown and Company. Including both scientific research and interesting personal stories, this well-illustrated discussion of twins will appeal to inquisitive elementary-school age readers. Colorado author Donna Jackson, whose mother is a twin, explores twins and their similarities, as well as their differences. "Twin Tales" also includes profiles of famous twins, information about identical and fraternal twins, a discussion about twin telepathy, a section on "supertwins," and a complete twins glossary. 48 pages, hardbound.



This is a great children's book for twins! Artist and author Arrin Freeman is a twin who grew up with her sister Farrah. Though they looked alike, they didn't always like the same things or act alike. One sister liked scary movies. The other liked funny movies. One liked dancing, while the other liked drawing and painting. Since they were twins, everyone always assumed they were the same. For Christmas and birthdays, they would receive the same present, but in different colors. In school, they found different friends and could follow their own interests and dreams. Despite their differences, they would forever be sisters and best friends with each other. 40 pages, hardbound.



Look-a-Likes Don't Act-a-Like—By Arrin Freeman. Published by Blue Marble Books.

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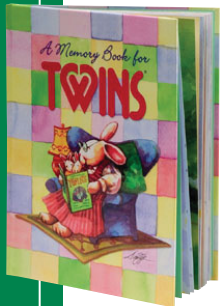
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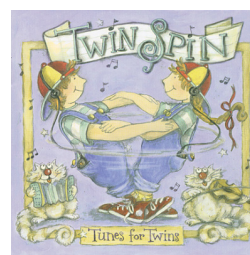
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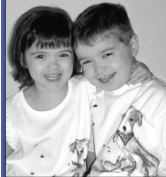
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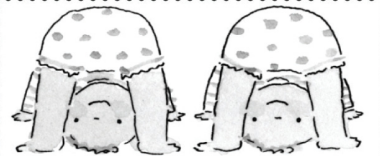
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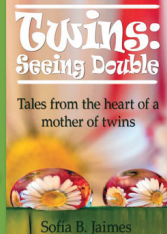
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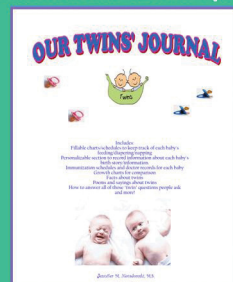
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Double Takes

Can you guess whether the twins pictured on these pages are identical or fraternal? Send us your photos for the Double Takes section at least three months prior to publication. All photos sent to TWINS™ Magazine become the property of TWINS™ Magazine and will not be returned. Photos should be accompanied by a signed photo release form that can be downloaded by visiting www.TwinsMagazine.com and by clicking on the Double Takes Photos button. By submitting your photos to TWINS™ Magazine via U.S. Mail or electronically you are releasing your rights to these photos for our use. Please note that we cannot use any professional photographs. On the back of your photos include an address label & phone number with your twins' names and ages along with their twin type (identical or fraternal). Send photographs to: TWINS™ Double Takes ATTN: TWINS™ Magazine, P.O. Box 271924, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1924.



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Carlisle, PA



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6 months
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Allison & Caitlyn
5 years
Jamison, PA



Drew & Tony
3 years
Towanda, KS



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25 months
Burlington, KY



Anthony & Aiden
5 months
Baldwin, MI



Cara & Elyse
22 months
DeWitt, MI

Based on Parental Reports

1 - FR-GG	5 - ID-GG	9 - FR-GG	13 - FR-GG	17 - ID-GG
2 - FR-BG	6 - FR-BB	10 - FR-BG	14 - NA-BB	18 - FR-BG
3 - FR-GG	7 - FR-GG	11 - FR-GG	15 - FR-GG	19 - NA-BB
4 - FR-BB	8 - FR-BG	12 - FR-BG	16 - FR-BG	20 - ID-GG

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WHO'S, WHO?

by D.B. Zane

D.B. Zane is a teacher, writer, and mother of three—none of them twins. She grew up admiring her older, identical twin brothers, and prides herself on being able to tell apart nearly ever set of twins she's ever met.



"Look at that sand castle!" Mom exclaimed. We had finally gathered for an evening watching a family "slideshow," as my parents called it. Dad had finally cobbled together photos from several years of family vacations. We were looking at our trip to Florida back when I was three years old. Classical music played softly in the background.

"Oooh, great sunset," mom exclaimed again. How many pictures can a person sit through and come up with something positive and exciting to say for every one of them? I thought.

"Hey, Bill, what are you doing there?" I asked at the next one. He had that five-year-old impish look on his face as he held a bucket of sea water. Had he been thinking of dumping it on my head?

"That's not me," Bill insisted. "That's Chad."

"No, it isn't," Chad protested. "You had the blue Speedos not me."

I didn't really think anything of this remark at the time.

"Hey, how'd that get in there?" Dad asked, feigning innocence. It was a picture of my brothers when they were babies. This was followed by toddler pictures. It looked like Dad had dredged up every picture he'd ever taken. This would take hours.

"Boy, Bill, you sure had long eyelashes when you were a baby," I remarked. "And, Chad, look at that high forehead." "Uh huh," they grunted, noncommittally.

Born weighing different amounts, my brothers looked less identical as babies than when they were older. Still, few twins are completely identical. I always knew who was who, even in those photos taken before I was born.

"Hey, Bill, you're wearing my watch," Chad said, as a photo came on that finally included me. It was of the three of us lying at the top of the stairs, heads propped up on our elbows.

"No I'm not," Bill protested. "I've never worn your watch."

"But look at the photo. That's not me."

"Maybe it's backwards," Dad suggested, flipping it the other way.



Backward or forward, it didn't matter to me. "Bill's right. He's not wearing your watch."

"Are you sure? I think it was better the other way around." Even Bill was skeptical. He flipped the picture again. We looked at it with Chad on the left; we looked at it with Chad on the right.

My parents and I had no doubts. "That's Bill in the white shirt and Chad in the blue one." "I'm wearing blue?" Chad asked.

"You both had blue shirts like that," Mom told us. "You just didn't like wearing them at the same time." The argument continued through several more slides, my brothers becoming more confused as the images blurred by.

Exasperated by it all, I finally sighed. "Can't you tell yourselves apart?" It had been meant as a rhetorical question. Of course they knew who's who; after all, they were themselves.

They exchanged nervous glances and suddenly my mother laughed. "Of course they can't. They don't have to."

"What are you talking about?" My evening entertainment was being ruined and interrupted. We hadn't even gotten to my baby slides.

"Well, Bill always knows who he is. So whenever he sees someone who looks like him, he knows it's Chad."

"Oh." It had never occurred to me. My brothers couldn't tell themselves apart. It was only a problem when looking at pictures. They took their cues from the clothes. Bill wore blues and greens; Chad wore reds and browns.

I prided myself in being able to tell them—and nearly every other pair of twins I've ever met—apart, in person, in photos, anywhere. I'd always been envious of my older brothers. They got attention for being twins. They were older so I was forever playing catch up. Here, finally was something I could do that they couldn't.

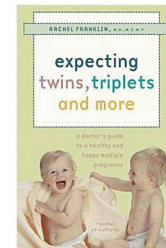
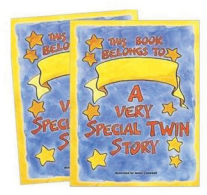
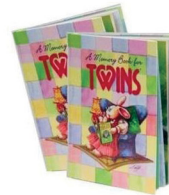
"Come on, Dad, more slides," I insisted. "Let me teach my brothers who's who." ♥

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