

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

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March/April 2015

When One
Twin Struggles

Two Twins
Two Different
Grades?

Boy-Girl
Twins...
The Facts
of Life!



Over 35 and
Expecting Twins—
Your Health Guide
Inside!

The Right &
Wrongs when
Communicating
with your Twins...

Loving Touch...
Using Massage
to Sooth, Calm
and Nurture your
Twininfants!





In Every Issue:

A Note from the Publisher _____ 3
 News/ Mailbox _____ 4
 TWINS Affiliates _____ 29
 Check out all these products available in our online store!
 Double Takes _____ 32
 Your adorable Spring-themed twins/multiples!

Columns:

MOM-2-MOM _____ 6
 The Best Advice for New Moms of Twins
 by Alyce Bain
 LOL: Laugh out Loud _____ 8
 I Believe in the Easter Bunny by Melinda Wetzel (aka: Planet Mom)

Raising Twins through Each Age & Stage

 **Pregnant with Twins**— Over 35 and Expecting? Your Health Guide to Expecting Multiples
 by Dr. James Byrne _____ 10
 **Infant Twins**—Loving Touch... Using Massage to Sooth, Calm and Nurture Your Infants
 by Vera Caccioppoli _____ 12
 **Toddler Twins**—Using Praise as Motivation... by Janet Gonzalez-Mena _____ 14
 **Preschool Twins**—I Only Wanna Be With You!
 by Patricia Edmister, Ph.D. _____ 16
 Tales from Twins _____ 21
 Purple Ruffles by Evon Martineau
 A Word from Dad _____ 24
 Let Me Count the Ways a Dad Can Help
 by Steven Jeffries

Feature Articles:

Two Twins Two Different Grades... What Do You Do When Only One Twin Struggles
 by Christina Baglivi Tinglof _____ 18
Communicating With Your Twins by Joshua Coleman Ph.D. _____ 22
Boy-Girl Twins... The Facts of Life
 by Elizabeth Montanya _____ 27
When One of Your Twins is Diagnosed with a Rare Terminal Disease
 by Amy Marquis _____ 30

On the Cover:



Jefferson and Jackson were born on August 10, 2014 in Mesa, Arizona (Jackson is two minutes older than Jefferson!) They will be 8 months old on April 10. They like to practice crawling, going on "walks" with the dogs, and playing with their two furry siblings. They are fraternal twins and just started noticing each other. Jackson likes to try and hold Jefferson's hand, but Jefferson quickly pulls his hand away! They started babbling at each other! These boys have quite different personalities. Jackson is shy, observant, and very serious about the world! While Jefferson is always smiling, laughing, and playing. They are our only children and the light of our lives.

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I love spring...

it always brings a sense of beauty and renewal and a great time to get the kiddos outdoors after a long, brutal winter.

For those of you with twins in pre-school, spring also means it's time to start thinking about Kindergarten registration. This is a big milestone for them (and you) and you might be wondering... are they ready? Will they be together or separated in the classroom? This is always a tough decision for any parent of multiples and one that should not be taken lightly. *We have a ton of great information on separating twins in schools you can find on our website at www.TwinsMagazine.com.*

Deciding to separate them in the classroom is tough, but, what if you were then faced with the issue of having to possibly separate them by grades? Would you do it?

Recently on our TWINS Magazine Facebook page we posted this very question. What would you do when one twin struggles and the other is ready to move to the next grade? Would you ever consider separating them by grade and having one twin move to the next grade? It was a lively and active discussion with almost 500 comments. Many parents mentioned that if they were faced with this situation they would not choose to move one ahead and they would keep them together no matter what. Where others felt it would not be fair to the twin that is ready to move ahead to hold them back since they are, after all, individuals.

Inside this issue we tackle this very subject in our feature article called "Two Twins Two Different Grades... What Do You Do When Only One Twin Struggles?" It includes some great information and tips on how you can tell if they are both ready for Kindergarten and to consider giving them the gift of time.

Also in this issue we give you tips on ways to communicate with your twins to get the best results; we talk about the facts of life when you have Boy/Girl twins; How to use infant massage to calm and soothe them, and when using praise as a motivation it may not always work in your favor, plus much, much more!

Be sure to check out our NEWS section for all the upcoming summer twins-related events you won't want to miss and as always... join the conversation with us on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, too!

I hope you all have a fantastic and fun-filled spring!

Sincerely,

Christa Reed,
 Editor-in-Chief





Multiples of America (MOA aka: NOMOTC) Gears Up for 55th Annual Unity Convention this July!

Multiples of America (aka NOMOTC) cordially invites you to attend the 55th Annual Unity Convention, Building Bridges, in Cincinnati, Ohio, **July 29 – August 1**. Come and build bridges between Multiples of America and its members as we perform the annual business of the organization; between the member clubs and/or state organizations as we communicate our best practices, tips from growing clubs, work on retaining members, and how best to serve each

member in our shareshops; between parents of multiples as we spend time reuniting with old friends and making new ones as we socialize; and between our organization's past 55 years with our future as we move forward with our new branding effort. With varied options for registration, you can choose to attend for just one day, for only Convention, or for the entire time with Pre-convention and Convention. Enjoy the rich history

of Cincinnati and Covington, KY, along the mighty Ohio River. Make your reservation now at the Millennium Hotel Cincinnati with a room rate of \$139, single to quad occupancy. This modern Cincinnati hotel, set in the heart of the city, offers spacious accommodations, rooftop pool and sundeck, fitness center, business center, a range of amenities to choose from and excellent service. Located in downtown Cincinnati, the Millennium is within close range of shops, museums, restaurants and entertainment venues. Meanwhile, just a short drive away are such renowned attractions as Cincinnati Zoo, Botanical Gardens and The Beach Waterpark. In addition, you will be within walking distance of over 50 restaurants, shops, the Great American Ball Park, and The Banks – Cincinnati's riverfront eating and entertainment destination. In fact, you could even cross a few bridges for more attractions nearby!

Book your room now online <http://www.millenniumhotels.com/usa/millenniumcincinnati/> or by calling 1-800-876-2100 and use code **1508MOTHER**. Please ask for the North Tower when making your reservations. For all the information on convention please visit our website at www.MultipleOfAmerica.org. Registration is now open. We hope you will join us in Cincinnati this summer!



Annual Twins Days Festival is Celebrating 40 Years August 8th-9th in Twinsburg, Ohio

The Twins Days Festival in Twinsburg, Ohio is the largest annual gathering of

twins (& other multiples) in the world! 2015 marks a major milestone for the Twins Days Festival and its twin family... its **40th festival!**

The 40th celebration will include many exciting events! This year's festival will be held on **Saturday, August 8th and Sunday, August 9th**. Friday, August 7th, events are for registered multiples and their families ONLY. They will celebrate their 40th with a time machine theme: "Twins Days: Times 2 Remember!" as they look back over the past 40 years of Twins Days festivals. The Twins Days Festival is open to all multiples — identical, fraternal, young and old, twins, triplets, quads — and their families. To learn more about this annual festival visit: <http://www.twinsdays.org/>



The International Twins Association (ITA) to Host their 81st Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida over Labor Day Weekend!

Save the date and make your plans to bring the family to the ITA's 81st Annual Convention taking place **September 4-6, 2015** at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, FL. Special convention rates apply (Single or Double occupancy rates: \$89 + tax per room, per night / Family rate: Children 17 & under are FREE!) be sure to visit the ITA website on how to get this rate! Trips to Disney, Kennedy Space Center; Golfing; Silent Auction, and Twins Contests & more! Want more information on how to attend this twin's convention? Visit <http://intltwins.org/index.php/en/convention-info>





THIS JUST IN— How would you like to win a 3-Day/2-Night Stay at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, FL, the site of this year's 81st Annual ITA Convention? ... Well, you certainly could! Announcing the **ITA Facebook Multiples "BEST FRIENDS" Photo Contest!** Photo submissions & online voting will run from **April 1, 2015, Noon CT - July 31, 2015, Noon CT.**

To see all the details of this contest please go to this link: <http://a.pgtb.me/4jTVjb>.

We're also excited to announce a new ITA "Facebook Page". The "Page" will allow our group to host photo contests and provide us with more options. Visit them at www.facebook.com/internationaltwinsassoc

Mother of Twins Christina Thomas, MD, Named Associate Chair OB/GYN at Emerson Hospital



Christina Thomas, MD has been named Associate Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Emerson Hospital. Dr. Thomas practices at Concord OB/GYN Associates and has served at Emerson for three years. As Associate Chair of OB/

GYN, Dr. Thomas is responsible for working with the Chair of OB/GYN, Jeffrey Riley, MD, to oversee obstetrics and gynecology services at Emerson and provide the highest quality care to patients. Prior to becoming a physician at Emerson, she practiced at South Shore Hospital.

Dr. Thomas received her medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Medicine. She completed an internship and residency in OB/GYN at Tufts Medical Center and is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology.

A resident of Carlisle, Massachusetts and mother of young twins, Dr. Thomas says of her appointment, "I am excited to take on the role of Associate Chair of OB/GYN at Emerson Hospital and make a difference in the community. In collaboration with our colleagues at Brigham and Women's Hospital, we are able to care for patients who are high risk right here in the community. As a mother of twins I understand the unique challenges and care that these patients need. Emerson is a gem, patients receive such a unique level of personal care that can only be found in a community hospital."

Commenting on her favorite part of being an obstetrician and gynecologist, Dr. Thomas says, "Seeing new parents' faces as their child is born and being part of the experience is something very special that keeps me going through the long days and nights." To learn more about Emerson Hospital visit www.emersonhospital.org.

Good Morning TWINS Magazine,
We are submitting a stroller picture for the spring picture contest since this how we enjoy the spring weather in Arizona with daily walks! The quintuplet's names are: Aurora, Briella, Delilah, Elias, and Felicity Hoffman. Big Brother is named Conner Hoffman (8 years old). The quintuplets are now 9-months old and are all fraternal. We live in Surprise, Arizona.

Thank you,
Roxanna Hoffman, Via Email
Mother of Quintuplets & a Singleton

Editor's Response: We are so very happy for this wonderful family! Quintuplets deserved a little extra space! Roxana, please be sure to keep us updated on all of their progress and congratulations again!





What is the Best Piece of Advice You Were Given About Having Twins?

By Alyce Bain

When you're pregnant you get a lot of unwanted advice. So who better to ask this question to than twin mums from around the world? Here are the best answers I collected from an online twin forum.

- 'Keep them on the same schedule.'
- 'Don't compare twin progress to singletons.'
- 'It's ok to ask for help, and not a sign of weakness.'
- 'Don't stress if you can't keep a clean house.'
- 'Don't compare their individual milestones to each other.'
- 'Premade freezer meals!'
- 'Always feed and nap them at the same time.'
- 'Don't stress if you can't exclusively breastfeed.'
- 'This will be the hardest year of your life.'
- 'Dress them in different pajamas, so at night you know who is who!'
- 'Leave them with daddy regularly, early on. My hubby is a champ now, although the first time I left him with them... I think he wanted to murder me.'
- 'Buy a ton of Ziploc bags.'
- 'Buy two different colored bottles, in case they are on different formula or one needs extra vitamins.'
- 'Get out of the house with them as early as you can. The more confident you are, the less overwhelming it is.'
- 'Always prepare for NICU time.'
- 'Have the mindset that you might not have your perfect birth plan.'
- 'Be prepared for possibly having to leave one behind in hospital.'



- 'It's ok to not like your kids all the time. And to feel defeated sometimes.'
- 'Don't keep score with your significant other.'
- 'Slow down and love them for their own persons.'
- 'You don't always need two of everything.'
- 'Get a cleaning lady!'

The best piece of advice I personally received was to put them on the same schedule. It took time. Basically when they were 12 weeks old, if one was sleepy, I put them both in their cot. When one woke, I'd wake the other. Now the boys are on schedule and I don't have constant awake, hungry boys cycling through my arms all day long. Feed them together or within 15 minutes of each other. There are days when it's impossible and others when you wonder why it's so hard but it does make it a hell of a lot easier.

When you're overwhelmed just remember, you were given twins for a reason, and if you have to sit them in front of the TV in their bouncers so you can shower for the first time in two days, then do it! There are no rules really, except do whatever you can to survive and not completely lose your marbles (even though there will be points where you will).

Oh, and have I told you... You're doing amazing. ♡

Alyce Bain is an Australian blogger with 10 month old twin boys Mason and Finn. Read more posts from Alyce by visiting her blog: www.tisfortwins.wordpress.com



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I Believe in the EASTER BUNNY

by Melinda L. Wentzel aka: Planet Mom

One of my favorite holidays is just around the corner—Easter. Maybe it’s the egg decorating that gets me, with the pungent scent of vinegar wafting through the air, Styrofoam cups steaming and sloshing with the most glorious shades of dye and layer upon layer of newsprint draped over our kitchen table. The smell alone takes me back—decades.

Or perhaps this holiday tops my list because I love drinking in the moment, as my children become completely absorbed in their exhaustive search for eggs—lifting every leaf, turning every stone and standing on tippy toes to reach the unreachable. Never mind the fact that the “prize” happens to be a cheap, plastic egg held together with tape (to keep jellybeans and M&M’s from falling out in the mud). In their eyes, the treasure is as precious as gold—they gather and guard their bounty as if their very lives depended upon egg hunting success.

Maybe it’s the fact that I enjoy seeing everyone dressed in their Sunday best on Easter. I get an especially big kick out of watching parents’ futile attempts to keep their broods out of mud puddles, inviting birdbaths and grassy temptations—at least until church is over. While growing up, I spent so little time in “dress clothes” myself it’s no wonder my mom made a mad dash for the Polaroid whenever I gave in to her wishes. I even went so far as to clean the dirt from my fingernails and scrub the grass-stains from my

knees. White gloves and a frilly Easter hat were thrown in for good measure. Ugh.

I might also especially prefer this season because receiving a palm serves to strengthen me throughout the year. Easter is a time for newness, awakening, celebration and most of all hope. (Lent is over, too! Pass the chocolate!) Or maybe I favor it because it brings to mind countless return trips from church,

pestering my brother with the tip of my palm leaf. Back then my parents served as judge, jury and executioner—always siding with he who held the shortest palm leaf.

Most of all, I think Easter has become one of my top choices because, traditionally, it has been based upon the concept of “believing.” Of course, this is America, and we are free to believe in whatever or whomever we choose. I, for one, believe wholeheartedly in the Easter Bunny—right along with the Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus and the Great Pumpkin. Who am I to knock tradition? This floppy-eared, buck-toothed bearer of solid chocolate bunnies and yellow peeps has been hoppin’ down the bunny trail for centuries now.

All this talk of “believing” has caused me to ponder the great depths of my personal belief system—especially as it relates to parenthood. In fact, I have created a list (soon to be carved in Play-Doh) of the monumental beliefs I hold. Hopefully, they will echo the sentiments of parents everywhere.

I BELIEVE IN...

...long, uninterrupted naps from which I awaken to find neither my glasses in a tangled mess, my house a wreck or a face full of stickers.

...real sit-down dinners with my family during which no bickering matches between siblings erupt, no arguments with teenagers ensue, no food becomes airborne and especially—no one phones to ask that I donate money to build a Wal-Mart on the planet Mars. I’m not ready to fork over cash to my college alma maters either. I have yet to see evidence of my success.

...romantic weekend getaways and candlelit dinners for two which are totally devoid of children—namely, mine.

...truly enjoyable family vacations that don’t break the bank, destroy our faith in weather forecasting or leave us wondering what on earth made us think we could endure seven solid days of togetherness.

...restful nights which are entirely free of the cries of inconsolable children, the endless howling of neighborhood dogs, the shrieks of brawling tomcats and the irksome droning of snoring spouses.

...family road trips full of peace, tranquility and dozing children.

...forgiveness and flexibility—because without those things, none of the aforementioned would be remotely possible, even with the Easter Bunny’s help.



Planet Mom: It’s where I live. Visit me there at www.notesfromplanetmom.com.

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PREGNANCY



Over 35 and expecting —what should I know?

YOUR HEALTH GUIDE TO EXPECTING MULTIPLES

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

CONGRATULATIONS! You're embarking on what is arguably the most challenging and rewarding experience of your life. Just as you would not go into the wilderness unprepared—it's important that you prepare for your upcoming adventure. By learning about possible medical challenges, you can better participate in obtaining the safest pregnancy possible for you and your new bundles of joy. Two major areas to explore are your health and common pregnancy complications.

MATERNAL HEALTH FACTORS

Ideally, women actively improve their lifestyle including a healthy diet and exercise to lose any excess weight even prior to getting pregnant. Given the obesity statistics in the U.S. you can see the value of pre-conception care and getting into the best physical shape possible. Pregnancy, particularly with twins, is a significant physical demand on your body including the heart and muscles. Unlike exercise, this demand continues around the clock for many months. Another reason to improve your overall health is that being overweight is associated with increased risk of

high blood pressure and diabetes. Lifestyle modifications often create the safest possible environment.

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

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

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

COMMON PREGNANCY FACTORS

It is well known that women carrying twins or other multiples are more likely to deliver prematurely. This rate

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

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

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



Vera Caccioppoli of Falls Church, Virginia, is a freelance writer and the mother of triplet boys

Loving Touch

by Vera Caccioppoli

USING MASSAGE TO SOOTH, CALM AND NURTURE YOUR INFANTS



Babies love to be touched. And most parents find the desire to touch and cuddle their newborns instinctual. As Dr. Elaine Fogel Schnelder, author and massage therapist says, "Being touched and caressed—being massaged—is food for the infant, food as necessary as minerals, vitamins, and proteins."

Massage is a ritualized technique that combines tactile, sense of touch and kinesthetic motion and stimulations in a formalized yet relaxed setting. Massage incorporates skin-to-skin interaction, eye contact, soothing sounds, the aroma of the oil and intimacy between parent and child. The beauty of a brief massage

is the ritual and routine that develops between parent and child. Because the child knows what to expect, he relaxes.

Ideally, it is easiest to begin massage sometime during the babies' first nine months. It is more difficult to get a child between one and three-years-old who hasn't been massaged from infancy to sit still.

MASSAGING PREMATURE MULTIPLES

There have been a number of striking studies documenting the benefits of massage on preterm infants. Dr. Tiffany Field at

the Miami Medical School found that incredible gains were made by preterm infants who were massaged on a regular basis. Her study determined that regularly massaged preterm infants gained 47% more weight, and 72% of them performed better on developmental tasks than the premature infants who weren't regularly massaged.

Massage helps to increase the development of muscle and nerve tissue by increasing circulation of nutrients and decreasing stress hormones. This is vital because it's stressful for infants to be separated from their mother and isolated in an incubator. Many neonatal units understand the importance of touch, but some are still resistant. If you face opposition, be a strong advocate for your child. Meet with your doctor and nurses and see if a compromise can be reached.

HOW TO BEGIN

There is no time like the present. Check out *Infant Massage: a Handbook for Loving Parents* by Vilmala Schneider McClure, which provides excellent step-by-step guidelines and is a valuable resource among professional infant massage therapists.

Select a warm spot where your child won't become chilled and use a non-petroleum based oil, such as vegetable or almond. Specialty shops sell infant massage oil with varieties of lovely aromatic therapeutic properties. Take a moment to relax your own muscles and mind. Shake off tension and take several deep cleansing breaths. To make them feel secure, ask permission from your children before beginning a massage. Give them non-verbal clues that the massage is about to begin: Rub the oil between your hands – the swish-swish sounds becomes a lovely cue that you are ready to start. Always make eye contact with your child.

Because babies and children can easily see their lower extremities, it's a good introduction and less threatening to begin massaging their feet. Your touch should be firm. Feathery touches can agitate a child. While massaging, talk softly, hum or sing to your baby.

The first sessions should be brief, advises Katie Jones, infant massage therapist and instructor. "Listen to your baby," Jones says. "Start off with shorter sessions – even just five minutes – and as the two of you become more comfortable, you can increase the time."

MASSAGING MULTIPLES

Some couples find it gratifying to give massages at the same time in the same location. Other parents of multiples pick a comfortable but secure area and massage one child, then the next.

While group massaging can be pleasant for many, some prefer to have isolated time with a single child.

Many mothers of multiples may feel torn between children. They find that a designated time one on one with each infant is invaluable. Jones advises, "Even if you can squeeze in only a half an hour once every week, or even once a month, for each baby, it's worth pursuing."

More important than the amount of time, is the atmosphere of the experience. "An Occasional soft, loving massage will do more good than a more regular, rushed one," she says. "It's important to remember that our emotions are readily transmitted through our touch. If the mom is tense and agitated, the little one will pick up on all of those negative emotions."

"Infants really communicate through their bodies," Schnelder says. "When you engage an infant in a massage, you begin to listen to the infant and understand her better." This provides a tremendous boost to parents' confidence as well as enhances parent and baby bond. ♥

MASSAGE TECHNIQUES

Strokes should be slow and rhythmic, with just enough pressure to be comfortable but stimulating. Do not use vigorous kneading – as in adult massages. Be sure to apply firm pressure.

Foot Massage

There are 72,000 nerve endings in each foot. No wonder foot massages feel so great and have so many benefits. "The many theories on how foot massage works agree that points on the feet connect with other body areas," McClure says. Thus, a foot massage may help reduce ear infections, colds, flu and other disturbances.

To begin, hold one foot in the palm of your hand and with your other hand; push the bottom of the foot from heel to toe with your thumbs, one after another. Gently squeeze each toe. Next, push the toes toward the sole of the foot, then toward the knee. Press in with your thumbs all over the bottom of the foot. Pull back gently on the ball of the foot. Make small circles all around the ankle with your thumbs.

The Stomach

Strokes for the stomach will tone baby's intestinal system and help relieve gas, constipation and perhaps colic. Always stroke from the ribcage down, and use a clockwise motion for circular strokes.

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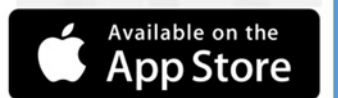
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AWESOME



by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

My husband has never been one to praise people. When I give him a compliment, he often says in a joking way, "What do you want from me?" His attitude used to irritate me; until I began to look more closely at the manipulative aspects of the way I give compliments and use praise. Often I do want something when I used my honeyed words.

I'm not blaming myself. I'm a product of all the hype about positive reinforcement. I learned in some parent education class, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." The problem is, the purpose of parent education is to help people raise human beings; it has nothing to do with catching flies.

I began to be suspicious of the effectiveness of praise quite a while back. I remember the day my daughter spent several minutes drawing a complex picture with crayons. She brought the paper to me with great pride. Instead of acknowledging her feelings, I gushed over her and her picture.

THE GAME BEGINS

She went back to her crayons, and I went back to reading my magazine. A few minutes later, she was poking a new picture in my face. She stopped expectantly while I examined it. I didn't like this one nearly as much as the first—she obviously had put less time into it, but she was waiting for praise, so I delivered. She looked dissatisfied, but didn't say anything.

Off she whisked to produce another picture. She was back in about a minute and a half. She held up a crumpled paper with a quick swirl of color across it and waited for her praise. I got the impression of a starving person who kept coming back for real food, but all she got was cotton candy. She wanted more and more of the stuff, but it was bound to make her sick long before it fills her stomach.

By now I recognized that we were engaged in some kind of game. I was getting tired of playing it, so this time I was honest. I told her I thought she was just drawing so I would say something nice about her picture. She burst into tears and said I didn't think she was a good artist. We had an unfortunate argument in which she accused me of not loving her. It ended in her tearing up all the pictures, including the first one, which I really did like.

A PREDICTABLE PATTERN

What I know now was that my response created what is a fairly predictable pattern. When I praise, I replace the inner feelings with outside rewards. My daughter's drawing quickly became something she did for me rather than what she did for herself.

I could have responded in other ways:

- I could have reflected her feelings she was having. "I see how excited you are about your picture."
- I could have made an observation about the process. "You really worked on that picture for a long time."
- I could have discussed some aspect of the picture in a non-judgmental fashion. "I see how you made the red go in circles and the blue is all wiggly lines. And here you blended them together to make purple."
- I could have asked her if she wanted to tell me about the picture, and let it go if she said no.

Any number of possible positive responses would have had a better effect than all that gushing praise. As I put this story on paper, I

hear my husband's voice in my head saying that praise is manipulative. Was I really manipulating my daughter? I have to admit I did want something from her. I wanted her to feel good about herself as an artist. Noble goal; too bad it didn't work.

But what I wanted even more was for her to leave me alone so I could finish reading my magazine. I wanted her to keep drawing those intricate, complicated pictures that took 20 minutes each. The problem was that praise had the opposite effect.

IS PRAISE EFFECTIVE?

Praise seldom works, according to Alfie Kohn in the book, *Punished by Rewards*. It doesn't motivate; in fact, it does just the opposite. I had second-hand experience with some of the research Kohn discusses in his eye-opening book.

One of my community college early-childhood students used to hang around Stanford University in her spare time. One day she arrived in my class excited from talking to a professor there about his research in motivation. Here's what she reported happened at Bing Nursery School, the lab school for the Stanford Psychology Department: Felt pens and blank paper were made available to the children as a free-play activity. This was long ago, when felt pens were a brand new concept and cost a fortune. Most children had never used them before, so once they discovered them, they flocked to the felt-pen table at every opportunity.

Then, over a period of weeks, some of the children were taken into the little "booths" that the psychology department used for experiments. The selected children were systematically given rewards for using the felt pens. There were a variety of rewards, including praise. When felt pens were again a free-play choice in the nursery school room, most of the children continued to flock to the table. But those who had been rewarded (including those who were merely praised) were far less interested. They turned away once they learned there were no rewards for using the pens.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Their own satisfaction was no longer enough to motivate them. It's as if they asked themselves, "What's in this for me?" and when their own good feeling was the only answer they could come up with, they had no use for felt pens.

Praise is better than punishment as a motivator, but both are manipulative devices that often backfire. Parenting doesn't have to be about manipulating children. We can find honest and forthright ways of encouraging and protecting children and guiding their behavior, without using manipulation of either rewards or punishments. We can stop using praise like bribes and discover alternative ways to encourage positive behaviors. ■

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



PRESCHOOL

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

"I Only Wanna Be With You!"

by Patricia Edmister

The preschool years are a time of tremendous variability among children regarding their friends and friendships. We find that some children are very interested in making friends; others are not. In addition, some children have a certain knack for forming new friendships, while others have more difficulty.

Research has shown that friendships are a very important component of children's lives from as early an age as 3 years and in some cases, even earlier. Children are most like to be attracted to others similar to themselves, tending to choose those of the same age, gender, size, level of intelligence and degree of physical maturity.

According to Dr. Zick Rubin's book, *Children's Friendships*, children who become friends and stay friends for some period of time are especially likely to have similar activity styles, interests and values. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to learn that many twins prefer their co-twins to other children as playmates.

However, it is important, researchers say, that children develop a variety of peer relationships. Children's friendships provide opportunities not only for developing relationships and learning valuable social skills, but they foster in children a sense of group belonging that cannot be provided by adults.

"Psychologists and psychiatrists," Rubin says, "have long agreed convincingly that social comparison is necessary for people to develop a valid sense of their own identity; and adults are so different from children on most dimensions as to provide relatively useless comparison.

Researchers have also found, however, that young children view friendships primarily in terms of momentary interactions, with the most important qualification for friendship be being physical accessibility. This has obvious implica-

tions for young twins, since they typically are in close proximity for much of their day.

NATURAL FRIENDSHIPS

But young twins tend to prefer to play together for more reasons than that their co-twin is so readily available as a playmate. Twins know each other's likes and dislikes, each other's rules and rituals, and the "pecking order" – who is in charge in any given situation. They are usually very quick to anticipate each other's needs or to understand each other's incomplete phrases and utterances, thus making it easier to play and communicate with each other than to seek out other children who would not allow them the luxury of such styles of communication.

This 'twin communication' can become problematic should the children become too dependent on each other and, by not communicating with peers, fail to acquire the many social skills they need to engage other youngsters in play. These may include a sense of fair play, a willingness to take turns, and the ability to manage anger and conflict.

Thus, it is critical that young children have playmates other than their co-twin, to facilitate their learning these social skills early in life. Another important reason twins should develop these communication and social skills with children other than their co-twin is so they might experience a variety of situations in which they can compare themselves to peers other than a co-twin. For example, children of this age are constantly making statements such as, "I can run faster than you," "I'm stronger than you are," or "I can color better than you."

New friendships provide opportunities to learn ways in which children are alike and different; and, as they learn to cooperate with each other, they provide children with ways of appreciating each other's capabilities and values.

When a youngster's only basis for comparison is his co-twin, he generally already knows where he stands and may not even try to see how he compares to other age-mates on a different set of attributes where he might fare better than in comparison with his co-twin. This is good for both children, in that the twin that is more accustomed to "winning" in certain situations might learn a little humility and the social

skills needed for coping with "coming in second."

WILL THEY NATURALLY OUTGROW EACH OTHER?

As children grow, their changing needs, abilities and interests often result in a change in friendships; however, the constant close proximity of one's co-twin can make this separation more difficult, especially if one child is ready to move on to a larger circle of friends and her co-twin is less secure and less interested in expanding his world.

It can be extremely difficult and painful when a child's relationship with his co-twin becomes more distant in cases in which they have been "best friends". When this happens, children tend to react in one of three ways. One will feel intense pain, possibly even act depressed. Another might do everything possible to try to win his co-twin back, while a third might try to find a new friend as quickly as possible.

Feelings of loneliness, depression, irritability and anger are common expressions of such a change in the relationship between co-twins, and parents need to be careful not to underestimate the importance of these changes. They need to talk about the feelings and emotions involved, letting the children know that they understand how hard it can be to "lose" a friend, even though they have not "lost" the sibling.

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN MAKE NEW FRIENDS

Making new friends isn't easy until a child learns how to approach other children. Typically, when a child first enters a new preschool or social situation and wants to join in the play, he will tend to 'hover' on the sidelines, hoping to be noticed and invited to join in. As he becomes more familiar with the classroom and children, he may approach the kids.

However, these approaches will not be successful unless the child has skills for engaging others. Usually this will mean some sort of parallel play rather than a verbal approach. Friendship skills also include being able to be a friend. Some children seem to have pleasing interactional styles and some do not. Studies have shown, for example, that the most popular kids in a class were

also the ones who most often paid positive attention to other children. Research has also found that children tend to acquire their social skills not so much from adults as from one another, discovering through trial and error which strategies work and which do not.

There are times and situations when children do need some help from adults, and parents or caregivers can structure small play groups or schedule small play times where they can model appropriate play skills for the child, reinforcing the positive ones.

Preschool age twins may often prefer each other's company to that of peers, for many reasons. But parents should encourage them to make other friends as well, and they should facilitate the forming of such friendships whenever possible, without forcing separateness before the children are ready.

Many twins do eventually outgrow a "best friend" relationship with their co-twins as they age and their interests change, but twins will almost always have a special bond because of the physical proximity, values of the family and sameness in size and age. The learning of new social skills, the development of their own identities, and the growth of improved communication skills are the reasons for facilitating other friendships, while not breaking the specialness of their twinship. ■

THE SKILLS OF FRIENDSHIP

- The ability to manage conflicts successfully—not being dependent on teachers or parents to solve problems
- The ability to express one's own rights and feelings clearly while remaining sensitive to the right and feelings of others
- Being able to suggest and accept reasonable compromise
- Displaying tact, being sensitive to a friend's feelings, and acting in a way that protects the other child's feelings

Two Twins Two Different Grades

What Do You Do When Only One Twin Struggles

by Christina Baglivi Tinglof

Each year parents of twins grapple with the question of whether they should separate their kindergarten-bound twins or keep the pair together. As hard as that decision is for some, just imagine if that question suddenly became, "Should we hold just one child back for another year?"

If one twin is struggling academically or socially in preschool (or even kindergarten) while his co-twin is right on target, the deci-

sion of what to do can be agonizing. It's a predicament that Melissa Schroeder of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida knows firsthand. Five-year-old son Michael lags socially behind his twin sister Madison and still struggles with speech. "Madison's very interested in learning but Michael gets more frustrated," Schroeder says. "He's very intelligent but his skills are scattered." Yet Schroeder and her husband never considered holding Michael back in preschool while promoting

Madison to kindergarten. "It's one thing to separate your children by classroom but it's quite another to separate twins by grade. It would be an irreversible trauma."

But is it fair or prudent to push a struggling preschool twin ahead just for the sake of preserving the twin bond?

"Psychologically, if you separate twins into two different grades, there's no way that one's not going to feel smarter than the other one," says Melissa Mullin, Ph.D. and an educational psychologist and director of the K & M Center in Santa Monica, California, an institute that diagnoses and remediates learning disabilities. "There's no way around that." Although Dr. Mullin believes that parents should

do everything they can to keep their twins in the same grade, even if that means holding both back in preschool or kindergarten, she cautions that parents first need to understand the type and the degree of the problem that the struggling twin faces.

DIAGNOSING THE LEARNING PROBLEM

The first order of business for parents is to get their child tested and assessed to find out if the trouble is a *developmental delay* or a *learning disability*. The difference between the two, Dr. Mullin explains, is significant when deciding what to do. "The problem is determining if this is a long-term difficulty or a catch-up process," she says.

On the one hand, a *developmental delay* is a lifelong difference in learning capacity and learning ease. This is a child who would benefit from a special class or a special school specifically for children with learning issues. Furthermore, if a twin has a developmental delay, it is clear that his learning needs will be different than that of his co-twin. If a child is temporarily lagging behind, however, that is not called a developmental delay. For instance, if a twin is delayed in language but his speech is developing in the right sequence just at a slower than normal pace, more than likely it's not a developmental delay. With proper and timely therapy, most twins with delayed speech will catch up.

On the other hand, if a twin has a *learning disability* and his IQ is in the average or above-average range, you're talking about only a slight difference in ability. This is when parents need to consider the emotional impact of holding one child back. "The studies on chil-



dren with learning disabilities show that holding a child back is not the answer, intervention is," Dr. Mullin says. "Once the learning issue is addressed and with the correct intervention, the child should be able to function in the classroom without being held back."

A correct diagnoses and subsequent remediation made all the difference for Sonia Fox's twin son John. When teachers told the Falcon, Colorado mom that she should consider holding her then first grader back a year because he struggled with reading, Fox looked into her son's learning issue on her own. "John couldn't control his eye movements. I watched him as we would try to read and noticed he couldn't keep his eyes on the page," she says. "He'd get lost and then frustrated and didn't want to continue reading." John was finally diagnosed in second grade with a tracking and convergence deficiency and started intense visual therapy. Today in third grade, he's reading just a few months behind grade level. "It's been a hard slog to get to this point," says Fox, "My son is a very sensitive and I feel the damage to his self esteem of repeating would have been great."

STAYING TOGETHER WHILE BEING APART

Since most kindergarten classes are more developmentally challenging these days, another alternative is to look at two different schools rather than two different grades. "Some schools are easier, and some are harder," Dr. Mullin explains. For a twin with delays, for example, choose a school that's more developmentally progressive, one that will be a bit gentler in its approach to teaching and one that will let your twin develop at his own rate. For the twin who is on par for her grade level, the local elementary school may be a good fit. "Since you have two different types of learners, match each child with the right school."

That's the approach that Lori Lynch of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania took with her six-year-old fraternal twin boys, Joey and Johnny. When April of their kindergarten year rolled around, it was recommended that Joey repeat while co-twin Johnny was ready to advance to first grade. Although it didn't come as a shock, the Lynches were nonetheless disappointed. "Separating them meant one would be able to join Cub Scouts a year earlier, one could make made their religious sacraments a year earlier, and one would be college hunting a year earlier," Lynch says.

They told the school district that splitting the boys was not an option. Instead, both boys would repeat kindergarten but in different schools and in different classroom settings—Joey in a more nurturing pre-K program and Johnny in a more challenging one. "After much debate and many meetings, both will be starting first grade together next year," she adds.

For Dee Whisnant's boy-girl twins, five-and-a-half-year-old Scarlet and Perry, the separate-but-together track began back in preschool. Both had delays in speech, explains the Salisbury, North Carolina mom, but Perry's was more challenging. After attending different preschool classes, the Whisnant twins are now in different kindergarten environments as well—Scarlet is in a traditional class but Perry attends a school that promotes academics through communication and social skills. "Until and if he is able to be main-

streamed, he will be different than his sister," she says. "He's come a long way since starting this year but has a long way to go, too."

THE GIFT OF TIME

If parents recognize now that one or both of their twins is struggling in preschool, simply give them the gift of time by holding both twins back for one more year. This is especially helpful for twins with a late summer or fall birthday, and even more important for premie twins whose true age should be based on their due date, not their birthday. "Most twins who are developmentally behind will always be behind—they'll be late talkers, late walkers. So those children would probably benefit from being held back because you are giving them more developmental time to catch up," Dr. Mullin explains. If your twins are not five by September 1st, hold them back in preschool.

But what if twins differ? What if one's on target while her co-twin is not? Is that fair to the developmentally ready twin? "How is it unfair to give your child the advantage of being the strongest academically, the most developed in the classroom?" she asks. "Sure, she may be done with her work quicker, but she can pull out a book and read while she's waiting. Compare that to being the youngest in the class, always stressed out, always a step behind, and the last to develop especially when it comes to motor skills."

By the time middle schools rolls around, age doesn't matter. What's more important is if a child is self-confident and can get along well with others. "I've never heard any parents say they were sorry that they held their children back in preschool or kindergarten," says Dr. Mullin, "but I've often heard parents with children going into middle school wishing they had held them back earlier so that their kids could have had that extra developmental time." ♥

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including 18-year-old fraternal boys and a 16-year-old singleton. She's also the author of *Double Duty: The Parents' Guide to Raising Twins*, and *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*. Her website is www.talk-about-twins.com.





PURPLE RUFFLES

by Evon Martineau



Most parents know the urge to dress their twins alike, but this trend actually occurs on a much broader scale involving neighbors, friends, and family members. Even people who barely knew my mom came out of the woodwork to give my sister and I matching white gift bags decked with pink bows. Until we were around the age of ten, every family gift exchange would result in matching dresses. Over time, we had a closet full of identical outfits.

At an early age, we found this sameness – which my parents fully embraced – comforting. It formed a bond between us wherever we were. In kindergarten, my parents thought we needed a little more independence, so my sister Deon and I were never in the same classes. So, although we were in adjacent rooms, the first few days of kindergarten were a little jarring. Along with separating us physically, our parents attempted to wean us from dressing alike as well. They bought me a pair of blue shoes and Deon pink, so we traded one shoe. That way we each had a pair of pink and blue shoes, and that made us feel connected. When my grandma gave us new coats for the upcoming school year, they were the same coat in different colors.

So we couldn't dress identically every day, but we made the effort for certain occasions. The first day of every school year, every birthday, and, of course, every April Fools' Day, we matched down to the socks.

One year in high school, though, we almost lost our historical connection to this tradition. A month before our birthday my mom suddenly announced that she had cleaned out our closet and was passing our outgrown dresses along to some twins she vaguely knew. Deon and I looked through the box and remembered. There were the dresses with purple ruffles with white lace my aunt had

made, the dresses my mom sewed for our baptism, the Easter dresses with smiling flowers on a green background, and the ballerina-like dresses we wore as greeters for a cousin's wedding.

"Do you really want to go through with this? We could always save them in case we have daughters," I found myself suggesting.

"But the Johnsons would love them," Deon countered. "Besides, they were given to us, so shouldn't we pass them along?" The debate didn't last because we both agreed on this point; because

the dresses were given to us, we felt we needed to pass along the tradition that connected the two of us.

Deon and I had only met the Johnson twins twice before. As we sat in their living room, we could see those little girls excitedly trying on our dresses and running down the hall together to show their mom. Besides the excitement of getting new clothes, we could tell they loved that there was two of everything so they could



share perfectly. Deon and I saw ourselves as greeters in bright pink dresses at our cousin's wedding, then hunting for eggs in our green, smiling flowers dresses. We saw that they shared the same connection through those dresses as we always had.

Despite the connection of our childhood dresses, Deon and I soon replaced them with our red tie-dye t-shirts from pep band, cerulean athletic shirts, purple jumpers we wore as bridesmaids, and matching college sweatshirts. We have different lives now - we're at the same university, but we can't always dress exactly alike anymore. Nevertheless, on many occasions we still match.

And that's the way we like it. The tendency to dress alike reflects my sister's and my desire to be close, even *through* the clothes we wear. After all, they show everyone else just how much we love having this special bond. ♥

Evon Martineau is a twin and is currently attending college as a junior (with her twin Deon) at Idaho State University studying English. She is majoring in Professional writing with a minor in Mass Communications.

OK, I'm not always proud of my behavior with my 8-year-old twin boys. Some days, I walk away thinking, "Well, that was straight out of the 'How to Decrease Self-Esteem in Your Kids with Bad Communication' handbook."

I have, on occasion, done every single thing I'm about to encourage you not to do. Why listen to me you wonder? Because I'm a parent of twins and we have to stick together. Also, I have a Ph.D. That means I have spent a great portion of my life listening to people who are a lot smarter than I am so I can pass their wisdom on to you.



by Joshua Coleman

Communicating with Your Twins

NOW WITH FEELING

Kids of all ages appreciate adults who help them express and label their emotions. Feelings can be either scary or burdensome or become roads to self-understanding. Twins can mirror and amplify each other's positive and negative feelings and the result can be overwhelming to any parent. When we try to understand our twins' feelings, their feelings gradually become more under their control, to their and our benefit. In addition, we develop children who are in touch with what they need and know how to get it.

For example, I have observed that my guys start acting like they're on caffeine and steroids when I tell them to get ready for bed. It's as if they decide to start cramming in all the fighting and

teasing they didn't get to earlier in the day, once bedtime is announced. This can be a problem, because bedtime is not my finest hour. I have to struggle not to become the drill sergeant in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. "You wanna know what's gonna happen if you aren't in that bunk in five minutes? Move it! Move it! Move it!"

Bedtime goes better when I take a deep breath and empathize with their desire to stay up. This version goes something like: "I know it's really hard to get ready for bed. You guys still really want to play and it's not fun going to sleep. If you're both in bed in ten minutes, I'll read for an extra ten minutes." Staying empathic, while keeping them on track of the goal, makes things go more smoothly. Also, I like myself better, afterwards.

ARE THEY LISTENING?

Half of the time we want our twins to do things they don't want to do. Get dressed, remove the pencil from your brother's ear, come inside, or take the cat food out of your mouth. Twins of all ages can be difficult when we want them to stop having fun and shift to something less rewarding. Russell A. Barkley, director of Psychology and professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center is the author of *Taking Charge of ADHD*. He recommends that parents use the following steps to elicit cooperation:

- a) Eliminate distractions
- b) Offer incentives
- c) Set time limits
- d) Monitor the activity and
- e) Offer praise

Let's look at these more closely.

Eliminate distraction. Frequently, this is the other twin. When I want Max to get his shoes on while Daniel is telling him a fascinating story of how their pet rat ate a snail, I need to get Daniel occupied away from Max. Young twins should be given a separate activity like playing with a toy, drawing a picture, or something to occupy them in the other room.

Offer an incentive if it's done within a certain time frame. Young twins are like puppies, motivated by something yummy to eat. As they grow older and can defer gratification, motivate them by offering points towards some larger goal (like getting to tie dad to the time out chair for 30 minutes).

Set a time limit for each task. "I'd like you to pick up the toys that you played with today in the next 10 minutes. Thank you."

Stay in the room to monitor the activity. We often need to observe the tasks we want our twins to do or they'll become distracted by each other or some other temptation.

Praise, praise, praise... When your twins do things that you like, be sure to tell them. Your words of praise are like gold to them. "I really like how you started doing that right away without me reminding you." Or, "Look at what a great job you're doing cleaning up your blocks. I didn't know you could do that so fast." (Then pray you get at least 30 minutes before the blocks are back out and scattered across the floor!)

LIVING IN THE LAND OF NEGATIVITY

I don't think there's anything as overwhelming as my twins when they're joining forces in a combined tantrum, complaining, or crying jag. Exploring our twins' negative feelings isn't always easy.

Sometimes it can feel like their feelings will go away more quickly if we deny or minimize them. And at those times, we really want those feelings to go away quickly! Faber and Mazlish, authors of *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* say that minimizing, advice giving or criticizing children's negative feelings usually makes matters worse. "The more you try to push a child's unhappy feelings away, the more he becomes stuck in them. The more comfortably you accept the bad feelings, the easier it is for kids to let go of them."

Recently, a farther complained to me that he can't get his twins to stop fighting. "They fight all of the time. I feel like I've got the toddler version of the World Wrestling Federation playing in my living room every day." Rivalry and fighting between the kids can sometimes dominate the twin household. Unless somebody's being hurt or is about to be hurt, it's good to ignore day-to-day normal bickering. Examples of normal bickering are low-key disagreements regarding toys, games, etc., or whose turn it is to pet the dog. In general, normal bickering teaches twins to negotiate and manage conflict.

If however, somebody's name-calling or getting hurt, the parent needs to intervene quickly and firmly. Twins should be separated at those times and a time out may be necessary for children who are not able to stay in control. Barkley recommends that Time-outs last one to two minutes per age of child. Thus a 2-year-old would get two to three minutes, a 4-year-old, four to five minutes, etc.

WATCH OUT FOR BURNOUT

We're the most likely to say something dumb to our kids when we're exhausted or stressed out. So many of us burn out with the belief that taking time away from our twins is selfish. Our kids, however, can't monitor whether we're taking adequate care of ourselves. Their job is to extract as much as they possibly can from us. As one parent put it, "I guess it's like when the stewardess tells you to put the oxygen mask over your mouth first, then your kids' after that. You have to be sure you have enough air so you help yourself and them." So make sure you're getting enough down time as a couple and as an individual. Parenting twins takes a lot of oxygen! 💖

Joshua Coleman, Ph. D., is the father of twin boys and lives in San Francisco. A writer and psychologist, he specializes in twins and parenting.

- Help them express and label feelings
- Empathize with the feelings
- Eliminate distractions when communicating
- Set time limits
- Monitor activities
- Offer praise
- Ignore normal bickering
- Avoid burnout



How Dads Can HELP

LET ME
COUNT
THE
WAYS



by Steven Jeffries

I have read quite a few posts in Facebook twins parenting groups recently from mothers of twins frustrated that their husband does not help enough with the twins or other children, and the amount of stress it puts on the mom. As a dad of twins myself, I hope that the reason in most cases is that the dad may not be aware of the ways he can help with his babies, toddlers or children. It is in this vain that I write this list of ways, from my experience at least, that dads can help with twins. Not all will apply to your situation, and I am not claiming to be great at all of them, but I do know some of the ways dads can ease the parenting burden, especially with twins.



Assist with any bottle feedings. Even after going back to work after my twins' births I did a late night feeding. Whether your wife or partner is pumping or using formula, you can feed one or both of your twins, and it is a great bonding experience.



changing time down by quite a bit

Change some diapers. Hey, it's only poo! I was shocked at just the look of it, the first time I saw it, but once my wife showed me a simple way to do it, I had no trouble, other than occasionally holding my nose. Even if you just help your wife when you can, it can cut her diaper



Buy and make any formula that is needed. A section in my book, *Twice Blessed: A Parent's Guide to Twins*, offers specific details on this topic. But really it is just about following the directions and making sure that the appropriate amount is made to last until before it expires.

Buying formula was like a game to me. I would try to buy it either on sale or to maximize store points in order to accumulate free cases faster. And keep in my mind that many formula makers offer free samples, usually of the powdered version.



Watch the babies or kids for an hour or two or three to give your wife a break or to let her get out of the house. And ladies, the more confidence that you have in your man, the better he will do. At first, you can watch them while your

wife relaxes in the house, or even while she takes a much deserved shower. Then as your confidence increases, lengthen the time. A great way to exercise and give your spouse a break is to take the babies for a walk in a stroller. I know that pushing that heavy duty double Mountain Buggy stroller kept me in good shape. Now, I take one or both of our kids on a walk to the library or our local splash pad.



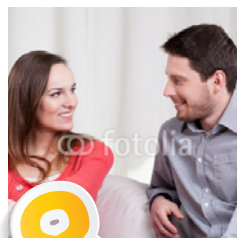
If your schedule provides for it, make dinner once or twice a week. You don't need to be Gordon Ramsay in either ability or temperament. It can be something simple such as sandwiches, boxed macaroni and cheese or nachos (my wife's favorite!). I still do this and our twins are seven.



Take one twin outside, to the park, or on an errand for some one on one time. I wrote a previous article for *Twins Magazine* on ways to make one on one time with each twin, and how important it is. But this can also allow you to do things that you need to do anyhow.



Do some household chores such as cleaning up after meals or folding the laundry. Your wife or partner will really appreciate this. Enough said.



Take time to listen and talk to your wife or partner. She may just want to vent after a difficult day. She may not want you to solve her problems, but knowing that you are there and willing to listen, will probably make her feel a lot better. Even just a few minutes has the potential to make a world of difference.

Steven Jeffries is a father of seven year old twins, loving husband to his wife Lisa and author of the book *Twice Blessed: A Parent's Guide to Twins*. He and his family reside near Toronto, Ontario.



Boy/Girl

by Elizabeth Montanya

The Facts of Life

TWINS

Boy/Girl twins come in all shapes and sizes and with all colors of personalities. Their relationships reflect these differences. Mom Elizabeth Montanya found one benefit to being part of a boy/girl twin set that holds lifelong promise.

A unique dynamic of twinship is underway in our home and I'd give anything to see how it will manifest itself in 20 years. Although one could argue endlessly about what the "best" combination of twins are: girl/girl, boy/boy or mixed, my vote for mixed is really a vote for the future of a greater understanding of the sexes. Here's why.

Michael and Colleen, almost 7, already exhibit signs of the quintessential Mars/Venus views of life, yet their relationship and shared experiences constantly ensure that each has a window open completely to the other side.

Take for example a recent incident at school when a teacher lost her patience with the class. Colleen took the blow-up almost personally and was greatly affected by the teacher's reaction, but Michael brushed the outburst aside. "Coll," he explained. "She got mad and she stopped getting mad. You don't need to talk about it anymore." Michael got over the incident within minutes, while Colleen was still talking about it hours later.

The female's almost natural interpretation of anger is counterpoint to her co-twin. Michael accepts a public display of hostility, and explains that to her on the walk home from school. She's hearing his chant, "Get over it." That attitude we know serves her brother well currently on the ball field, and years from now in the boardroom. Michael is able to pick up and move on easily.

The flip side of this boy-girl twinship is just as interesting: When Colleen appeared one morning after spending considerable time and energy on a first grader's interpretation of Ariana Grande's hairstyle. Mike had his head in his bowl of cereal. After posing a few times without garnering a reaction, Colleen took action and promptly whapped her twin upside the head. "What was that for?" Colleen retorted, "Don't you notice anything?"

It only took a few more incidences like that for Michael to take seriously any cosmetic change on display. He now not only will routinely offer compliments, comments and suggestions on Col-

leen's wardrobe, but on that of his 13-year-old sister as well. Most recently, when I grudgingly left my sweats at home and actually put on some heels and makeup for a meeting, Michael was the first (and only) one to weigh in, "Wow, Mom," he cried. "You look the beautifulist ever!" Michael has learned to notice. What's more, I left the house feeling pretty good, thanks to his comment.

Colleen's influence on Michael's perception extends beyond the cosmetic. Although today they rarely truly play together (Michael doesn't want to dance to Ariana's CD and Colleen has no interest in seeing how many dead spiders can be squished in the down spout), as toddlers they did devise some interesting games that included Barbie being threatened by a hoard of flesh-eating dinosaurs. In several fascinating instances, Barbie did manage to mediate a truce between the dinosaurs and Ken. From that point on, although the dinosaurs always enjoyed a good rampage, they usually came through and patched up relationships as well as the village they trampled.

It's taken me almost 20 years to teach my husband critical domestic skills like putting down the toilet seat. Michael learned that skill years ago. At the same time, Michael has taught Colleen valuable mindsets, including setting goals and doggedly pursuing them. Colleen recognizes that it's OK to drive hard. Sometimes that's what's necessary to achieve your goals. Along the way, Colleen, although a 'real girl' through and through, has proved she can swing a bat, defend a goal and hit a basket from the outside—aligator rough and tough beneath that pink rosebud exterior.

Some of the lessons that Michael and Colleen are now teaching each other, I've tried to teach my older children. Somehow, though, my 14-year-old son wouldn't know if his 12-year-old sister dyed her hair purple and came down for breakfast in a Halloween costume.

Colleen's instant and constant interaction with her twin, by virtue of their special relationship, seems to have made a big impact. I think Michael's future wife owes Colleen big time. ♥

Elizabeth Montanya is a freelance writer who lives in the Washington D.C. area with her husband and five children.

Opposite sex twins

For more than two decades the Louisville Twin Study conducted interviews with parents of more than 200 pairs of opposite-sex twins about the first year of their twins' lives. In the mid-1990's, the former director of the Louisville Twin Study, Adam P Matheny, Ph.D., reported some of the findings from the study in TWINS™ Magazine:

- Boy twins tend to gain weight faster than girl twins.
- Boy twins consume more food and are less picky.
- Boy twins tend to be more sickly.
- Girl twins typically teethe earlier.
- Infant girls sit on their own sooner and walk slightly earlier or at the same time as their twin brothers.
- Infant girl twins seem to be slightly more adept at transferring objects from one hand to another, picking up small objects and playing with blocks.
- Social reactions to family members and friends are similar, but boys are friendlier with strangers.
- Boy twins tend to be less cautious, timid or fearful when introduced to something new.
- Girl twins babble, croon, jabber and begin speech about one to two months earlier than boys.
- Infant girls tend to be more assertive. ♡



Getting an expert opinion...

Setting the separation milestones for opposite sex twins

An interview with Dr. Maureen O'Brien, a psychologist and professor at Bentley College, Waltham, Mass., reveals how varied approaches to rearing boy/girl twins can be. O'Brien is the author of the *Watch Me Grow* series and a mother of 8-year-old twins.

O'Brien cautioned that there aren't any hard and fast rules on when to separate boy/girl twins. "It's difficult to come up with a generality," O'Brien said. "The bottom line in determining how to approach everything from sharing bedrooms to parties comes down to how they get along. Do their temperaments match? Is one dominating the other? This should be a case-by-case approach." Here are some broad guidelines.

Bathing together. O'Brien suggested that bathing male/female twins together falls under her principle of 'Less stress is best.' "Do whatever is easier for you and the kids," she said. "They have been naked together their whole lives. They are going to be perfectly comfortable." Somewhere between the ages of 4 and 6, however, children will want to shut the door while they are in the bathroom. "Almost all of a sudden, they want privacy. They'll let you know—that's your indication they want the separation in the tub. Oftentimes, this really becomes an issue because the parent is uncomfortable, or twins hear comments from others; then, it's time to make a change."

Birthday parties. Until they are about 6, O'Brien said, "It's less about the age than about the topic...they probably don't care, need or want to have their own party." After 6, picking the theme can be difficult. (At 7, Montanya's children had a Power Rangers/Barbie party, which resulted in five barefoot boys chasing five party-perfect girls in new plastic high heels around the backyard. Disaster was the word of the day.)

Their own room. Before age 8, O'Brien explained, kids don't usually express themselves in terms of their gender. "In

general, at 8-years, children want to strike out on their own. They'll want their own circle of friends, to do their own thing, decorate their room their own way. Separating rooms becomes a practicality of, 'How can I show my individuality when my brother has all his sports equipment and battle droids all over?'" She cautioned: Don't separate them if they are going through a stressful time, such as new classrooms or a new sibling. Plan the separation accordingly.

Playing doctor. Before overreacting to anything, O'Brien warned, take a reality check. It's a natural curiosity. "We project more on this than is probably necessary. Kids are interested in what's alike and what's different. If it bothers you, then talk about the privacy issue." At 4 or 5, children are old enough to talk about keeping private things private. O'Brien counseled that we need to talk to all of our children about good and bad touching and to encourage kids to talk to us if the touching is repeated or unwanted.

O'Brien agreed with Montanya's theory about the interesting by-products of raising boy/girl twins—a richer understanding of the opposite sex, a greater tolerance and thus, acceptance of our differences. "Twins are reported by their parents as being more empathetic and nurturing, they are more likely to share, and they know how to wait their turn," O'Brien said. "Top this with the fact that opposite sex twins have lived their whole life learning the differences between male and female—this greater wisdom becomes ingrained in them. They have an opportunity most of us don't have to really understand the other half. They are going through the same things at the same time, from toilet training to learning a new skill. My pediatrician would say that because we learn through understanding, boy/girl twins have an added advantage in their dealings with the opposite sex." ♡

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WHEN ONE OF YOUR TWINS IS DIAGNOSED WITH A RARE TERMINAL DISEASE...



by Amy Marquis





I thought it would never happen to us, with the bad luck that we had had, losing triplets in 2010, and a 3 month old son to SIDS in 2012, these twins were to be my rainbow miracles.

Riley and Carter were born in 2013, 7lbs each. Pure joy. Life was not easy as any twin mom will tell you, but around 9 months I noticed a difference. After bringing up the concerns over and over to our Pediatrician, and told "It's normal, don't compare them" we switched to someone who listened to our concerns. Riley kept losing weight, she would not cry, she had not hit milestones...

and then we saw seizures.

In March 2014, after MRI's, EEG's and countless blood tests, we were told our 13 month old daughter had a form of Mitochondrial disease, specifically Leigh's which was terminal. I did some research Leigh's is a severe neurological disorder that effects the respiratory system, and the energy production in cells. Mortality rate for these kids is 16 months to 3 years old.

I was determined Riley would not be in that category. After a 3 month battle sitting by her side in a hospital and being told to "Let her die" by many doctors, we did everything possible to give her the quality of life. After coding on us three times and 10 breathing tubes, we opted to try a tracheotomy and g-tube, and it was the best decision and allowed us to bring her home.

It's a very hard balancing act being a mom of twins, it's even harder when one is very sick, I wanted to spend every waking moment with her, not missing any milestone or memory, not knowing how much time we have with her... But also blind in your sadness that for a while we were making everything about Riley, and not giving Carter our healthy twin the attention that he craved.

We brought Riley home in August 2014, she was so weak she couldn't move, she couldn't come off her Ventilator without her oxygen crashing. They warned us, she would never walk, she would never talk, she would not be the little girl I pictured the day I got pregnant. But Riley has overcome all her obstacles, she talks, crawls, walks with a walker, plays with her brother, and is a smiling happy child who has taught everyone who's followed her story that you never give up. She taught me the true meaning of love, and with everything she's been through, she always has a smile on her face. I am happy to be her mom.

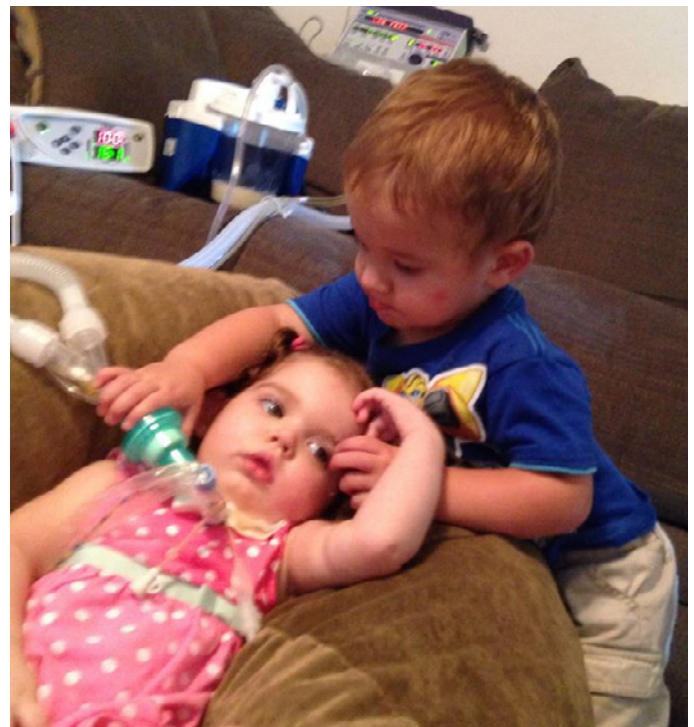
So we will keep trying to spread awareness for Mitochondrial Disease... And hopefully we can find a cure. To learn more about Riley's story visit their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PrayersForRoo/>

What is Mitochondrial Disease?

Mitochondrial diseases result from failures of the mitochondria, specialized compartments present in every cell of the body except red blood cells. Mitochondria are responsible for creating more than 90% of the energy needed by the body to sustain life and support growth. When they fail, less and less energy is generated within the cell. Cell injury and even cell death follow. If this process is repeated throughout the body, whole systems begin to fail, and the life of the person in whom this is happening is severely compromised. The disease primarily affects children, but adult onset is becoming more and more common.

Diseases of the mitochondria appear to cause the most damage to cells of the brain, heart, liver, skeletal muscles, kidney and the endocrine and respiratory systems. Depending on which cells are affected, symptoms may include loss of motor control, muscle weakness and pain, gastrointestinal disorders and swallowing difficulties, poor growth, cardiac disease, liver disease, diabetes, respiratory complications, seizures, visual/hearing problems, lactic acidosis, developmental delays and susceptibility to infection.

Source: *United Mitochondria Disease Foundation*
http://www.umdf.org/site/c.8qKOJ0MvF7LUG/b.7934627/k.3711/What_is_Mitochondrial_Disease.htm



Double Takes



1

Riley & Avery, FR
Age 1
Salem, OR



2

Enoch & Henley, FR
Age 4
Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey



3

Addy & Ally, ID
Age 9
Duke, Oklahoma



4

Nicholas & Samuel, ID
Age 16-months
Mystic, Connecticut



5

Allison & Madison, FR
Age 8-months
Myrtle Point, Orego



6

Kaitlynn & Kaydence, ID
Age 10-months
Tracy, CA



7

Mason & Gavin, FR
Age 16-months
Mentor, Ohio



8

Laurel & Brody, FR
Age 22-months
West Palm Beach, FL

March/April 2015



8

Caleb & Leah, FR
Age 3
Thomasville, NC



10

Owen & Gabe, ID
Age 6
Florence, SC



11

Ryder & Makenzi, FR
Age 9-months,
Phoenix AZ



12

Riley & Hailey, ID
Age 3
Savannah, GA



13

Mac & Joey, FR
Age 1
San Diego, CA



14

Bobby & Anyssa, FR
Age 6-months
Mesa, AZ



15

Emersen & Everleigh, FR
Age 6-months
Peoria, AZ



16

Lucas & Asher, FR
Age 11-months
Lowville, NY



17

Harper & Logan, FR
Age 6-months
North Liberty, IA



18

Delahni & Dalayla, ID
Age 11-months
New Oxford, PA



19

Finlee & Indee, FR
Age 1
Rigby, Idaho

Double Takes



20

McCarthy & Sawyer, FR
Age 5-months
Oxnard, California



21

Adilee & Dailee, ID
Age 6-months in photo
Collinsville, TX



24

Kaiden & Collin, FR
Age 10-months
Galway, NY



22

Jaxon & Brayden, FR
Age 6-months
Somerville, MA



23

Abigail & Graham, FR
Age 9 1/2 months
Lexington, KY



25

Eli & Ethan, ID
Age 7-months
Muskego, WI



26

Levi & Lucy, FR
Age 5
Uniontown, Ohio



27

Jenna & Jules, FR
Age 5
Chesapeake, VA



28

Logan & Lexi, FR
Age 11-months
Allen, TX



29

Dominic & Devin, ID
Age 6
Licking Missouri



30

Blake & Bryce, FR
Age 6-months
Lima, Ohio

March/April 2015



31

Emma & Izabel, FR
Age 7
Fairfield, CT



32

Luke & Lily, FR
Age 2
Mulberry, FL



33

Sophia & Olivia, FR
Age 18-months
Jonesboro, Arkansas



34

Asher & Bishop, FR
Age 10-months
Fair Oaks CA



35

Thomas & Mikailah, FR
Age 6-months
Collinsville IL



36

Heidi & Nora, ID
Age 8-months in photo
Kannapolis, North Carolina



37

Charlie & Jack, FR
Age 4
Morganville, NJ



38

Aurora & Emmett, FR
Age 8-months
Buffalo, New York



39

Ozzie & Lola, FR
Age 8-months
Lewiston Idaho



40

Samantha & Alexandra, FR
Age 6
Nampa, ID



41

Maverick & Cruz, FR
Age 15-months
Sacramento, CA

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