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Meet NFL
twins Devin
and Jason
McCourty

What to do
when one
twin is sick!

Unique is
-BETTER
than Equal!

Cut the **Chaos**
and Adopt a Color
Coding System

Does Alcoholism
Run in Families?

What twin research reveals

September/October 2011



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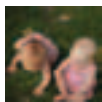
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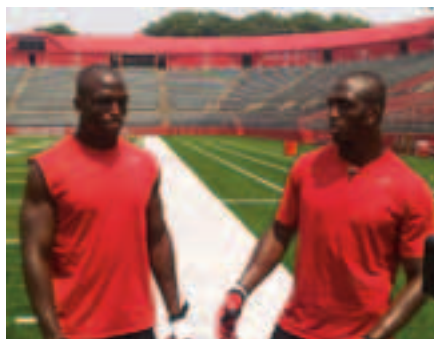
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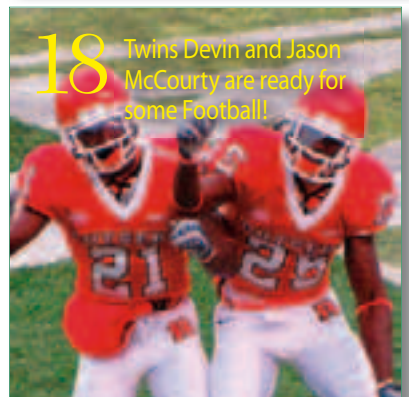
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Professional NFL football players Devin and Jason McCourty, age 24. Read more about this duo in this issue's cover story!

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It's Like Winning the Lottery for a Twin!

Ever since my fraternal twin boys came into this world on March 2, 1998 (which was the first day of my 34th week of gestation) we have noticed stark differences in our beloved pair. Even while pregnant, Baby-A settled into a cozy position quite nicely, while Baby-B was unsettled, moving around a lot and couldn't find his "comfortable" spot. This pattern continued when Baby-B's water broke early but Baby-A just wasn't ready to be born yet and wanted to keep "kicking back" for another four to five weeks at least! (Kind of funny since that is how they still are today as teenagers—Baby-B is always pushing Baby-A to go, go, go!)

All throughout their lives, our Baby-B has always strived to be the best at everything he does and often times that means being first, too. Baby-A, however, with his easy going, mild mannered pleasant persona doesn't seem to be bothered by much at all and we are lucky to have such a peaceful and mellow spirit in him. He is just as content to sit back and observe. They are very close and definitely have that twin bond but have and always will be complete opposites... When they were born, Baby-A was 4 lbs 11 oz and Baby-B was 4 lbs 5 oz and they have always been separated by at least 1 1/2 to 2 inches in length and height.

When they were infants, Baby-A was easy-going, smiled a lot and was quite content doing practically everything...to the contrary Baby-B was our "squeaky wheel" and always needed a little more from us. As they grew into busy and active toddlers it was Baby-B to figure out how to crawl first and then take his first true steps on his own with his twin brother following his lead just a few days later when he was ready.

Our Baby-B has always been driven and competitive by nature and he has been the one that started talking first as well and has seemingly been the alpha in this twin set. But no matter what accomplishments and milestones he would reach first, his twin brother, Baby-A, was always bigger and taller than him.



Baby-B Baby-A

In elementary school, they began developing completely different interests and had different friends, too! Baby-A loves video games, started playing Football and got involved in musical theatre while Baby-B plays Soccer, Basketball and is a singer and musician. Baby-A is an above average student and is good about accepting responsibility for his actions;

while Baby-B is in the Gifted and Talented program and could argue his way out of anything if he believed it was true. Baby-A is humorous, sensitive and absolutely loves animals while Baby-B is more serious, cautious and quite athletic. This list of differences goes on and on...



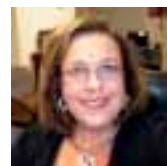
Baby-B Baby-A

If you have ever been around teenage boys, you probably know how occupied they can get with how tall everyone is and how tall they will become as an adult. In particular, my Baby-B plays basketball so this topic is very important to him. Luckily for our twins they are above average in height anyway since both my husband and I are considered "tall" and we also have many "tall" people in our family (some of my uncles are even 6'5")! At our house there is even a wall that tracks all the boys' height each school year at the start and finish and we have been amazed at how much they have all grown over the years.

So, this past August when it came time for me to take them in to see the pediatrician for their 8th grade sports physicals and well care visits, something amazingly incredible happened. We already knew that there was a 70-pound weight difference between the two so that wasn't a shock. But, for the very first time in their 13 years of life they were measuring the same exact height!!! Baby-B finally caught up to his twin brother and he was beaming from ear to ear. The excitement and sense of accomplishment he was experiencing could be felt throughout the entire doctor's office. In fact, by the look on his face, you would have thought that Baby-B just won the

lottery since he has been waiting and dreaming of this one single moment his entire life—and it finally arrived! And, in the most predictable and easy-going way, my Baby-A simply smiled and made a joke about it!

We hope you enjoy this issue covering a variety of twin specific parenting topics such as ways you can actually cut the chaos in your life by using a color coding system; understanding infant attachment and bonding; what to do when only one twin is sick and the other is not; explaining how being unique is BETTER than having everything equal; and 11 tips parents need to know when raising twins with autism. In this issue we also look at what twin research reveals about alcoholism and if it runs in families; tips for women pregnant with multiples getting ready for delivery; plus, much more! We are so excited to introduce to you our center-feature story just in time for the kickoff of the NFL season... meet NFL twins Devin and Jason McCourty! We hope you enjoy a colorful and wondrous fall season and be sure to take lots of pictures to capture every single moment—looking back, you will be so grateful you did!



Christa D Reed

Christa D. Reed
Editor-in-Chief

Output Services, Inc. to Join Race for Fetal Hope as National Race Series Sponsor

The Fetal Hope Foundation recently welcomed Output Services, Inc. as a National Race Series sponsor to its Race for Fetal Hope events. Output Services will serve as the official printing service for



the event's promotional collateral in the currently planned three host cities across the country. The

sponsorship was a natural fit, as the ownership family has 4 year old survivors of Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome, Ella and Sofia.

"As soon as we received the diagnosis, our lives became nothing short of an emotional roller coaster. The support that we found was amazing and we remain grateful for the many resources that we had during our pregnancy," said Kate Ledermann, mom to Sofia and Ella.

A family-owned, business since 1983, Output Services provides a variety of services including print and design, data management and storage, and paperless marketing and mailing solutions, etc. Their mission is to simplify the unique document, data, and marketing needs of every business through superior technology, highly-personalized service, and 100% security and accuracy.

"The Foundation is very near and dear to the hearts of the Executive Team at OSI, so we are really excited to be able to contribute in this way," said Jennifer Simpson, Business Development Manager.

Output Services, Inc. will join other national sponsors for the Race for Fetal Hope events such as Twinz Gear, Luna, RoadID, and the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs.

The event beneficiary, the Fetal Hope Foundation is a national non-profit organization that serves as a liaison between families affected by fetal syndromes and the medical teams that provide their care. Its mission is to provide support, provide information, fund research, increase awareness and be an outlet for leading medical information pertaining to fetal syndromes. Each year since 2006, Fetal Hope directly supports around 15,000 families through resources, counseling and its Travel Grant program. To learn more about the Fetal Hope Foundation or its events such as the Race for Fetal Hope National Race Series, visit www.fetalhope.org.

Teen Twins Kenzie and Kierra Fisher are Dancing their Way to Stardom

Kenzie and Kierra Fischer, age 15 are identical twins that have danced together their entire lives. They are now in a company that is owned and operated by Shannon Mather, one of the dance choreographers for the hit ABC television show "Dancing with the Stars".

These young twins are competition dancers and have just come onto the entertainment scene breaking into the industry. Both have danced duets together for over six years and they have an amazing synergy and connection when dancing together. You can view a YouTube video to see these graceful twins in action at:



<http://www.youtube.com/user/Fischertwins#p/a/u/2/yBVYf9BwC6c>



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New children's book written by twin sisters!

Deborah Ruddell and Robin Luebs, are twin sisters who've had successful careers in writing and illustrating children's books and they have recently published a children's book called, "WHO SAID COO?" a witty book for sharing with little ones and the twins' very first collaboration. While there are a number of husband-wife teams in children's books, there aren't many twins who create books together. "WHO SAID COO?" is a sweet story about Lulu the pig, and she can't seem to get to sleep. Who is making that noise? She asks pigeon, and owl, and still the racket persists. What's a pig to do? "WHO SAID COO?" is a good story for bedtime, but it's also about managing anger and the importance of manners. Learn more about this new children's book by visiting: <http://mysp.ac/b25K4A>.



Tiffany and Tess McDunn are Twins with Talent!

It was three years ago when young twins Tiffany and Tess McDunn approached their mother while at dinner about their true desire to sing and perform on stage. As it was, they were constantly singing in the house (to their older brother Todd's dismay) and primarily wanted to pursue vocal performance, with modeling and acting as their second choice. Their mother, a former model and actress herself knew the industry was tough and recalled all the casting cattle calls and disappoint-

ments that came along with this path. But the girls never gave up asking her for help and three years later at the age of 13, Tiffany and Tess continue pursuing their dreams. "It has been fun to see people's reaction when they hear the girls sing for the first time," says mom Lori. "Everyone notices the difference in inflection of their



voices. Tiffany has a clean, crisp voice that carries the high notes with perfection. Tess has a bluesy, rhythmic vibe that when the two are combined, the sound is haunting," adds Lori.

Tiffany and Tess have representation in Nashville, Tennessee and they are currently writing their first song in accompaniment with an acoustic guitarist.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Send us your comments, suggestions, questions about raising multiples or if you need advice on a pressing subject or any other information you want to share with us and your letter/email may be included in an upcoming issue of TWINS™ Magazine. You can also send along a photo of you and your twins/multiples with your email.

Contact Christa D. Reed, Editor-in-Chief at twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com.



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TOYS

More Than Simply Playthings

CHOOSING DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TOYS FOR YOUR MULTIPLES!

Vroom, vroom! Whee! Oooooo! These are the sounds of my toddler twins hard at work exploring their world and toys are often the tools they use. Good toys provide children safe ways to interact with others, opportunities to use their imaginations, and occasions to observe cause and affect relationships. Choose a few quality items that work well together and you can find infinite ways to combine them for fun and learning.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Interactive toys require your twins to play with them, instead of passively observing them. They help to develop problem-solving skills and imagination along with self-esteem, as your children realize the power they have to create scenarios and games independently. Infants learn cause and effect from simple wrist rattles, noisemakers and activity quilts from Fisher Price, Playskool and Little Tikes. If you get something like the Little Tikes Easy Store Activity Cottage allows your multiples to play in the same area but with different toys. Discovery Toys is an excellent resource for older babies and preschoolers with toys like the Hide Inside and Measure Up Cups. Both toys stimulate object identification, sorting and matching skills.

Toys and games in the open-ended play category encourage reasoning and creativity. They lead multiples to cooperation, not competition. According to Margaret Berrio, Ph.D. and director of the Cal Poly Preschool Laboratory, "The number one toy to provide children of all ages is a ball. Give them lots of different kinds. Second to balls would be blocks. Parents should invest in the best-quality and most elaborate set they can afford and have space for." Dr. Berrio points out that our children often combine block play with animals and other figures developing complex scenarios for imaginative play. When shopping for blocks, consider the MegaBlocks—these are soft and don't hurt as much if your toddler twins decide to use them as projectiles instead of building materials. Older children will delight in the texture and feel of wooden blocks.

Toys that "grow" with your children can be used in a variety of ways and help your multiples to develop intellectually and socially. Consider your twins' current physical and mental skills and look for toys that engage their imaginations. Some of the most popular toys in our home are from the Little Tikes line—the Activity Garden, Grocery Store, and Tool Bench have proven to be timeless and age-spanning playthings. My 5-year-old loves to interact with her 18-year-old siblings with all of these toys. The twins have enjoyed the Activity Garden since they were old enough to sit up and look

at the colorful figures surrounding them. Now they "plant" the vegetables and "water" the flowers. Of course, blocks, balls, and dress-up items are tops in this category.

SAFETY AND SHARING

Read all warnings on the packages carefully, and be sure to keep older children's toys away from infants and toddlers. In addition, parents of multiples need to consider how two or more children of the same age playing with a toy might "misuse" it. Some of the toys that were safe for my singleton daughter as a toddler are not safe for my twins because they can be used for hitting. Sharing can be a challenge, but it is a necessary life skill for all children—especially multiples. Dr. Berrio has outfitted her preschool with only two swings, but provides several sprinkling cans at the water table. "Whether you provide more than one of everything really depends on the toy," she says. "Watch how the children use the item and consider whether or not it can be shared."

THE BOTTOM LINE

A good toy should engage your children, not merely entertain them. Play is a critical aspect of your multiples' development. Make the most of playtime by choosing appropriate toys that challenge your little ones while expanding the learning curve and helping them to creatively conquer new frontiers.

Rosemary W. Canfield, M.Ed., of Shell Beach, California, is a Creative Memories Consultant and the mother of three, including boy/girl twins.



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by Christina Baglivi-Tinglof

Cut the Chaos & Adopt a Color Coding System

No doubt about it—newborn twins, triplets, and quads are adorable. (Especially when they sleep, right?) But they also demand an enormous amount of your attention and if you don't have a plan in place you'll quickly sink beneath the mounting piles of dirty burp clothes, half-drunk baby bottles, and laundry. So while you're designing your nursery or buying your twin layette, you should also be thinking about organization. Adopting a simple plan for your family and household can help keep your head above water during those first few hectic months. But where should you begin? Think color coding.

WHY COLOR CODE?

When you assign each of your multiples an arbitrary color and then match their personal items to that color—everything from pacifiers and blankies to sippy cups and teddy bears—it clears up the confusion of whose stuff belongs to whom. Furthermore, when you have two or more babies at once, color coding is not only practical but a necessity as each may have different dietary or medical needs.

"We needed to color code my fraternal twins when they were babies because Matthew was sensitive to all formula except one



while his cotwin, Luke, could drink anything," Susan Thomas explains. This Riverside, California mom decided to color code baby bottles—blue for Luke and green for Matthew—to help eliminate mistakes. Although her twins are now four years old, the process still makes sense. "It's helpful with shoes since my boys wear different sizes," Thomas says. "Even though they hardly look like siblings, the color coding continues to help us."

Jamie Dudzinski of Green Bay, Wisconsin relates. "I have never had an issue telling my children apart," says the mom to 15-month-old identical twin boys. Unfortunately, others did, and shortly after putting her sons in daycare at 14-weeks old, a childcare provider gave a dose of antibiotic to the wrong cotwin. "Since then I color code everything," Dudzinski says.

Linda Curry has color coding down pat, too. This Phoenix, Arizona mom to ten-year-old, boy-girl twins, Sara and Jonathan, says there's also a great sanitary aspect to color coding personal items such as water bottles and toothbrushes. When everyone sticks to his or her own items, there's a minimal amount of cross contamination. "We've had very little illness in our family and I think it's at least in part to our system," she says. Furthermore, she believes the process of "that's yours and this is mine" adds to a twin's sense of individuality. "I do believe color coding helps to focus on the simple fact that they are two different children," Curry adds. "Although twins, they should have certain things that are theirs, and theirs alone."

"In the beginning color coding was necessary for us and others," Stacey McDonald of Anniston, Alabama and mom to 17-month-old fraternal twin boys explains. "Now it is just routine and has stayed that way!"

IF IT'S GREEN IT MUST BE YOU!

Dressing twins in different color clothing is the most common way of implementing the system. And for parents of identical twins or fraternal twins that look remarkably alike at birth, color coding has as an added benefit. It helps parents, relatives, and especially teachers distinguish between the pair.

"We color coded religiously for the first year or so," says Ashley Domingo of Vancouver, Washington. Although she and her husband Anthony can tell their very similar-looking fraternal twin daughters, Bliss and Felicity, apart, few others can. "Color coding their clothing makes it easier for other people to recognize them, especially around family that doesn't see them very often."

Heather Eckstein learned that lesson the hard way. "We didn't color code our first set of twins and I'm ashamed to admit that I can't tell them apart in some of our old photos," says the Tacoma, Washington blogger (itstwinsanity.com) and mother to six children including two sets of identical twins. "With our second set of twins, we assigned them different colors and it has been so much easier for others to tell them apart!" The bonus? Eckstein can now easily identify who is who in photographs.

But which color should you choose for your multiples? Surprisingly, it's not as simple as you would think as every family has a unique method for deciding. The Napier family of Maple Grove, Minnesota, chose green for identical twin Liam since his name is Irish and blue for cotwin Alec since his name is Scottish. (The Scottish flag is blue and white.) The Perez's of Fort Lauderdale, Florida,

on the other hand, simply stuck with purple and pink, the colors of the newborn hospital hats, for their fraternal twin daughters, Rebecca and Julie. Other families try rhyming names and colors. Drew's in blue. Ted's in red. Eileen's in green. (You get the idea.)

Yet color coding clothing as a way of identifying similar twins may not be for everyone. Florence Athens of Atlanta, Georgia gave her sons, Easton and Kael, different colored braided bracelets instead. It was subtle but effective method to help others distinguish between her identical twins.

COLOR CODE THE SCHOOL-AGE YEARS

The color coding system is flexible and can evolve as your family grows and changes. After I gave birth to a singleton two and a half years after my twins, I simply added a new color to my arsenal. With my twins now in their sophomore year of high school and my singleton in middle school, I rely on color coding more than ever. When I see a backpack thrown onto the living floor, I know instantly who it belongs to. (And who to yell at!) I use each child's chosen color on the family calendar, too. With just a glance I can tell who has a doctor's appointment, tennis lesson, or class trip.

When it comes to laundry, color coding has been a true lifesaver. We use color-coded laundry baskets (perfect for dropping all that color-coded clothing) as well as the "dot system." What's that, you ask? With a permanent marker, I add one "dot" to the inside label of the largest boy's clothing, two "dots" to the next largest boy, and then three "dots" to my smallest son. It's especially helpful in sorting laundry since as they've gotten older they've added more colors to their clothing palate. Furthermore, I can easily hand down clothing to the next boy in line by simply adding a "dot" to the label.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

Although color coding clothing is a wonderful tool for running a well-organized household, many twins become very attached to their respective colors. Some even a bit too possessive refusing to use an item in other colors, leading many parents to believe they've had undue influence on their children's preferences. Just ask Lora Morrison of Columbus, Ohio. "From the beginning starting in the hospital, I dressed Savannah in pink and Olivia in purple," she says of her four-year-old identical twin girls. "Now those are their favorite colors and I kind of feel bad since this was probably my influence!"

But there are plenty of twins who just grow sick and tired of their color. "One day when he was about five years old, Ben told me he was sick of wearing blue," explains Leslie Lewis of Arlington, Texas. When this mom to identical twin boys including cotwin John asked him what he'd like to do, his answer was simple. "He asked, 'Why can't I just tell people who I am?'"

Why indeed Ben!

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including 15-year-old fraternal twin boys and a 13-year-old singleton. She's also the author of *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*, and *Double Duty 2e*. She blogs at christinabaglivitinglof.com and runs the website talk-about-twins.com.



PREGNANCY

Happy LABOR Day!

by Ruby Coats Mosher

"I never worried about going through labor," said Sally, mother of 4-year-old fraternal twin boys, Aaron and Michael. "My doctor planned to deliver my twins by Caesarean section (C-section) at 37 weeks, so I didn't even attend the labor section of our prenatal classes."

The, due to complications at 36 weeks gestation, Sally was transferred to a regional medical center 100 miles away, where her new doctors planned a vaginal delivery. After inducement,

Sally labored for six hours. But as she was ready to begin pushing Baby A out, the external fetal monitor showed that Baby B was experiencing a life-threatening decrease in heart rate. "So after all that labor," Sally said, "I had a C-section after all!"

While Sally's experience was certainly not the usual for women expecting multiples, neither was it that unusual. Just as there is no "average" multiple pregnancy, there is no average labor experience either. Labors with twins may take unplanned turns, or may go as smoothly as clockwork. There are many factors which may affect the course of an individual woman's labor, such as the number of babies she is carrying, gestational age, fetal presentation, maternal or fetal medical conditions, experience and expertise of the attending obstetrician, and availability of fetal monitoring technology, anesthesia, and neonatal care.

Ideally, the decision concerning the route of delivery—whether through the birth canal or by C-section—which determines whether or not a woman will go through labor, should be made before labor begins or in the early stages of labor. Generally, unless there are mitigating circumstances, uncomplicated twin pregnancies near term (about 37 weeks), are allowed to spontaneously progress into labor and vaginal delivery.



The most likely candidate for vaginal delivery are the 40 percent or so of twin pregnancies in which both babies present head first. Some obstetricians will also attempt vaginal delivery with other combinations of vertex and breech, but others may be inexperienced with such a delivery and/or unwilling to risk the difficulties which may be encountered in those situations.

But some women know well in advance of the onset of labor pains that they will have a Caesarean and not go through labor. Early indications for C-sections may include pregnancies of three or more fetuses, fetal growth retardation, monoamniotic placentation (both babies in the same sac), placenta previa, and maternal diseases such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus or herpes.

In addition, for a variety of reasons, some doctors routinely schedule all multiple pregnancies for planned C-sections. If this is the case with your doctor, ask him or her to full explain their reasons for this decision in your particular situation.

Because a couple's desire for a certain type of labor and delivery experience needs to be considered, prospective parents of twins should discuss their wishes with their obstetrician well in advance of labor so accommodations can be arranged. Sometimes, a change of doctor or hospital may be necessary. For instance, couples who wish a vaginal delivery may need to be referred to another obstetrician if their current doctor prefers to perform C-sections for even uncomplicated twin births.

Ruby Coats Mosher, D.V.M. is from Emporia Kansas, is a veterinarian and the mother of fraternal twin girls.

DON'T WORRY—BE HAPPY

Bonica, mother of 5-year-old Mandy and 2-year-old Jesse and Jessica, was petrified at the thought of laboring to deliver her boy/girl twins. "I remembered my labor with Mandy," Bonica says. "I was afraid labor with twins would be twice as long and twice as hard."

Although it is true that there is the potential for complications, a woman's labor experience with twins is generally similar to that with a singleton. As it turned out with Bonica, labor can actually be easier and faster, especially if a woman has already delivered one or more previous babies. Usually, the length of labor with twins is about the same as with a singleton. However, in some cases, the second stage of labor can be prolonged between the births of Baby A and Baby B.

Just as for singletons, a multiple labor is divided into three main stages. During the first stage, uterine contractions become progressively stronger and closer together, causing the cervix to prepare or ripen for delivery. Typical cervical changes include dilation (opening), effacement (thinning and shortening), and softening.

When labor must be induced, the obstetrician is concerned about readying the cervix for delivery as well as initiating uterine contractions. In most multiple pregnancies, however, the cervical status is favorable in the late stages. It is not unusual for a woman's cervix to be partially dilated before the onset of labor when she is carrying multiples, especially if she has previously given birth. And generally, the uterus containing multiple is easy to stimulate. Indeed, many women will have been taking tocolytics to hold them back from labor.

When the cervix nears full dilation and labor becomes active, the contractions become more intense as Baby A prepares to be born.

In most cases, both babies share the same first stage because the cervix needs to dilate only once for both babies to be delivered. Each baby will, however, have its own second stage in which he makes the journey through the birth canal. Many obstetricians prefer to deliver Baby B within 30 minutes of Baby A, but unless fetal distress or other complications occur, there is an increasing tendency to consider longer intervals when safe and, perhaps, warranted. Complications after the vaginal birth of Baby A which may precipitate a C-section delivery of Baby B include cord prolapsed, placental abruption, and an abnormal fetal presentation which cannot be remedied.

Stage three is marked by the delivery of the placenta or placentas, usually after the birth of both babies. Occasionally, the first placenta is delivered before the second twin. In either case, there may be only one placenta, or there may be multiple placentas, which may be separate or fused. Close examination of the placental membranes can reveal some, but not conclusive, information about the Zygosity of the multiples.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING

Fetal monitoring can also be credited with saving the lives of compromised fetuses. Electronic monitoring should include both twins during labor and delivery. Fetal monitors register the babies' heart rates and can detect fetal distress as evidenced by bradycardia or slowed heart rate. Although the fetal heart rate may normally slow down at various times, obstetricians are concerned with what are called variable and late decelerations. Variable decelerations may result from compression of the baby's umbilical cord. Late

Continued on page 21

Are Your Twins Identical?





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INFANT

The Ties that Bond

by Cheryle G. Levitt, R.N., M.S.N.

UNDERSTANDING INFANT ATTACHMENT & BONDING

Every expectant mother can attest to the fact that parenting begins in the prenatal period. They are advised to protect and nurture their unborn child or children by modifying their activities during pregnancy, watching their health and seeking prenatal care. Under normal circumstances, during the months before babies are born, some measure of emotional ties to the unborn children also begin to develop. These feelings tend to increase as the pregnancy progresses, and the babies move and become more of a reality.

Cheryle G. Levitt, R.N., M.S.N., is a pediatric nurse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the mother of four children, including fraternal twins.



“Attachment” and “bonding” are the usual names used for those activities and feelings that connect parents emotionally to their children both before and after birth. Common buzz words of parenting-phrases such as “mother-infant bonding” and “prenatal attachment” have been popular for the last several decades.

The “how-to” baby books over the last several decades have proliferated with suggestions on how to facilitate early bonding between mothers and babies; these were accompanied by subtle and, in some cases, not-so-subtle warnings of the potential consequences to the future maternal-infant relationship if early contact did not occur. As a result, positive changes occurred as nurseries in hospitals instituted rooming-in policies on post-partum units and whisking the baby away for weight and measurements immediately after birth were discontinued; and breastfeeding soon after delivery became the common practice.

In addition, childbirth education curricula included information on bonding; birthing rooms became quite popular; and home deliveries took on new significance. The latter developments strived to enhance maternal-infant bonding as well as de-sterilize the birthing process, and have helped to improve and demystify the whole labor and delivery experience. Research found that the first minutes and hours after birth were crucial to the formation of a healthy bond. The down side of these early conclusions from bonding and attachment studies was their all-or-nothing nature; it caused many parents who did not, for whatever reason, have early contact with their infants to be suffused with feelings of worry and guilt over the status of their future relationship with their newborns. The research findings and predictions limited choices of individual families and imposed activities that may have been inappropriate; plus it made few allowances for infants whose births were unusual, whether due to prematurity, distress, multiple gestations, etc.

Also the terms “bonding” and “attachment” were often used interchangeable, causing confusion among parents and health professionals, and leading to possible labeling, incomplete or inaccurate judgements. As the message spread, parents who had been separated from their children at birth and had ultimately developed positive relationships questioned both their own practices and the research. What, exactly, are bonding and attachment? Are they different? Is it crucial to have early contact? What happens to the many parents whose infants are whisked to neonatal intensive care units (NICU) immediately after birth? Are these parental relationships doomed from the start?

UNDERSTANDING ATTACHMENT

There is a distinction to be made between the immediate contact between a parent and child at birth and the continuing process of developing affectionate ties over time. The current belief is that “attachment” is a process, an affectionate tie formed between two individuals that endures and progresses over time. It develops during infancy, but then continues to evolve. Attachment is divided into three areas: acquaintance, bonding and attachment.

1. **Acquaintance** is the act of becoming familiar with someone through some means of communication—touch, vision, speech. This stage differentiates for parents of the fantasized ideal they’ve held throughout pregnancy from the actual little individuals they’ve created.
2. **Bonding** refers to the immediate connection made at birth through the initial few hours after birth; it is the physical/visual

contact between mother and baby. It is but one step, albeit, an important one, of the total attachment process. Bonding refers to time-limited mutual experiences in parent-infant relationships, and the concept persists that parents’ encounters during these few hours can have lasting effects on subsequent parental behavior. Hospitals encourage mothers to see and touch their infants even if they are being transported for care to another unit.

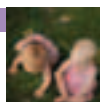
3. The last phase, actual **attachment**, is a long process, but can develop normally over time with support in an NICU setting. Parents must make a commitment to come, assist with feedings and care, when appropriate, and change some other priorities in their lives to allow for frequent visitation. Mothers can pump breast milk to save for when the babies can tolerate it, decorate the bedside, and hold the babies when stable for hours and visit regularly. Asking NICU personnel in advance about the baby’s schedule helps parents plan their visits and allows the NICU staff to organize their care to allow for more free time with the parents.

WHEN BONDING IS INTERRUPTED...

When parents are separated from their infants at birth, normal bonding processes are interrupted. Priorities are altered and the entire focus of the birth experience is shifted to the babies’ survival, progress and adjustment to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Parents need help in accessing information, understanding the complex health care system into which they have been thrust.

The NICU personnel have the unique role of helping parents cope as well as possible; the optimal method in the initial days is through communication. Unfortunately, parents’ information needs are at their greatest during the early days, but their strength and ability to seek information are at their lowest. During the difficult early days, parents need:

- Explanation and clarification of the need for the babies to be transported to another facility for treatment;
- To name their babies;
- Pictures and/or videos of their babies;
- Factual, up-to-date information about their children’s conditions, provided in laymen’s terms;
- Names, titles and phone numbers of personnel they can contact with questions and concerns. The NICU has a team comprised of neonatologists, surgeons, nurses, social workers, therapists, and others directly concerned with babies’ care;
- Suggestions parents can use to enhance their contact with and care for their babies;
- An explanation of pertinent equipment in simple terms, focusing on the role the technology plays in the treatment of their babies;
- Comments about the babies that individualize them for their parents, such as “I notice that he curls his fingers while he sleeps,” or, “He seems to become calm when I stroke his cheek”;
- To be called sometimes by the primary nurse instead of always doing the calling. Communication does not have to be initiated by NICU staff only in times of crisis; a call to reassure and report the past few hours can be a great uplift to a grieving mother;
- Ample time for questions and reiteration of the facts;
- Informational booklets/DVDs about the NICU to help allay fears about the babies’ first home. ♥



When One Twin is Sick

TIPS FOR PARENTS!

Janet Gonzalez-Mena lives in Napa, California and teaches early childhood education at Napa Valley College. She is the mother of five children and co-authored a book, "Toddlers and Caregivers".

by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

"He has to be exposed to germs sometime," the doctor told me when I complained about how often my toddler son, Tim, got sick. Tim was a preemie, born 13 weeks early. He spent there and a half months in the intensive care nursery. I wanted him to enjoy a little rest and relaxation after his difficult start, however, so in order to protect him from various and sundry childhood illnesses for a while, I proposed to isolate him from other children.

The pediatrician, however, disagreed. "If he doesn't get around other kids now, then he'll just get all these illnesses when he finally does. You can put it off until Kindergarten, but it's inevitable that he'll get sick sometime."

This is just one of the issues that parents of premature infants, whether they are singletons or multiples, sometimes face. Protecting their children from germs can become an obsession with some parents. How to handle illness when it strikes is another issue—one that doesn't just concern parents of preemies.

MULTIPLE SICK BEDS

I hated for my children to be sick, especially when they were toddlers. "Nothing is worse than a sick toddler," I told a group of parents of twins, "unless it's two or three of them." "Wrong!" they informed me. In fact, when illness strikes, it can often be harder on parents of singletons than parents of multiples. Of course, it's never fun having a sick child, but the ill singleton is alone and often feels isolated. Multiples have each other for company. A playmate to share misery can lessen it a bit, and a healthy co-twin can be encouraged to help out and even entertain a sick co-twin. Even a toddler can bring a wet washcloth for a feverish forehead.

Not that all parents of multiples keep their children together when sick. In many families, a good deal of effort goes into trying to isolate the sick child for fear of contagion. But most parents eventually give up trying to keep twins separated, because they usually end up getting the same diseases anyway. Most germs are sneaky and spread before symptoms appear, so that by the time one child becomes sick, his co-twin has usually already been exposed. Meeting the needs of both a sick and a healthy toddler at the same time can be difficult. Parents who don't have help automatically offered to them should ask for it, enlisting grandparents, neighbors and friends if possible.



THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

Jealousy can be a factor if one child is sick and his co-twin is well. It's only natural for parents to pay extra attention to the child who is sick, but it's important to be aware of the well child's feelings. Giving them each individual time with you (whenever possible) will help prevent repressed anger and anxiety being acted out in obnoxious behavior, or fake injuries and illnesses.

When I was a child, I was always put to bed when sick. It was just assumed that bedrest was called for in every situation. As a parent, I've learned that keeping toddlers in bed is harder than letting them move around and engage in quiet activities. Of course, it depends on how sick they are, but I go by how the sick child feels and if he wants to play. If I observe that they feel well enough to do so, I let my children play, but make sure they get plenty of rest and don't elevate their temperatures. Letting sick children experience extreme temperatures can be hard on their bodies, so I tend to keep them inside the house. ♥

BABYING BOTH BABIES

Here are some tips for making things easier when one or both of your toddler twins are sick:

- **Take what sanitary measures you can, such as separate cups and washcloths, but don't go overboard.** Exposure probably occurred before the symptoms appeared. Some childcare centers have discovered that it doesn't really help their illness rate at all to isolate sick children.
- **Keep life as calm and as ordinary as possible, but lighten up on expectations.** You might have to temporarily suspend some of your rules or requirements for behavior.
- **Avoid making too big a fuss over an illness.** When children discover that being sick makes them special, they learn to fake stomach aches and other maladies. Helping each of your children feel "special" should be a daily goal, not something that's only associated with illness or injury.
- **Watch out for overprotective tendencies.** It's okay to "baby" a sick child, but keep it within reason. And be sure to stop the "babying" when the illness passes. It's easy to worry about a child who is sick a great deal, or seems weak in some way. But the way to strengthen children is to provide them with what they need, rather than limit them or smother them. There's a fine line between caring for delicate children and overprotecting them.
- **Take care of yourself.** It's easy to neglect your own health when your children are extra-needy. You and your children will pay for that neglect in the end. If possible, ask friends, relatives and neighbors to help out.



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Tips & Tricks for Pre-School Age Twins

JACK-O-LANTERN SAFETY

If you are decorating for Halloween, be sure to take a safe approach to lighting up that smiley pumpkin face. Battery operated candles eliminate the danger of little fingers flirting with fire. If you choose to use regular candles for illumination, be sure to place the pumpkin up high and out of reach of curious twins and little trick-o-treaters.



TO DRESS OR NOT TO DRESS YOUR PRE-SCHOOL TWINS ALIKE

Clothing choices are always an issue for parents of twins. *The Joy of Twins* author Pamela Novotny offers a few things to think about in her book. "You don't make it easier to distinguish one twin from the other if you dress them alike. Conversely, you create the opportunity for others to discern personality differences in your twins if you dress them differently," she says. Many parents leave the choice up to the kids. But Pamela reminds parents, "Keep in mind that if you have always dressed them alike...they may not know it's an option for them to dress differently when they are old enough to decide for themselves—say 3 or 4 years old."

QUARTERS FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

With her twin sister Maggie off exploring the wilds of their bedroom, 3-year-old Tess sat quietly examining her quarters. "Mommy, what's his name?" I answered, "That's George Washington." Continuing her investigation, Tess asked about the man on the second quarter. "What's his name?" "That's George Washington, too," I said. Tess sat silently for a bit, apparently trying to figure out the story behind the two identical Georges. Then another question came, "Mommy, are they twins?"



PERFECT PORTIONS FOR YOUR PRE-SCHOOL PAIR

Small portions, a balanced variety of foods and seconds only if your multiples ask for them is the nutritional advice offered by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Here are some recommended portions:

- 4-6 ounces of milk or juice
- ½ cup of yogurt or cottage cheese
- 2 ounces of hamburger or chicken
- 1 slice of toast
- 4 tablespoons of vegetables
- ½ cup of cereal
- 1 teaspoon of butter/margarine

Limit extras to two healthful foods a day so that snacks don't interfere with regular meals. If your twins trade food items, remind them to eat something from each food group.



OFF TO GRANDMA'S

Parents of multiples struggle to settle into a routine that works for their family. When the kids spend a day or weekend with their grandparents, it is helpful for the grandma and grandpa to understand your basic philosophy for raising your twins and respect the routine you have established. Give them a clear idea of the kids' schedules, special needs, likes, and dislikes, food preferences, bedtimes and naptimes. While grandparents want some spontaneous time with your little ones, it will help to reacquaint them with what children enjoy and are capable of at this particular stage. Grandparents can show your children a whole new side of family life. It's a precious relationship that your parents and children will treasure.



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Twins Devin and Jason McCourty are ready for some

Football!

A double dose of the NFL

by Christa D. Reed, Editor-in-Chief

Did you know that identical twins Devin and Jason McCourty are only the 13th set of twins to play in the NFL together (*see side-bar box.*) Both of these super-fast, agile and athletic dynamos play Corner Back, both start for their teams and they both seem to have huge futures in this sport yet many fans don't know they play in the NFL and most people don't even know they are twins... but they soon will now since they are very involved in social media and have thousands of followers on Facebook and Twitter branding their twinship!

"There's not too much difference between the two, really," mother Phyllis Harrell said, chuckling. "Devin has always been a little quieter than Jason but Jason is also more likely to call home. He may still be a bit more outgoing, but Devin is sure catching up," she says about her twins who were born 27 minutes apart on August 13, 1987 in Nyack, New York. These identical brothers, who can be told apart by tiny scars on their faces left by chickenpox, have escorted each other through life, playing on the same football teams their entire lives, up until now.

These twins have always been very close and come from a tight family and have always been supportive of one another. From the time they were small, classmates have always tried to pit them against each other in a constant game of who is better? And even at a very young age, they refused to play into that game. "We always wanted to be on the same team," Jason says.

In Junior High, they moved with their mother to Nanuet, New York and can remember those days were the only time they ever competed against each other on different teams, and it wasn't even in football it was basketball. The twins made the decision to go to St. Joseph High School, which is in Bergen County, New Jersey, and was a 15-minute drive from Nanuet where they first got the attention of college recruiters.

After high school, the brothers were prepared to go their separate ways when Boston College recruited Jason but not Devin, and Jason liked what the Eagles had to offer. Then Jason and Devin took a recruiting trip together to Rutgers. "When Jason went on his visit to Boston College, Devin didn't go with him but when they went to Rutgers, he felt more of a connection," their mother said. "The people felt more like what he's used to and they both wanted to play at Rutgers."

So on the very first day allowed, they signed letters of intent to play football together and proceeded to move into a dorm suite together on campus. But Jason played as a true freshman, and Devin was redshirted and nearly left. "I didn't like being alone," he

Continued on page 27



Twins in the NFL...a brief history

There have been just 14 sets of twins in NFL history where both twins played in the league.

- 1st Gene and Tom Golsen** were NFL pioneers, playing together on the long-defunct Louisville Colonels team in 1926. Gene was a fullback and tailback, while Tom was a guard. The Louisville team had one of the shortest life spans in NFL history, having played just four games total in 1926 before going under - the NFL began in 1920 and the first decade of the league saw a lot of teams come and go. It would be another TWO decades before the NFL would see another set of twins.
- 2nd Hal and Herb Shoener** began their brief NFL careers in 1948. Hal played for the San Francisco 49ers from 1948-1950 as an end (*San Francisco was in the AAFC in 1948 and 1949 and joined the NFL in 1950*). Herb also was a defensive end, playing for the Redskins in 1948 and 1949.
- 3rd Rich and Ron Saul** who both were offensive linemen from 1970-1981. **Rich Saul** played all 12 of his seasons with the Los Angeles Rams. **Ron Saul** played for the Houston Oilers from 1970-1975, and the Washington Redskins from 1976-1981.
- 4th Mark and Mike Bell** was the 2nd set of twins to actually play together on the same team but whose careers were interrupted by off-the-field problems. Mark was a defensive end for Seattle from 1979-1982, and with Baltimore and Indianapolis in 1983 and 1984. Mike was a defensive end with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1979-1985 and then again from 1987-1991. But both Bells were sent to prison in 1985 for cocaine possession, causing Mike to be suspended from the league in 1986.
- 5th Phil and Paul Tabor** were both linemen but on different sides of the ball. Phil was a defensive lineman with the New York Giants for four seasons (1979-1982). Paul played just one season in the league, seeing some time both at center and at guard with the Chicago Bears in 1980.
- 6th Raleigh and Reggie McKenzie** are the twins who played the longest cumulative time in the NFL to date. Raleigh was an offensive lineman (guard and center) for 15 seasons. He played for the Washington Redskins from 1985-1994, but he also saw action with Philadelphia from 1995-1996, San Diego 1997-1998 and Green Bay in 1999. He also was the first twin to be a part of a Super Bowl-winning NFL team, winning rings with Washington following the 1987 and 1991 seasons. Reggie was a linebacker with the Los Angeles Raiders from 1985-1988, and again in 1992 with the San Francisco 49ers.
- 7th Keith and Kerry Cash** were both tight ends, playing for five different teams from 1991-1996. Keith Cash was with Pittsburgh in 1991 and Kansas City from 1992-1996. Kerry Cash played for Indianapolis from 1991 through 1994, for the Oakland in 1995 and Chicago in 1996.
- 8th Devon and Ricardo McDonald** was both linebackers. Devon McDonald played for Indianapolis from 1993-1995 (*where he was a teammate of fellow twin Kerry Cash*), and Arizona in 1996. Ricardo McDonald was with the Cincinnati Bengals from 1992 through 1997 and with the Chicago Bears in 1998-1999.
- 9th Tiki and Ronde Barber** are probably the best known NFL twins on this list. Ronde Barber has been a defensive back with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 1997 to present. Ronde had two TD's in a game on Sept. 22, 2006 against the Eagles to tie

an NFL record. Tiki Barber was a running back with the New York Giants from 1997 through 2006, while Tiki had his best professional season in 2005 with 1860 yards rushing, 2nd in the NFL, then followed it with 1662 yards rushing in 2006, 4th-best in the NFL, before retiring at the age of 30. Tiki began broadcasting for NBC-TV back in 2007.

- 10th Kato and Wasswa Serwanga.** **Kato Serwanga** played collegiately at UCLA, and was a cornerback in the NFL with New England from 1998 to 2000 and in Washington in 2001. **Wasswa Serwanga** went to the University of California, and was a defensive back with San Francisco in 1999 and Minnesota in 2000.
- 11th Daniel and Josh Bullocks** both play safety. Daniel Bullocks played for the Detroit Lions from 2006 to 2009. Josh Bullocks played for the New Orleans Saints from 2005 to 2008, the Chicago Bears in 2009-2010 and recently is playing for the Oakland Raiders in the 2011 season.
- 12th Paul and Pat McQuistan** both played as offensive lineman making their NFL debut in 2006. Paul played for the Oakland Raiders from 2006 through 2009, the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2009-2010, and is presently playing for the Seattle Seahawks in the 2011 season. His brother Pat played with the Dallas Cowboys from 2006 to 2010, the Miami Dolphins in 2010 and just signed with the Tennessee Titans to play in the 2011 season.
- 13th Devin and Jason McCourty** (*Our Cover Story*) Devin was a round 1 draft pick in 2010 and plays cornerback for the New England Patriots. In 2009, brother Jason was drafted to the NFL in round 6 by the Tennessee Titans as a cornerback and still plays for them in 2011.
- 14th Maurkice and Michael Pouncey.** Maurkice was a round 1 draft pick in 2010 and plays for the Pittsburgh Steelers. His twin brother Michael was a round 1 draft pick for the 2011 season and is playing his rookie year as center for the Miami Dolphins.

OTHER NOTABLE NFL TWIN CONNECTIONS....

John and Jana Elway, John Elway was a NFL Hall of Fame quarterback for the Denver Broncos from 1983 through 1998 and led his team to five Super Bowls, winning the titles in his last two years in the NFL in 1997 and 1998. He played in nine pro bowls and had the best winning percentage of any quarterback in NFL history. Sadly his twin sister Jana was unable to witness John being inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2004 after passing away in 2002 to lung cancer.

Rex and Rob Ryan are both coaches in the NFL and each have won a Super Bowl ring (Rex in 2001 with Baltimore where he is a Defensive Line coach, and Rob in 2002 with New England where he was a Linebacker coach). Rex was named head coach of the New York Jets in 2009 to the present season. Rob has been a defensive coordinator for the Oakland Raiders from 2004 to 2008, the Cleveland Browns in 2009-2010 and is now the Defensive Coordinator for the Dallas Cowboys in this 2011 season. Their father is legendary coach Buddy Ryan.

In April 2011 NFL star, **Peyton Manning** became a father for the first time when he and his wife Ashley delivered twins!

Twins with Autism

11 Tips Parents Need to Know!

by Melanie I. Bloom



It's picture day. It should be a regular morning with a few extra things to do. That might be the case if I wasn't the mother of twins with autism. My twin daughters are 10 years old and on both ends of the autism spectrum. I'm going to have to plan ahead and get everyone up earlier. Here is what my agenda looks like this morning:

Get Rachel out of bed earlier and show her the outfit we picked out last night. Expect grumbling because it's not the outfit she wants to wear. There is only one she likes and it's looking pretty stained and worn and it is definitely not what I want to have her picture in. She is going to complain about the seams on the jacket of the dress, the fact that it isn't her favorite color "baby blue" or that it's not "girly enough", and that her dress shoes don't fit, even though they fit just fine. She may get angry and close herself in her bedroom and refuse to come to the bathroom. Build in extra time for tantrums and cooling back down. I meant for Rachel, not me.

Next get Kara out of bed. She is going to be very sleepy and out of it. Get her dressed before she has time to get whiny. Get her to

the restroom stat. She only just potty trained this past year, so we have to get her in there before she has an accident. She is not going to feel well and will be gagging at the sight of food due to her acid reflux. I have to try to get her medicine in her while she sits here half asleep. If I don't watch her, most of the liquid will dribble down her chin.

Now, it's time for the hair. My girls have super thick, curly black hair which is noticed by total strangers everywhere we go. It is also a mother's nightmare. It gets tangled and knotty. Both girls can hardly stand the sensation of having it brushed out. We brought in the arsenal of detanglers and spray bottles, gels and the like. Now if I can convince Rachel to wear a different headband from the old, tired, dirty looking one that she has had for several months and refused to part with.

The girls are dressed, we have our portable breakfast for the car ride, the backpacks are ready to go, the glasses are currently on their faces and we're just about to leave. Rachel has to collect up her menagerie of toys that must accompany us to school.

We get in the van and drive to school while Kara demands, "Home day," because she wants to go back to sleep. I do, too. When I arrive at school and drop them off at the before-school childcare, I feel like it must be the end of the day. I'm that tired.

Since this has been my life for the better part of the last decade, I have picked up some tips and tricks to make the daily routine better.

- 1. Plan ahead** — Parents of children with autism know what is going to set their children off. Buying clothes without seams that bother them in colors and fabrics that are not irritating to them will help to get them dressed without upset. Picking out the clothing the night before with their input and limiting the choices between 2 or three items will also help. If the child has limited verbal abilities, a picture chart with the morning routine will be helpful.
- 2. Get help** — Each school year, I make contact with the teachers and morning child care providers. I enlist their help. If it's a bad morning, I can call them and they will come help me get the girls out of the car. We have a routine for when they arrive in the morning and that helps make the transition go smoothly.
- 3. Ask to be notified of changes in advance whenever possible.** — Sometimes staffing changes due to absences are unavoidable and last minute. Having a substitute can be

difficult for a child who is routine-bound. If the parent knows in advance that there will be different individuals working with the child that day, (s)he can prepare the child by having those conversations in the car on the way to school.

4. **Remember that the calendar is your friend.** — Many schools publish the school events calendar on their web sites. Teachers often send newsletters with events that are coming up. Parents can role play or create a social story with their children about how to handle events that will be happening such as special assemblies. Advance preparation can really help the child to feel more at ease.
5. **Keep the lines of communication open with the teachers and staff.** — Ask for a daily report. Ask for it to include the things that you are most concerned about (i.e. if your child ate lunch, behavior in the classroom, behavior at specials (art, music, p.e., library, computer lab), comments from support personnel (Occupational, Physical, Speech and Behavior therapists).
6. **Connect with other parents.** — There are many online groups and local support groups available to parents who also have children with disabilities. These can be invaluable. Having the opportunity to ask other parents how to handle situations that arise is invaluable. Chances are that other parents, particularly those with children who are older than your child, will help you learn new strategies to try.
7. **Ask away** — Ask for suggestions from occupational, physical, speech and behavior therapists for ways to manage

daily routines. Consistent language between home and school helps your child understand what is expected.

8. **Look for opportunities to develop your child's talents and interests** — Check with your local parks service and community centers for inclusive recreational activities. Follow your child's lead for areas of strengths and interests and have your child take lessons in those areas to further develop them.
9. **Provide support for siblings.** — Look for support groups for your non-disabled children. Get counseling if needed to help them deal with the issues of being the sibling of a disabled child.
10. **Take care of yourself.** — Often we forget to take care of ourselves with all of the stress in our daily lives as parents of children with disabilities. Eat right, exercise, get regular medical care and don't ignore health problems. Our children need us to be healthy so that we can take care of them.
11. **Plan for the future.** — Talk to professionals about issues like guardianship, special needs trusts, transitions between levels of school and post-high school. Don't wait to seek help. Advance preparation is necessary to insure that those resources are ready when your child is ready for them. ♡

Melanie I. Bloom is an Education Specialist Spectra (Gifted) Teacher for the Francis Howell School District in St. Charles, MO and recent graduate in Educational Leadership (Initial Principal certification). She is also the mother of twin daughters age 10.



Continued from page 11

PREGNANCY

decelerations begin at the peak of the contraction and last beyond the end of it. These bradycardias occur due to insufficient oxygen supply from the placenta.

Sally credits fetal monitoring and an emergency C-section with saving the life of her Baby B: "Without the monitor telling us that Aaron was having trouble," she said, "we might not have him today."

"There is no way," she added, pulling her boys close, "I could be dissatisfied with the way my labor and delivery went—just look what I got out of it!" ♡



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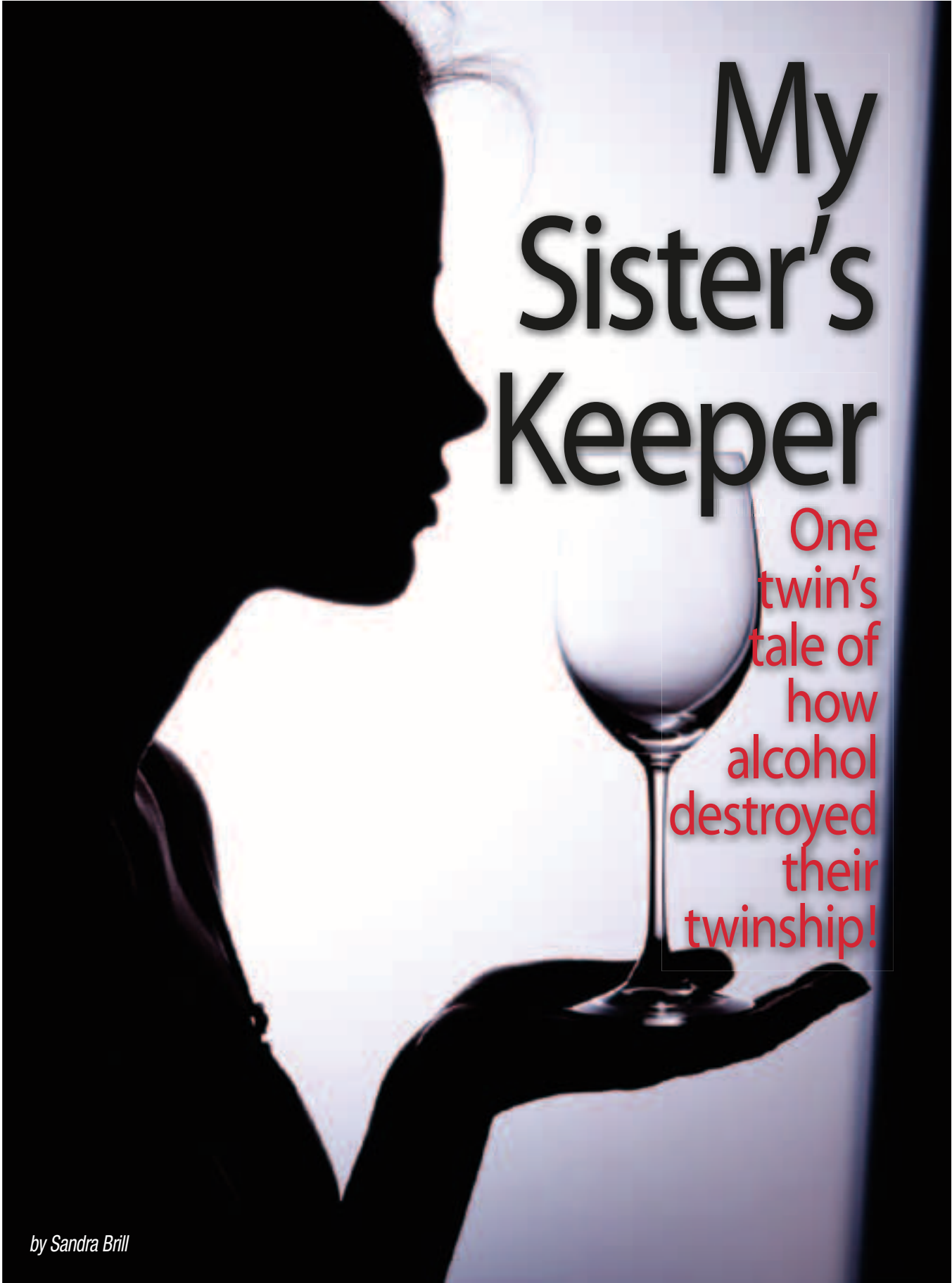
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My Sister's Keeper

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twinship!

by Sandra Brill



My twin sister and I share a secret. Not unusual for twins I suppose, but our secret is dark. It's ugly. And, it is destructive. We are on a downward spiral that is destroying "us," devastating our unique bond, and ultimately and admittedly it will eventually kill my beloved twin.

We share an addiction...

alcohol. You see, my sister drinks, and I, well I guess you could call me her enabler. After all, we are codependent on each other, a characteristic shared by many alcoholics, and I would argue a condition of many twin sets, too. In our case, we have always relied on each other for support, comfort, companionship, advice, and even more (if you can imagine?) There was a time in the not so distant past where we faced the world together and shared everything life had to offer together. After all we were twins.

Growing up with a twin, nothing was scary knowing my sister was always by my side. Even when we moved to a whole new state and started a brand new school when we were adolescents, didn't faze me, I was a twin, and had a twin to share this experience with. I can remember not being afraid of trying out for a sports team in junior high; taking the test to get a driver's license as a teen; or even as an adult going through labor and delivery was a breeze because I had my twin sister by my side. With my sister, I did not have to be afraid of anything and we had such an amazing twinship.

I often try to describe what it is like being a twin to "singletons," because quite frankly, they ask. But it's difficult, it's like trying to describe what wind looks like or how water tastes. Sometimes, though I liken being a twin to being one of the Beatles. There are millions of people who can play music. There are thousands of famous musicians who understand what it is like to be adored by the masses. However, there were only four guys from Liverpool who knew what it was like to be a Beatle. Their experience was singular to the four of them and nobody else will ever experience it or thoroughly understand it. That is how I look at being a twin. I think twins are similar. Millions of people are twins and can relate to other twins on a certain level but only my twin and I truly understand our unique bond.

Therefore, based on this amazing, unexplainable twin bond, I could have never imagined that there would come a time in our lives when there was not "us." In my mind I never could think of how there could be any circumstances or any person in the entire world who could ever pull my twin and me apart! The idea was inconceivable to me. After all, we were twins.

Yet we did find something that actually was able to tear apart this bond...and it was alcohol. Insidiously, slowly, but oh so thoroughly, it crept in and broke us apart. In hindsight, I can now recognize the beginning of the end for us when, all the way back at the age of thirteen years old when we took our first tentative sip of booze. That night we started down a broken road and one I'm uncertain will ever be repaired. You see, that night my sister literally was falling down drunk and in the process of really hurting herself and me, but there I was to pick up the pieces, bandage her wounds and put her to bed; and that was when I began to lie (which was always required to cover up her actions) so we wouldn't get into trouble.

Unfortunately, this same pattern continued for the next twenty-five years of our lives.

High school and college was a round of parties, where my sister's tolerance, as well as her reliance on alcohol, grew and my enabling flourished. She always, always got smashed. I could never understand why she couldn't stop with one or two drinks but, still, I could never walk away and let her suffer the consequences. I would watch over her, ensure no harm came to her, carry her home, and as always, lie to keep us out of trouble.

As adults, I actually made it possible for my twin to drink every day. No need for her to be a mother to her two little girls when I would drive them to play dates, cook them meals, and launder their clothes. But the alternative was leaving them with a drunk and that was truly something I could not do because my sister's drinking had become dangerous.

Now into our thirties, my twin and I had gone through two interventions, one poor attempt at rehab, and she was cited for three D.U.I.s. What little contact we shared usually ended in my begging her to get help, but she never would. Not for anything, or anyone... Not for her husband, not for her daughters, not for our parents, not for herself, and not even for me, her twin.

My angst and frustration over my sister were actually making me physically ill. The time had finally come when I realized that I could not rescue her, but I could also not walk away from her either. She was killing herself, and also she was killing us. Everyone knows an addict has to reach bottom to stop and after all of this, I couldn't believe my sister hadn't reached hers yet. After all, she had lost everything: her looks, her health, her kids, her marriage, her wealth, her happiness, and her twin.

What my sister could never admit I certainly couldn't either. I had reached my bottom and hadn't even realized it yet either. My bottom came after my sister's fourth D.U.I. when she was sentenced to one year in jail. The absolute lowest moment of my life came when I went to visit her there. There she was in a course, gray prison jumpsuit, and we were forcibly separated between a glass divider. We had to pick up phone receivers to talk to each other and all she could do was rant about how she did not belong there in jail with all these drug addicts. It was at that very moment, I knew she was lost to me.

It was during this low point, as I frantically tried to find some sort of way to get her out of jail and into a rehab... my husband finally intervened and asked me to stop trying to save my twin and focus on myself and our family. Doing this has been the hardest thing I have ever done. It's literally heartbreaking. To be a twin and lose that amazing and unique bond is a physical and mental hurt that is indescribable. Nevertheless, I believe my husband was right to ask me to walk away. After one year in jail, my sister was released and promptly began drinking again and continuing on this destructive path.

As for me, I have really never told anyone about my sister's time in jail or anything about our long affair with alcohol because it is such a sordid and ugly tale. I could not bear it if others judged her for her drinking or even thought ill of my twin in any way so that is one reason I have kept this a secret for such a long time. In a sense, though, keeping this secret has been the only way left for me to be able to protect my beloved twin... just as I have always done. But at this point, I realize that sharing our twin story with others may be the only way I can heal myself and help others. ♥

Does Alcoholism Run in Families? *What Twin Research Reveals...*

by Nancy L. Segal

Are girls more likely than boys to abuse alcohol?

These questions are of particular interest to those of us who are raising twins, as we support the individual similarities and differences between our identical and fraternal twins.

Since greater similarity between identical twins than fraternal twins demonstrates a genetic effect on a given medical condition or behavior, twin studies can help researchers disentangle the interplay of genetic and environmental influences associated with alcoholism. A number of researchers, in fact, both in the United States and abroad, have used twin studies to investigate hereditary influences on alcoholism, and have published some significant results.

TWIN STUDIES

A number of twin studies over the years have demonstrated gender and genetic influences on alcohol consumption and alcoholism. In fact, their results have helped rule out its simply being social contact that impacts these behaviors. Carol Prescott, Ph.D., in the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, studies alcohol use in an older twin sample. Twin participants included members of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Questionnaires were mailed to over 12,000 twins who had responded to a notice in the organization's newsletter. Over 9,000 forms were returned. Some twins were eliminated for a variety of reasons—for example, if the co-twin was deceased or if there was a request for removal from the mailing list.

The final sample included over 4,000 twins, with a mean age of 66.7 years. It was found that alcohol consumption was greater among males than females, as well as among older than younger individuals. In addition, twins who were in more frequent social contact with one another were more similar for both lifetime and current alcohol use. Whether similarity reflects a genetic influence in this case, or whether the fact that the twins chose to spend a greater amount of time together, is unclear.



Ordinary drinking behavior was also studied in a Colorado sample that included 46 identical twin pairs, 44 fraternal twin pairs, 37 non-twin sibling pairs and 46 adoptive sibling pairs. Research participants were recruited by means of newspaper and radio ads in the Denver area. A questionnaire was developed to assess alcohol consumption during the previous 12-month period.

Identical twins showed greater resemblance than fraternal twins, suggesting a genetic influence. Fraternal twins, non-twin siblings and adoptive siblings showed relatively low resemblance. These findings indicate that shared environment for identical twins have special characteristics which may contribute to behavioral resemblance between them. The investigators noted, however, that this socially-based explanation was probably unable to fully explain the identical twin findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The importance of genetic factors in alcoholism among women has been unclear for some time. In a past review, Matt McGue, Ph.D., from the University of Minnesota, indicated that three out of five twin studies which included females did not produce evidence of a genetic influence on alcoholism.

In contrast, another study by Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., and colleagues in the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical College of Virginia, did find evidence of genetic effects for alcoholism in women. These investigators reported findings from a population-based study using female twins. Over 1,000 twins were identified in the Virginia Twin Registry.

Registry staff located twins following a review of birth certificates of individuals born in the state of Virginia since 1918. Twins were interviewed by trained social workers who were unaware of their drinking status. Based on interview information, twins were classified into one of three groups: **narrow**-alcoholism with tolerance or dependence; **intermediate**-alcoholism with or without tolerance-dependence; **broad**-alcoholism with or without tolerance-dependence or problem drinking.

The lifetime prevalence for all three categories of alcoholism was higher for identical than fraternal twins, suggesting genetic effects. In addition, genetic factors seemed to contribute equally to all three varieties of alcoholic behavior. It was noted that these findings appeared to be inconsistent with those from some previous studies which have not supported a role for genetic factors underlying alcoholism among females (the majority of studies have, however, found evidence of genetic factors for alcoholism in males.)

Kendler and his colleagues estimated that genetic differences account for approximately 50 to 60 percent of the individual differences we see among females for alcoholism. These are important findings that can help families and medical health professionals to understand and to treat this disturbing condition. It is important to note, however, that differences between previous studies and this

one may be associated with the particular definitions of alcoholism used and/or the methods which participating twins were identified.

As in earlier studies, identical twins in the present sample reported greater similarities in their childhood environments, and greater frequency of social contact as adults, than did fraternal twins. In this study, similarity in childhood environments was found to be unrelated to twin resemblance in the measured drinking behaviors. Frequency of adult contact was, however, associated with alcoholism.

The investigators indicated that their data did not enable analysis of whether social contact led to similar drinking preferences, or whether similar drinking preferences led to increased social contact. They did point out that studies of other behavioral variables have not provided evidence that contact leads to similarity, so that it is unlikely that such processes would be operative in the case of alcoholism.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

In general, twin studies of alcoholism support a genetic influence on alcoholism, thereby answering the question posed earlier as to whether alcoholism “runs in families.” In addition, as noted in research reports stated earlier in the article, Kendler’s more recent twin study now reports a genetic influence on alcoholism in females.

Genetic influences do not imply certain outcomes, however. For example, though having an alcoholic identical twin means that the twin partner’s chances of becoming alcoholic are relatively higher than for members of the general population; it does not mean that unaffected twin partners of alcoholic twins necessarily face the certain outcome of becoming alcoholics themselves. Environmental factors also contribute to the behavior; someone with a predisposition to alcoholism will not become alcoholic if alcohol consumption is severely restricted or avoided entirely.

An important goal for the future is to clarify the nature of the genetic influence on alcohol use and alcoholic behavior. McGue emphasized that there are probably several biological pathways leading to alcoholism. Inherited factors may include alcohol sensitivity, personality and temperament characteristics, and cognitive factors, which assert their effects either alone or in combination. How these factors interact with critical aspects of numerous researchers in the future. Identical and fraternal twins will be a major part of this important undertaking. ♥

Nancy L. Segal, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the department of psychology and Director of the Twin Studies at California State University, Fullerton. She is also author of the new book that just came out called, “Someone Else’s Twin...the True Story of Babies Switched at Birth”

TWINS’ ROLES IN ALCOHOL RESEARCH

- A number of researchers both in the United States and abroad, have used twin studies to investigate hereditary influences on alcoholism
- Twin studies over the years have demonstrated genetic influences on alcohol consumption and alcoholism.
- One twin study of 9,000 people found that alcohol consumption was greater among males than females, as well as among older than younger individuals.
- Identical twins show greater resemblance in drinking behavior than fraternal twins, suggestion a genetic influence.
- A later study in the mid 1990s at the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical College of Virginia found evidence of genetic effects for alcoholism in women.
- In a study conducted by the Virginia Twin Registry, twins were classified into one of three groups: narrow-alcoholism with tolerance or dependence; intermediate-alcoholism with or without tolerance-dependence; broad-alcoholism with or without tolerance-dependence or problem drinking.
- Genetic factors seemed to contribute equally to all three varieties of alcoholic behavior listed above.
- Cases in which one fraternal twin is affected with fetal alcohol syndrome and the other is not, suggest that there may be genetically influenced predisposition to being susceptible to the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.

WHAT IS FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME?

Fetal alcohol syndrome, or FAS, may result when alcohol ingested by a pregnant woman crosses the placental barrier between her and her fetuses before birth. Study of the syndrome during the last 20 years has indicated that children with FAS exhibit both characteristic physical and behavioral effects. Behavioral effects, says Laura Beck, Ph.D., author of the textbook *Child Development* and a professor at Illinois State University, include mental retardation, heightened activity level, and limited attention span. Physical effects include slowed development, eyes that are widely spaced, and small head size. Children displaying only a few symptoms of prenatal exposure to alcohol show fetal alcohol effects, or FES. Children diagnosed with FES typically had mothers who ingested smaller quantities of alcohol during pregnancy than children with FAS.

FAS was a major focus of the Gatlinburg Conference on Research and Theory in Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities held in Brainerd, Minnesota. Among the various findings reported at the meeting was information of particular relevance to parents of twins. Studies by French investigators included mothers of fraternal twins who had consumed large quantities of alcohol during their pregnancies. Dr. Ann Streissguth, one of the first researchers to define FAS, described cases in which one member of a fraternal twin pair was affected with FAS, while the twin partner was unaffected. This finding suggests that there may be a genetically-influenced predisposition to being susceptible to the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.

by LaToya Watkins

Miracles in the Making

a view on how twins are seen in other parts of the world



In West African tradition, I am a *manyi* (mother of twins.) I wonder if my role or the roles of my daughters would be viewed differently if I had been exposed to fertility drugs during their conception. Assisted reproductive technology has revolutionized infertility treatment.

I recently read Barbara Kingsolver's book entitled, *Poisonwood Bible*, where she depicts a Southern white family of missionaries, forced by their father to journey the Congo during the country's fight for independence from the Belgian government. Halfway through the book one of the African characters realizes that one of the white children is a twin. The African informs the girl that in his village baza are taken into the forest and abandoned after they are born because they are believed to possess power to curse and plague the people of the village. This particular character finds the African traditions and practices strange enough; however, she reasons that natural disasters had indeed plagued her homeland the year that she and her sister were born. She considers that maybe—just maybe, there is something more than ordinary about twins.

As well, during the period in Kingsolver's book, there were more fraternal twins born in West Africa than anywhere else in the world. Today, many ethnic groups in Cameroon and Nigeria strongly react (positively or negatively) to twin births. Many reactions center on a belief grounded in twin divinity. They are seen as supernatural forces or gifts, possessing powers to harm those who do not please them.

Traditionally, certain rituals and in some cases, rites, were performed when twins were born; however, colonization and imperialism contributed to changes in these traditions. Practices varied tribe-to-tribe. Some tribes killed the children and others simply

spoiled them. Particular birth and burial rituals were also performed. For instance, the Yoruba would kill the twins and sometimes the *manyi* as well. They once believed twins were evil entities born to mothers who had slept with two men at one time. This practice and belief was abandoned under the influence of organized Christianity (actually credited to a Scottish missionary.) Today in Yoruba, twins are celebrated as humans of divine origin. They are treated with respect and are often positioned to gain prosperity for their families.

Infanticide in cases involving twins was not exclusive to Africa. In some tribal societies, twins of the opposite gender were believed to have committed incest in the womb and were condemned. In many cases only one twin was killed. In Serbia, infanticide was still common in the 19th century. When twins were born, at least one was sacrificed to the pagan god, perun (church doctrine forbade this practice, but it was still done.) Overall, the practice of infanticide (even outside of twin birth) was not uncommon throughout the world.

In America, there are many factors involved when considering chances of "twinning." About one in 90 births result in twins and about two-thirds (or higher) of twin births can be attributed to assisted reproductive technology. In 2003, over half of all infant births by way of assisted reproductive technology were part of multiple births. Another explanation for the climbing rate of multiples in America is that women are waiting until they reach their thirties to have children. Studies show that woman over thirty-five have higher chances of having multiples.

I often wonder, with the use of fertility drugs, if the perception of twins translates into something less powerful. How are the supernatural and divine creations of twins viewed when human actions are what have increased the chances of twin births? If the matter of twin births (influenced by fertility drugs) does translate to less power for those who believe that twins warrant special treatment, how would they argue the explanation that the high number of twin births in West Africa has been connected to the high diet of phytoestrogen (a plant based hormone that stimulated the ovaries to produce eggs from each side)?

I do know that there is a certain sense of pride associated with being a mother. Double that and you have the pride of a *manyi*. Being a proud *manyi* has nothing to do with me believing that my girls are divine or supernatural beings. Moreso, my pride stems from the idea that I get to be part of the phenomena of motherhood times two. There is something fascinating about knowing that my girls share the same DNA, natural cloning of sorts. To see them grow and develop at almost identical rates is amazing; yet, even more astounding is how different they are. How one egg spilt and formed two souls that seem so empty apart is beyond my understanding. I think more than magic... it's a miracle. Since long before me, this miracle has been interpreted as many different things. I imagine as humans we have grasped for understanding and sometimes concluded incorrectly, acting savagely on those conclusions. But still, I wonder... do miracles become something else when we control them? ♥

LaToya Watkins is a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at Dallas. She lives (with her husband and children) and writes in Texas.

Continued from page 18



said. Devin shared the difficulty in having to wait until his sophomore year to earn playing time at Rutgers but the next year, Devin did get to go on the road trips and the duo held down the starting opposite cornerback spots together for the Scarlet Knights for the following two years. As a freshman, Jason helped Rutgers reach the 2005 Insight Bowl, the Scarlet Knights' first bowl game in 27 years, and Jason and Devin, both listed then at 5 feet 11, helped the 2006 Rutgers team finish 11-2. Rutgers went to bowl games in all three seasons they played together.

They both say they never really talked about that inevitable time when their playing days would come to an end they just knew it would just happen, sooner or later. "It was just the next step in life for us and we felt blessed that we were able to enjoy ourselves by attending the same college," said Devin.

Jason then went on to play in the NFL in 2009 when he was drafted in the sixth round to the Tennessee Titans as a Corner Back. The former Rutgers standout grabbed a starting cornerback spot out of training camp in 2010 before suffering an injury early in the season and missing four games. Jason returned to the lineup and started three of the team's final four games and finished his second pro campaign with two interceptions.

Devin finished up his college career at Rutgers before being drafted as a 1st round draft pick for the New England Patriots in 2010 and in his rookie year was a finalist for the league's defensive rookie of the year award and already snagged an invitation to the Pro Bowl.

Last June, Jason and Devin came back for a home-town visit and visited the local community center where they once frequented as kids and filled the building by holding an autograph session in the gym. Everyone was tightly wrapped around a single basketball court and it was packed, not with people, but with excitement from the clusters of locals at half-court, the 3-point line and standing out-of-bounds. This isn't the first time the twin brothers came back to their hometown, but it was their first publicized event since Devin became a Pro Bowl selection after his rookie season with the Patriots and Jason solidified a starting spot with the Titans, both at cornerback.

As they were signing photos and taking publicity pictures they exclaimed with a thrill when a mother with two sets of twins came over to their table. "Hey, Mom! Come check this out," they called out in unison. That's when mother, Phyllis looked over and smiled.

The McCourty twins haven't changed that much from the kids who used to frequent that same community center back in high school and it is apparent that at the heart of their success is their mother Harrell, and that's where their heart lies. She raised them to be respectful and has kept them grounded despite the boons of being pro athletes and she is still very much a strong, pervasive presence in their lives. They are and will be their mother's boys and were excited to recently buy her a house in Montvale, New Jersey where they went to high school, moving her after 13 years of living in Nanuet.

When they are not busy with their intense NFL schedule, they tend to cram in as much time with their mom as they can. During the recent lockout, they took advantage of the opportunity to spend some quality time by moving into the lower floor of this newly purchased home... yes, an NFL Pro Bowler and a starter were more than happy to crash in their mom's basement.

Now they are bound and determined to take advantage of their status as one of only three sets of twins in the NFL, which has led them to do promotional work with Maxim, ESPN and Sports Illustrated. And to capitalize on their new twin brand, they've consolidated their personal profiles into one single [Twitter account](#), ending each tweet with J-Mac or D-Mac and have a combined Facebook page, too!

"Anyone can brand themselves individually but being one of the only sets of twins in the NFL, we're doing this and it's a unique situation so why not go for it," said Jason. "Hopefully people catch on and like it and hopefully other twins will follow our careers, too!" ❤️



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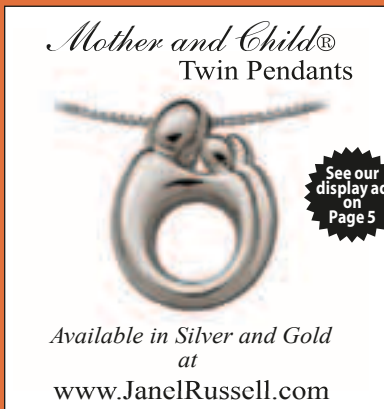


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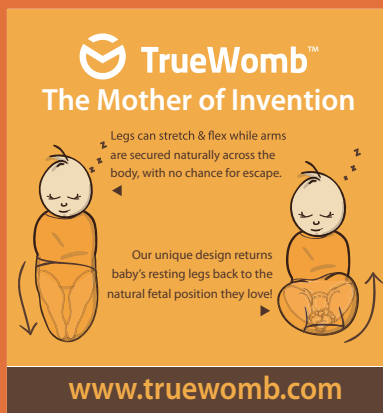
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What would you do if faced with the following scenario? You've offered your twins a reward, a trip to the nearest pet store to look at the new puppies, for doing a particular task. One twin finished the task and the other did not. You begin to follow through on giving your reward when your child who did not do his job asks, "Why can't I go look at puppies, too?"

Would you give the hard-working twin a treat for completing the task? Would you leave his brother home to do without?

Reinforcing children for the work they have completed in a careful and timely fashion is very important. Work that the child is capable of performing, but chooses to leave undone, does not deserve a reward. Both these premises seem self-evident. But there is more to this situation than appears. For in this seemingly simple scenario lies a fertile opportunity for *building* a unique sense of self, *teaching* responsibility, and *preparing* your twins for the reality of the real world.

BUILDING A UNIQUE SENSE OF SELF

All parents want their children to have good self-concepts and high self-esteem. But what do we mean by these words? Self-

concept is how each individual sees herself in the world. Optimally, this means seeing oneself as a separate, unique individual who can relate to one's self, as well as one's family, friends, employers, etc. successfully.

So how can we, as parents, help each of our twins develop a good self-concept of themselves? Seeing and treating each twin as a separate, unique individual with her own wants, needs, personality, strengths and weaknesses, is one way. That means not seeing and treating her and her co-twin as a unit.

Many times, parents of twins believe that they should always treat their children equally. Whatever they give to one twin, they believe that they should give to his co-twin. But this does not build a sense of uniqueness and specialness. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, in their book *"Siblings without Rivalry"* stated, "To be loved equally is somehow to be loved less. To be loved uniquely—for one's own special self—is to be loved as much as we need to be loved."

This unique love, then, is what enables children to build a sense of self. This is not to say that it is never appropriate for parents to give equally to both twins; but in so doing, it is important to see each twin as unique.

Rewarding each twin individually and uniquely for accomplishments also builds self-esteem. Parents must be careful, for it can have an opposite effect if done in an unkind or unfavorable way. So the manner in which the reward is given is very important. Avoid making comparisons, favorable or unfavorable, between a twin and her co-twin. Instead, Faber and Mazlish explain, "The key is to describe what you like. Or describe what needs to be done. The important thing is to stick with the issue of this one child's behavior." There is no need to refer to the co-twin. Whatever you want to say can be said directly.

Feelings may be stirred up when one twin is acknowledged or given a reward and the other is not. Feelings such as envy, jealousy and competition are natural and sometimes unavoidable. These feelings, once acknowledged, can provide an opportunity for communication and growth for the twin, her brother or sister and her family. Parents who listen, are understanding, and accept their child with all her feelings, help their child accept herself, therefore, building self-esteem. It is important to note that some competition, once understood and appropriately directed, can lead to growth and development. This can spur a person on to stretch to great heights and achievements, breeding self-confidence and self-esteem.

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

Everyday experiences are wonderful teaching moments and the example given at the beginning of the article is one that provides an opportunity to learn responsibility. Making a choice, finishing a task, and learning consequences of one's choices, teach independence and responsibility. Being rewarded for a job not finished, just because one's twin sibling gets rewarded, does not teach responsibility; it teaches dependence on one's co-twin.

Making good decisions, following through on these decisions and taking responsibility doesn't just happen automatically; it is a long process which is learned. How do we teach our children discover there are choices, make decisions regarding those choices, and face the consequences of their decisions, they have the opportunity to learn responsibility. The more choices and consequences they face, the more responsible they become. This means letting children learn from their experiences, and *not* bailing them out when they make poor decisions.

Foster Cline and Jim Fay, in their book "Parenting With Love and Logic," discuss two kinds of parents who do not foster responsibility in their children. One type they call the "helicopter parents"; the other, they call the "drill sergeant parents." Helicopter parents feel uncomfortable seeing their children hurting or struggling. So they bail their children out. Drill sergeant parents never allow their children to think for themselves, choosing to make all the decisions for them. According to Cline and Fay,



both these styles of parenting tell children that, "You can't think for yourself, so I'll do it for you."

The more often children are bailed out—by their parents, by their co-twins, by the twin situation—the less they will learn to take responsibility for themselves and grow into separate, responsible individuals. Cline and Fay believe that, by not allowing our children to fail, "sometimes grandiosely fail, we cannot allow our children to choose success." Parents who allow their children to try things on their own, make choices and see the consequences of their choices, teach responsibility. This begins in the early years with choices that are not too risky and continues throughout their lives. This is a learning process; making mistakes, or failing, is a part of learning and, therefore, growing.


The emotional climate or environment in which responsibility is experienced and taught is important. Parents who are caring, loving and understanding of their children's efforts at learning will promote future growth. These children will feel secure in their relationship with their families and eventually willing to take further risks in assuming responsibility for their actions. Parents can help their children with decisions by teaching their children to think—asking questions and offering choices. Again, this is done in a climate in which the child is accepted unconditionally and is not judged for trying to work out her problems or take responsibility for his actions.

PREPARING FOR REALITY

Eventually, our twins grow up and go out into the "real world"—a world where they are responsible for their own decisions and actions. Each may not be looked upon as being "special" because he or she is a twin. They probably will not be rewarded because their twin sibling was rewarded and their boss wants to keep things even and equal.

Giving our twins equal rewards, according to Judy Hagedorn and Janet Kizziar, in *Gemini: The Psychology of Twins*, "does not help prepare the youngsters for reality—that throughout life what they receive and what they achieve will not be identical."

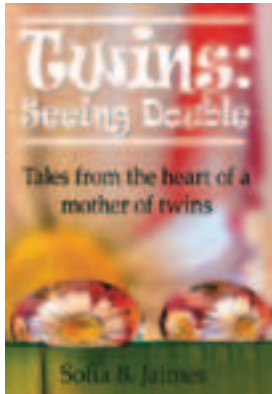
It can be a rude awakening for twins when they get older and discover for the first time that they are responsible for themselves. Therefore, allowing our twins to face the consequences at an early age prepares them for the reality of the adult world.

Let's go back to the beginning scenario. It may be easier to take both twins to the pet store. You would not see the dejected face on the child left behind, nor hear the arguments, nor, perhaps, even see her crying. But your twins would be missing an opportunity for learning and growing. Day-to-day experiences provide a rich soil in which to plant seeds for growth and development. Don't let spring planting pass you by. 

Eileen M. Pearlman, Ph.D., resides in Santa Monica, California, is a psychotherapist and director of *TWINSight*. She is an identical twin, is married to a fraternal twin and has two daughters.

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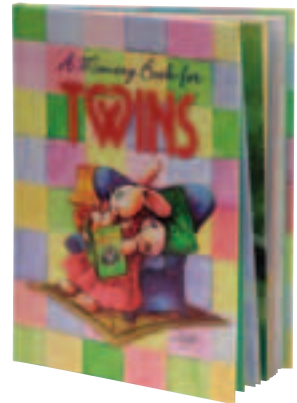
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Hearing Impaired Parenting



by Michelle Tracy

Disability of a Defense Mechanism

I usually tell people that I am hearing impaired right away. Even after 15 years of hearing loss I still find the fact that I am impaired surreal. I mean impaired after a few Captain Morgan and cokes sure, but impaired as in disabled - Nah.

Anyway, I am usually right up front about it. It's not about any pathetic need for sympathy or attention. It's just that I have discovered that when you are relatively young and you don't hear what people are saying, they assume one of a couple of things, and none of them have anything to do with being hard of hearing. You are either stupid, stuck-up or an airhead. Now I suppose this is a personal decision, but I would much rather have people know that I have a problem with my ears, than think I have a problem with my intellect or an exaggerated view of my own self-importance. And the nice thing is...if you give people a chance, most people will accept this as just part of who you are.

I began to lose my hearing in my late twenties. At first I thought it was just one too many concerts and bar bands. I mean really, who would expect to spend their teens and twenties going to see bands like Metallica, Van Halen, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest and not lose some hearing? Many a night I stood in front of a pounding pile of Marshall Stacks, drinking beer and watching local bands, so it stood to reason if my hearing was a little off, right? Right?!?! Wrong!

Turns out I have what the doctors assume is an inherited sensorineural hearing loss, which has taken about 40% of my hearing. My grandfather went deaf at forty. I was seriously afraid that I would lose the rest of my hearing by the time I hit that age. I'm 45 now, and my 40% hearing loss has remained stable, for which I am very grateful.

My kids are used to my hearing, or lack thereof. I think they have come to terms with having to repeat themselves. I joke that as a mom of multiples; maybe the hearing loss is a defense mechanism to keep me from losing my mind. When I get home, I often take out my hearing aids and take the edge off the chaos. We have a lot of funny moments and I admit I sometimes milk it with the kids. One of them will say, "Mom, can I have some money to go to the mall?" To which I will respond, "What? You want a green fuzzy

monkey to take to the ball?" You know silly stuff that always makes the kids laugh.

Even with these good times, there are some bad things about my hearing loss, too. I have to deal with persistent, annoying tinnitus - the constant ringing in your ears that makes you crazy. Fans and other white noise cover it up, but it's hard finding a fan that's loud enough for me. I do miss some sounds, like rain on the roof, birds chirping, and the sound of whispering. I can't hear a whisper to save my life, which makes it very hard for me to hear juicy secrets.

I hate going out to a bar or a loud restaurant and not being able to follow the conversation. I don't care how witty and intelligent you are, it is very hard to look or feel intelligent when you are smiling inanely, while the conversation goes on around you in an unintelligible babble. The worst part for me is not knowing if what little hearing I have left will even last.

One if my twins recently asked me if my hearing loss ever makes me sad. I think it's a testament to my positive attitude that this only recently occurred to them. I must be doing a good job making this a non-issue for everyone around me. I try not to let it stop me from doing anything I want to do. I just finished graduate school, and even though it wasn't always easy to participate in class discussions, I didn't let it stop me. The truth is that of course losing my hearing is a pain in the ass. Of course it makes me sad, but everyone has to deal with and overcome something in their lives.

It's funny, but in a way, I have been given a gift. I cherish the sounds that most people barely register. I may not hear as well as most people, but I think I listen far better than most.

For now, it is enough that I can still hear my favorite things and that's what makes life truly special to me. My kids' voices and the priceless sound of their laughter; an old Queen song on the radio that makes you want to roll down the window harmonizing and singing to the world; the sound of the beach, with the waves and the seagulls; a distant sound from a radio; and of course my kids playing in the background. ♥

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MEETING IN THE MIDDLE

by Mary Oves

So I'm shopping with my thirteen year old twin sons, trying to find outerwear that they will actually agree to wear outside.

I hold up a black hoodie, and show it to Dustin. "How about this one? You can wear it over your sweatshirts." He made a face that has accompanied him since he became a teenager. It is a cross between a grimace and a scowl, kind of like his arm is being twisted behind his back.

"Ew, no. Who am I, Johnny Cash?" "Fine," I said, gesturing to his twin brother. "How about you, John? Do you like it?"

He sauntered over, and eyed the hoodie up and down. "Did Dustin like it?"

"No." He smiled. "Then I like it. It's awesome."

My twin sons have been competing ever since they were born. Who could scream the loudest, make the messiest diaper, get lost the fastest. When they were babies, people would "ooh" and "ah" over them in their double stroller. "How do you tell them apart?" they would ask. I would smile at them cooing in their stroller, dressed identically, and wonder how anyone could ever think they look alike.

For thirteen years it has been a battle of who has what, or more, or better. "Mom, why does he have a shirt with a blue digger, but mine is brown? I waaaaaant bluuuuuuuu..."

"Mom, John has twelve green beans, I only have eleven!"

"Mom, Dustin's sippy cup has yellow stripes, why doesn't mine have yellow stripes?"

Everything had to be the same color, the same shape, the same amount...same, same, and same. I either bought two, or zero, because it wasn't worth the fight. I still remember one Christmas my husband bought one a football, and one a baseball glove. The cacophony that resulted could have been heard straight to the next county.

"Why can't I play football? I like football?" (grasps at football...) "Where's my glove? I need a glove!" (grasps at glove...) Trading never helped. It still left both children without something the other had.

Then they grew and their bodies changed, as well as their minds. They grew tired of being referred to as the "twins" and sought to establish their own identities. Seemingly overnight, not only did the amount of green beans not matter, green beans became distasteful if the other liked them. "Can I have corn instead, Mom?" Now that the boys are thirteen, the goal is to be as different as possible.

When people look at them, the reply is more invariably, "Twins? Where? These two?" They look back and forth at the boys, trying

to figure out how these two human beings could possibly be related. One is lean, the other muscular. One has dark hair, the other blonde. One likes people and going to parties, the other appreciates quiet and alone time. One is competitive and motivated, the other relaxed and thoughtful. One wants eggs and toast, the other pancakes and syrup. One likes steak, the other pasta. The differences between them go on and on.

If Dustin is good at soccer, John aspires to football. If John is good at a video game, Dustin pronounces the game "stupid and senseless." They refuse to have the same friends, the same interests, the same grades. If John is a good writer, Dustin excels in math and if Dustin likes his gym teacher, John most certainly has a "problem" with him.

John is very sociable, and constantly seeks social situations. Dustin would stay home and empty the dishwasher before he would ever admit that John was going somewhere fun. When John gets home, and tells Dustin that all of his friends were there asking for him, he shrugs his shoulders in indifference. "Sounds like it was dumb," he mutters, but I can tell from the look in his eyes that he wishes he had gone.

They constantly vie for the upper hand. Both boys are surfers, and one day as we headed to the beach, we had to make a decision to surf either to the left or to the right. Dustin ascertained right was better, John was sure the left was the right choice. They argued vehemently over this, so an executive decision needed to be made: I chose the left because it was closer and looked less crowded.

Dustin grumbled and carried on, and decided to surf by himself on the right. After a half hour, both boys came out of the water at exactly the same time, and announced that the other was right, the side his brother picked was better. They met in the middle again, and proceeded to get in another argument, and then switched sides, scowling and muttering all the way.

But despite all the bickering, it is thrilling to watch. Because the things that divide them are what make them interesting people. They are going to follow their own personal dreams. They will play different sports, go to different colleges, and aspire to different careers. But at the end of the day, just like on the beach, they will meet in the middle, as brothers, disagreeing with one another... but still brothers (and best friends.) ♥



Mary Oves is a teacher and freelance writer living in Ocean City, New Jersey with husband Tom, twins John and Dustin, and nine year old son Tommy.



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