

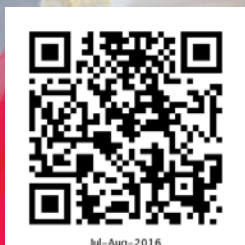
The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

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July/August 2016

EXTRA, EXTRA!
WELCOMING TWINS
WHEN DOWN SYNDROME
IS PART OF THE STORY



Jul-Aug-2016

**Which Hands
Do YOUR
Twins Use?**

**Is It Normal
for Twins to
Fight?**

**Hitting the Road
with Twins Plus More**
Traveling Tips for
Larger Families!







In Every Issue:

A Note from the Editor _____ 3
 News _____ 4
 Double Takes _____ 32
 Celebrating 40 adorable summer-themed photos of twins/multiples!

Columns:

Product Round-Up—Check out the latest & greatest NEW products _____ 5
 LOL: Laugh Out Loud _____ 6
 My Wife Is a Domestic Ninja
 by Steve Rockwell
 Mom-2-Mom _____ 8
 Focus on “Me” and not “We”: Five Tips to Advocate for Your Children’s Education
 by Shawnta S. Barnes

Raising Twins through Every Age & Stage

 **PREGNANCY** — How I Turned to Song Writing While on Hospital Bedrest
 by Crystal Duffy _____ 10
 **INFANTS** — Pediatrician Debunks First Food Myths for Transitioning Twins to Solid Foods
 by Dr. Dyan Hes _____ 12
 **TODDLERS** — 5 Must Know Sleep Tips for Parents of Multiples
 by Barbara Henderson _____ 14
 **PRE-SCHOOL** — Keeping Them Safe This Summer
 by Christa D. Reed _____ 16

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Feature Articles:

Extra, Extra! Welcoming Twins When Down Syndrome is Part of the Story
 by Kirsten Eve Beachy _____ 18
 Which Hands Do Your Twins Use?
 by Staff Writers _____ 24
 Is It Normal for Twins to Fight?
 by Judith O. Hooper, Ph.D. _____ 26
 Hitting the Road with Twins Plus More...
 Traveling Tips for Larger Families
 by Christa D. Reed _____ 28
 “US” A poem about twins written
 by Danielle Bush _____ 30

On the Cover:



Meet 4-year-old identical twins Abby and DJ from Aransas Pass, Texas. They have a very strong bond and are very protective of each other but at the same time they are their own person as well. Abby loves to tell stories (and boy does she come up with some crazy ones) and DJ is more into singing. They love to sing together but also get mad at each other if they don't sing the right words. They love to be outdoors and to fish and would live in a swimming pool or at the beach if they could.



10 How I Turned to Song Writing While on Hospital Bedrest



16 Keeping Them Safe This Summer



24 Which Hands Do Your Twins Use?



28 Hitting the Road with Twins Plus More



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School Days or School Daze...

Summer is winding down and for many of us with school-aged kids; it means having to get our kiddos ready for another successful school-year! If you're like me, the structured routine of having them in school can be wonderful but the start of the school year is filled with so many activities and back to school nights it can make me feel a little "dazed". With double the lists of endless school supplies, school activity fees (time two) and all the new clothes we have to buy it can truly be overwhelming for parents. Throw in the added worry and stress that parents of twins/multiples are faced with each year... the tough decision whether to separate or not to separate your twins in school. This is an often agonizing decision and should not be made lightly. In the end, ultimately you and only you will truly know what is best for your twins! If you feel strongly that your twins are best together in the same classroom than advocate for them. If you feel like it would be better to request separate classrooms than advocate for them.

Every set of twins have different needs and that is why we at TWINS Magazine feel strongly that the decision to separate or not to separate is best left to those that know the children better than anyone, their parents and family members. Sadly, there have been many documented cases over the years citing incidents where overzealous school administrators would step in and take an extremely hard line with parents by forcing twins to be separated in school. These drastic measures had a long-term impact on the children and created anxiety and additional psychological issues for them.

Some twins thrive when they are together in the same class and other sets of twins thrive when apart. It is up to you as a parent of twins to decide what you feel works best for your children and to stand up for yours and their rights. This issue at one time had become so heated that several states had to pass "Twin School Legislation" prohibiting school districts from "forcing" twins to separate in school when parents wanted their twins together. You can visit <http://www.twinslaw.com> to see what your state is doing (or not doing). We also suggest you visit the TWINS Magazine website because we have a ton of resources and useful information regarding this heated subject. Here is a link for you to check out to learn more: <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/twins-school>.

Before summer ends I encourage you all to go out and make memories with your twins! Go on a picnic, put a tent up in the backyard, get in a water balloon fight, blow bubbles, or catch lightning bugs... just spend time with your kids! **Your time is the number one thing that your kids want the MOST!** My twins are actually heading off to COLLEGE in a few weeks (sigh!) but I can still remember how much fun we always had swimming in the river when they were young and those memories are priceless to me. Your kids won't remember how much money you spent on them but they will remember all the time and effort you made to get to know each one individually and love them for all that they are! So enjoy every second and start making those memories!



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

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

The Two Dr. Matwicks...

Kelsi and Keri Matwick, identical twins from Peachtree City, GA, were each awarded their PhDs in linguistics from the University of Florida this last May. They graduated from Starr's Mill High School in 2001 as valedictorian and salutatorian. Both of them graduated summa cum laude in 2005 from the University of Notre Dame and then served as lieutenants in the U.S. Air Force, stationed together in Anchorage, Alaska. After their commitment to the Air Force was completed, they both returned to the University of Notre Dame and completed their master's degrees in Spanish in 2010 before accepting teaching assistant positions at the University of Florida while completing their doctoral studies. ♡



New Online Consignment Boutique Just for Twins!

Shopping for twins doesn't have to be expensive! Have you heard about the brand new online full-service consignment boutique just for twins called "Ring Around The Rosie?" They are the first and only full-service online consignment boutique specifically launched for families with twins. "We've created an all-in-one place where you can find affordable, quality name brands for less and turn your children's outgrown clothing into cash," says owner



Ring Around The Rosie
A CONSIGNMENT BOUTIQUE FOR MULTIPLES



and mom of twins Andrea Romito. Big savings abound when you shop and consign name brand clothing, shoes and accessories just for multiples! Visit their website today at: www.ringaroundtherosieboutique.com ♡

UK Twins named Alumni of the Year!

Two Birmingham (UK) brothers are keeping it in the family as they share the honor of being named Alumni of the Year at Birmingham City University. Twins Alisdair and Jonathan Cusick received their award on Monday, July 25, 2016 in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, in the presence of hundreds of graduates and their families. The Alumni of the Year award provides an opportunity to recognize Birmingham City University graduates who have made a valuable contribution to society or their professional field. It also demonstrates the extraordinary range of achievements among the University's former students.

After securing a degree in Visual Communication (Photography) in 1999, Alisdair Cusick has built a reputation as a freelance photographer, specializing in the automotive sector, providing car manufacturers, advertisers and publications with the high-quality



CAPTION: (l-r) Professor Cliff Allan, Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham City University, Jonathan Cusick, Alisdair Cusick and Councillor Ray Hassall Chancellor of Birmingham City University.

images they need. He has won the Audi/Guild of Motoring Writers Photographer of the Year award twice, and has been commissioned by almost all the UK motoring media, from classics to performance car titles. His work has also featured in books celebrating the history of such iconic models as the Mini and Triumph TR7. Alisdair said that he was encouraged to practice and develop his own style of photography while studying at Birmingham City University. Alisdair graduated at the same time as his brother, Jonathan, who secured a first class degree in Visual Communication (Illustration). Today, Jonathan Cusick is a well-respected illustrator and caricaturist, having had his work published by the likes of 'The Times', 'The Independent on Sunday', 'The Spectator' and 'The New Statesman'. He's also created illustrations for several Christmas editions of the 'Radio Times' since graduating, and has been commissioned by companies and organizations including Unilever, Cadbury, Netflix and English Heritage. A number of celebrities have purchased Jonathan's caricatures of themselves including the late DJ John Peel, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, chefs Raymond Blanc and Heston Blumenthal, and Queen guitarist Brian May.

On finding out that he had been selected for the award, Jonathan said: "I'm still doing exactly what I studied at the University. My world is one of refinement rather than innovation; I do it better now. Looking forward, I'd be happy if I could continue to be in demand. As a freelance, that's an achievement in itself.

"Learning that I was an Alumni of the Year was a nice surprise, as it's always good to be remembered. I've been asked back half a dozen times by the illustration department, giving lectures about my work, professional practice, character design, and for portfolio reviews. I really enjoy speaking to students and seeing their work."

Alisdair has also remained involved with the University since graduating, supporting current students with their portfolio preparation and reviews. ♥

TWIN'S PRODUCT ROUND-UP!

Savoy 12 Cup Thermal Coffee Maker — Krups

Rather than preparing coffee first thing in the morning, wake up to the rich aromas and pour a steaming cup with Krup's Savoy 12 Cup Thermal Coffee Maker. This device features a programmable clock to begin auto-brewing your favorite breakfast blend the moment your alarm goes off. Want to enjoy your cup instantly? No problem. With the pause and serve feature, you can happily fill a cup of your favorite coffee while the intelligent Krup Savoy system pauses and resumes brewing. The Bold function lets you select the strength of your coffee—whether you'd like a rich cup to jump-start your day or a softer brew with an evening dessert. Krup's Savoy 12 Cup Thermal Coffee Maker is ideal for coffee enthusiasts who enjoy experimentation or reliability. \$119.99



Giraffe Razor Extension Handle



There is now an option for women with mobility issues and pregnant women to shave their legs independently with comfort and safety. Introducing the Giraffe Razor Extension Handle, a shaving accessory designed to customize the length and angle of your premium disposable or reusable razor. The Giraffe is easy to use: just lock in the razor, adjust the length, choose the desired angle, and you are ready to shave! The Giraffe Razor Extension Handle is available for \$29.99 on Amazon.com and Giraffebathandbody.com

Moccis Swedish Moccasins

Moccis are the only makers of luxury, hand sewn, authentic Swedish moccasins worldwide. Unlike socks and slippers, which can damage your feet, Moccis are podiatrist approved and safe for little feet while they are still growing! Moccis use a unique 10 step secret system to create fun, functional and fashionable indoor footwear. Benefits include: Machine washable leather and non-slip soles to help prevent slipping and injury; An invisible support strap so that they don't fall off or lose their shape; the highest quality luxury materials to comfort your feet; hand sewn stitching to provide durability so that they last with over 30 limited collector designs by creator and designer Anna Wetterlin. Visit their website www.moccis.co.uk



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MY WIFE IS A DOMESTIC NINJA

by Steve Rockwell

It was well into the night, when my wife and fellow insomniac poked me with her finger over and over again. I had grown accustomed to this poke over the past couple of months. It was very specific in meaning

and landed in a very specific, head whipping part of my free shoulder. It was meant to jar me from my slumber. The reason for this rude awakening was to inform me of one thing...one of the twins needed to be fed and there was NO WAY she was getting out of bed to do it. It was my turn. Months earlier we had made an agreement to switch every other night when the twins were born for feeding, calming, and changing diapers. The theory was that at least every day, one of us would have a full night asleep. That all works in theory, but when presented with an angry, exhausted spouse, an angry, exhausted set of twins, and enough stubborn resolve in the room to choke someone out, it becomes clear real quick that one may want to get out of bed if the crying is ever going to stop. This night held a special moment in parenting lore, however, that only parents of multiples will understand. I decided in that moment of angry shoulder poking to take my stand and point out the fact that I was *currently* feeding one of the twins and that my less than understanding wife could also help out. It was then that she demanded that I open my eyes and explain to her which of the twins I was "currently" feeding. I was in the middle of saying my son's name as I looked down at what should have been his face and found only...my pillow. Yes, my nightly duties had not only overtaken my sleep, my days, my evenings, and all of my money...now they had removed my ability to decipher the difference between and pillow and a human being.

understand. There are parenting decisions that singleton parents never have to make (singleton is the word for single children vs multiples children). There are careers that are immediately halted after childcare is calculated. There are home updates, grocery purchases, diaper runs, attempts at escape (by husbands desperately seeking a beer), and crying... lots of crying. All of these things combine to cause most of us in the "multiples club" to think of ourselves last in all areas of our lives until their ages are in the double digits and we can actually think for a second.

Steve Rockwell lives in Columbus, Ohio and is a proud father of boy/girl twins and a singleton daughter. He's written this article now that the twins are ten, the fog of war has lifted, and he's realized the cost both mentally and financially. Let alone on his body. (He says his wife just punched him for writing that...)

All of this is not to discount how hard it was to raise just one child. In fact, our first daughter suffered from heartburn that we were not able to have diagnosed until she was eight months old. During that time, we torched through a lot of potential babysitters due to the unceasing screaming of our child. We naively thought that we were prepared for twins based off of how difficult it was to deal with her medical issue. Although we were seasoned parenting veterans at this point and had stopped arguing about all of the ridiculous things that two people argue about when thrust into a stressful situation, the one thing that we were not prepared for and are still figuring out is the unrelenting COST of raising twins.

Without going into all of the detail, a little googling will help you find that the average first year of twins costs around \$25,000, due mostly to upgrades in housing, transportation and an estimated \$6k for childcare. This also doesn't take into account the \$13k in average medical bills. (We can attest to the post-delivery intensive care costs.) We are now experiencing having three kids participating in sports, including our older daughter, needing project supplies, clothes, etc. Depressingly, the cost of raising twins has been estimated

People often look at me with adoring googly eyes when I tell them I have twins. Although they are not identical (boy/girl), people seem to think of them as mythical creatures, like leprechauns or Care Bears. I understand the thought process. I feel so grateful to be the parent of two wonderful children who are so wonderfully different in their personalities that it makes you wonder how they lived in such close quarters for nine months (although that might explain why they tried to come out at 28 weeks.) The truth about raising twins however is that it is extremely difficult. There are financial pressures that are inherent that only multiples parents

Continued on page 9





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By Shawnta S. Barnes

Focus On Me Not We

Five Tips to Advocate for Your Children's Education



As an educator who is a mother of identical twin boys, it is important my fellow educators understand best practices for children who are multiples. In my classroom, I have had one half of a twin set and both twins together. My experience thus far as an educator and a parent of multiples has taught me when educators focus on twins as a “we” instead of an individual “me,” they are not providing an optimal learning environment for academic and social development. I offer five tips to help parents advocate for their multiples.

1. Know your school's multiples classroom placement policy.

Many schools have a policy, where multiples are placed in separate classrooms. It is best to know your school's policy at least one year before your child enrolls in elementary school. If your twins have not had the opportunity to have separate experiences, you can use the year prior to formal schooling to prepare them for separation. Our children's elementary school allows the parents to choose whether multiples are in the same classroom or not. If you have the choice, school staff may still suggest you should separate your twins. You have spent the most time with them and

will know what is best. Our boys were in the same classroom for preschool during the first semester, but in separate classrooms at two different schools during the second semester. When they begin kindergarten in August, they will be enrolled in separate classrooms at the same school. Although, my husband and I knew our boys could remain together in kindergarten, we knew it made no sense to place them back together after a successful second semester being separated in preschool.

2. Help your twin understand their classroom experience.

Even if your twins are ready for separate classrooms, they may not understand how different each of their classes might be. In her book, *Emotionally Healthy Twins: A New Philosophy for Parenting Two Unique Children*, Joan A. Friedman, Ph.D, shares this script, “Life isn't always fair or equal. And your life will always be different from your brother's which is what makes each of you so special.” I have found this script helpful to explain to our boys why different experiences are okay. This script is beneficial to also share with your children's teachers. It might not sink in the first few times or when emotions are blocking out logic, but we had a breakthrough



after our boys were in separate classes. Jeremiah was invited to a birthday party and my husband and I were worried about James'

potential response. He put us at ease when he said, "Kids in my class have birthdays too and I'm sure I will be invited to a party one day." It's to your children's benefit to learn how to cope with experiences that differs because it will help their emotional and social development.

3. Acknowledge, but don't compare academic milestones.

Each child should be praised for his or her accomplishments. When one twin has a special need or struggles with an academic subject, it will impede the child's progress if the child believes the bar is the success of his or her twin. When scheduling parent/teacher conferences schedule one for each child and not for your twins as a unit. Do not allow a twin to be present at its sibling's conference. One of our son's has an anxiety diagnosis. It is important his brother is not privy to conversations about him, so he does not feel as if he is being compared.

4. Teach your children to advocate for their own individuality.

Part of navigating school as a twin is learning to develop as an individual and being known by others for what makes you, you. When other students refer to your twins as "the twins" or "hey twin" what is being acknowledged is the fact they are siblings who have the same birthdate. They are seen as only a unit or part of a unit and not known for who they truly are. We have taught our boys to kindly say, "My name is Jeremiah" or "My name is James" when children do not refer to them by their names. If it becomes a significant issue, have a conversation with the teacher to explain your concerns.

5. Visit your twins at school.

Even if you have a great relationship with the teacher, it is beneficial to observe your children at school. This is a way to learn how your child is coping at school and if there are any concerns to address. Both my husband and I, individually, visited our sons at preschool. When our sons were in the same class, there was an unhealthy dynamic. One of our sons felt it was his responsibility to parent and look after his brother. They were not interacting with other children unless the child would play with both of them at the same time. This prompted us to separate our boys the second semester. Although there was another preschool class at their

current school, we decided another preschool would be a better placement for our son and it was. Because his brother was not present, he had to make his own decisions. We learned what his true interests were; he was truly a different child.

This is not an all-inclusive list, but I have found these five tips to be beneficial when advocating for your children. ♥

Shawnta S. Barnes

is a mother of five year old identical twin boys. She is a literacy coach in Indianapolis Public Schools, an adjunct instructor at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis School of Education and a 2016 Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellow.

Continued from page 6

MY WIFE IS A DOMESTIC NINJA

the cost of raising twins has been estimated at roughly \$500,000, JUST TO GET THEM OUT OF THE HOUSE! Some estimates show a range between \$300k-850k. This does not include double college costs, double wedding costs, and Double Mint gum costs. It's not a requirement but I feel that I should support their cause.

Raising children is a challenge, whether it be a singleton, multiples, or both. But the unique challenges that raising twins present can be summed up in a quote from a friend of mine whilst observing my wife just going about her day as the mother of multiples. To set the scene, he and I were on the front porch when my wife pulled up in the car. She got out of the car with swift and purposeful intent. The trunk had been popped before she was even out of the front seat. She walked around and opened both back doors where the twins were locked into their carriers. She leaned into the curbside and pulled one car-seat out and hooked it on her inner elbow. She butted the door shut with...her butt and moved to the other side, repeating the process. She then, with both babies in her arms, knelt the trunk lid open to reveal the groceries she had just purchased. With her forearms, she scooped up six bags of groceries like a boss and used her forehead first to push the trunk lid down, followed by bottoms of the baby seats to close it tight. It was at this point, she noticed us on the front porch staring and sarcastically pointed out, "I've got it." I opened the front door for her and shut it tight behind in case she wanted to put everything down so she could punch me for not helping. As I turned around, I noticed that my friend's mouth was wide open in complete awe of her adulting capabilities. He then spoke these words, which I feel sum up the multiples parenting life mantra "Dude, your wife is a ninja of totally mundane tasks!" ♥



by Crystal Duffy

How I Turned to Song Writing While on Hospital Bedrest

Hot tears rolled down my cheeks as I stepped out of the elevator door and into the lobby of my doctor's office. My OB's words kept ringing in my head. "Crystal, we are going to have to admit you inpatient for continuous monitoring, to make sure you and the babies are safe." Inpatient? In the hospital? Meaning I would check in for an indefinite time until I had safely given birth to our twin girls (or so we hoped). How was I going to get through this? I had a toddler at home and so much still left to do to prepare for these two little ones. I went kicking and screaming with two massive suitcases filled with everything from the full series of *Sex and the City* DVDs to my living room lamp. I was determined to make my cold sterile hospital room as cozy as I could for my weeks ahead.

My twin pregnancy had been rough from the get-go. I had gone into my doctor's office expecting to hear the dreaded news that I was having a miscarriage and to my shock and

surprise I was six weeks pregnant with twins. It was high-risk, that was for sure. I had a blood clot that almost pulled the pregnancy, a cerclage procedure where the doctor sewed my hoo-hee, a terrifying diagnosis of Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome that required a laser ablation surgery to correct this horrific condition, and the destruction of the inter-twin membrane that resulted in the Mono-Mono twin status. Mono-Mono twins carry their own host of complications so I can't say I was completely shocked when my doctor told me to pack my bags for what would be a several-month-hospital-stay but it was still heartbreaking. I would have to say goodbye to my sweet little daughter, Abby, and my husband. Our worlds would be turned upside down for an indefinite amount of time.

During my hospital stay, my family and friends reassured me by saying, "Don't worry; in a few years you won't remem-

ber this time," or "it will be a distant memory that you had to live through once; that's it." As genuinely well-meaning as those thoughts were, in reality, they were dead wrong. How could I ever forget my time here? Not just days, but months of feeling terrified, alone, and scared shitless?

I had to make the best of this hellish situation. For the sake of my family. For the well-being of my unborn twins. For my own sanity. That's when I turned to music.

The antepartum unit of the hospital arranged meetings for all the Moms inpatient and one afternoon a musical therapist came to visit our meeting and mesmerized me with her guitar and passion for song writing. I knew that my experience here in the hospital long term was life changing and I was intrigued by the idea of creating a song that would capture my deep emotions during this time.

Hannah, the musical therapist, advised me to start by journaling, free-writing, and scribbling whatever came to mind. She asked me to focus on the hardest thing about being in the hospital. I knew in an instant what that was. It had nothing to do with being bored or alone in a hospital room with the plain walls and just one window to the outside world. Of course I missed my house, my family, and friends. It didn't bother me that the medical team picked and poked me with needles, or administered medication. I didn't care that they still checked my vitals every few hours or that they kept me awake all hours of the night doing my monitoring. The two most excruciating things about being here were the possibility of losing my twins at any moment and missing Abby. I decided that this song needed to be about Abby. I was stuck in the hospital, freaking out about my twin babies and simultaneously missing out on Abby's life. It sucked bigtime! I thought about her constantly. Every minute of every day. I thought of her every moment of this journey along with her sisters.

I would take deep breaths, put my pen to my paper and write. I started slow with several minutes of free writing, capturing all the thoughts that came to my mind without judgement. "I love you, I miss you, I'm thinking about you everyday." Then I would look over it organize and re-structure. The rhyming would come much later, with my therapists' help, and of course the melody.

Just when I thought I was getting the hang of it, I would burst into tears and have to stop. *Damnit.* Blubbering over my pen and paper was constant at first. Was I on the verge of depression? It certainly felt like it.

But then I found the more I wrote, the more it helped move past the pain. Writing was cathartic and liberating. I was sitting in a bed physically unable to get up and yet my mind was running away. Memories and flashbacks from my life inspired my song lyrics. I couldn't stop writing. Thoughts kept coming and words poured out on the page.

"Dreaming of you while I'm away, being there to see your sweet face. Setting off on adventures, on walks to the park. When you look up at

the Goodnight Moon, I hope that you know that I'll be there soon. I miss you, Abby, I miss you."

The more stressful things got, the more I threw myself into songwriting. I hadn't wanted to admit that I was in therapy, but I suppose that was the purpose of music therapy; the process didn't carry the stigma of traditional therapy. It was far more creative and stimulated healing in ways I would have never imagined. Whatever the magic, it truly worked for me. I needed the musical outlet to process my feelings, emotions, and everything we had gone through. My song embodied everything about my experiences of motherhood and my incredible love and intense longing to be with my child. The song had a tremendous impact on me; it had empowered me in so many ways, allowing me to process the pain and start moving past it. I had tried so hard throughout my pregnancy to not stress, to control my emotions, but I was only human. Of course, I had moments where I would lose it and burst into tears. But I didn't want my time in the hospital to be tinged with despair. I didn't want to let myself sink into a hormonal depression. I didn't want to be messed up from this experience when my babies were born. And that was just it; I didn't allow myself to think *if* my babies are born but rather *when* they are born. I knew that *when* they were born, I'd be as busy as the President; I wouldn't make the time to heal or go to therapy. A mother always puts her children's needs above her own. Right or wrong, that was the reality. I was completely grateful to have found comfort in songwriting. Songwriting was a beautiful pastime that allowed me to take care of myself, which was something that might not have happened had I been home alone with my daughter. ♥



Crystal Duffy lives in Houston, Texas. She is the author of her memoir *Twin to Twin*, and the mother of three girls, including identical twins and a singleton.



INFANTS

Pediatrician Debunks First Foods Myths for **TRANSITIONING TWINNS TO SOLID FOOD**

Dr. Dyan Hes

Dr. Dyan Hes, recently named a 2013 top doctor by *NEW YORK* magazine, is the Medical Director of Gramercy Pediatrics in New York City and sits on the board of the American Board of Obesity Medicine. In 2006, she served as an Expert Witness at the NYC Department of Health Hearing to Ban Trans Fat in Restaurant Food. Currently, Dr. Hes is a pediatrician serving as a Director of the American Board of Obesity Medicine. Dr. Hes practices both primary care and obesity medicine. She was named one of New York's Top Doctors of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 by Castle and Connolly.



Many new parents often struggle with introducing solid foods into a baby's diet. There are conflicting ideas of what babies can eat and when to start a little one on solid foods. Dyan Hes, Medical Director of Gramercy Pediatrics, provides new parents with advice for starting babies on the first foods and sets straight some common myths that hold parents back from giving their baby certain foods.

"Starting a baby on solid foods can be a scary time for new parents," says Dr. Hes. "With fears of choking, allergies, digestive problems, and even poor nutritional content, parents often feed their baby only a handful of items. Babies can be exposed to a variety of foods in their first year, as long as parents follow a few simple rules."

When to Start Babies on Solid Foods:

The World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that babies be exclusively breastfed for six months before other foods are introduced. "This is a guide and not a hard-fast rule," explains Dr. Hes. "Babies develop at different rates and it is best to ask your pediatrician if your baby is ready instead of waiting for exactly six months." The typical age is between four and six months when pediatricians recommend introducing solids to babies' diets. Waiting beyond six months of age can also be problematic and more difficult to wean a baby from the bottle or breast.

Single Grain Cereals Must Be Introduced First

One common belief is that single-grain cereals, such as rice, must be introduced first, but parents don't have to start with these. There are a variety of foods that babies can eat as long as the food is pureed or mashed. Another problem with sticking to only rice-based foods is the increase of arsenic in a baby's diet. Rice naturally absorbs arsenic as it grows, and is not typically harmful. However, with beliefs that rice must be a first food and more rice-based products for babies on the market, there is potential that the larger consumption of rice might have an impact on a baby's health.

Don't Give Babies Meat

It is best to consult with a pediatrician before introducing meat into a baby's diet, but meat can be very beneficial to a developing baby. Make sure the meat is completely pureed and add flavor with cooked and pureed vegetables. "Parents often avoid giving their child meat as a first food, but it can be safe with the right preparation," says Dr. Hes. "However, it is recommended to avoid meats with hormones or additives."

Stay Clear of Allergens for the First Year

Many parents believe that babies should not be given foods that cause potential allergic reactions. In general, there is no reason to

wait until the baby is older before introducing highly allergenic foods. Some research indicates that it may be helpful to introduce these foods early. "When introducing a baby to foods that have a risk of causing an allergic reaction, parents should do so carefully," says Dr. Hes. "Don't give a baby more than one highly allergenic food at a time. Start with small quantities, know the signs of an allergic reaction, and watch the baby carefully after the food has been introduced."

Hold Off on Fruits Until Babies Are Given Veggies

There is an old wives' tale that giving a baby fruit as a first food will cause them to develop a sweet tooth, and to dislike vegetables. There is no evidence to support this. In fact, many fruits make great first foods, such as bananas and pears. Mashed avocados are also a great first food and contain necessary nutrients and fats babies need to grow. When introducing vegetables, they must be cooked and pureed, but there isn't a rule that babies must be given vegetables before fruit or before any other first food.

"Before starting babies on solid foods, it is best to discuss with a pediatrician if your twins are ready," says Dr. Hes. "If properly prepared, babies can eat a wide-variety of foods." ♥

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TODDLERS

5 Must Know Sleep Tips for Parents of Multiples

Barbara Henderson is the mother of two sets of twins and lives in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. Barbara has a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology from the University of Calgary, is a trained Life Skills Coach and a Certified Child Sleep Consultant. When Barbara is not helping families rest easy and chauffeuring her 4 children around, she loves to volunteer at her children's school, read books, travel with her family, and spend as much time as possible outdoors. For more tips and to learn more about SleepWell Baby consulting services, please visit <http://www.sleepwellbaby.ca>.

by Barbara Henderson

When it comes to parenting, sleep is another skill we teach our children. All parents will tell you just how exhausting it is when you bring home a new baby, and the first few weeks are always the hardest. Now imagine how difficult it is when you are a parent of multiples! Sleep is the key factor in not only surviving with multiples, but thriving with multiples. SleepWell Baby certified child sleep consultant and multiples expert, Barbara Henderson, is sharing her top sleep tips for parents of multiples. For many families, these tips will be life changing!

1

Schedule

Children thrive on schedules and routines so knowing that alone should be enough to convince us to keep to a schedule with multiples. Not only do multiples thrive with schedules and routines, it helps the parents and gives them some time for self-care – which is extremely important for all mommas but especially those with multiples. Once your little bundles of joy are born we recommend that you try to get them on a schedule of wake, eat, activity, sleep.

2

Sleep Log It

It's highly recommended that you keep track of each baby's sleep. When we are overwhelmed, exhausted, blurry eyed, exhausted, and trying to remember what time Baby A, B, C or D (if you are so lucky) woke up is going to be next to impossible. Knowing these details are imperative in being able to determine when to put the babies down for their next sleep time. If we wait until they are too tired, we have missed the window but also if we try too early we are in for a fight as well...so LOG IT! Another reason logging it is helpful, is eventually the babies' sweet spot may become very clear (when they go down great and have a great sleep etc.). It also helps you identify the more sensitive sleeper – whom we cater our sleep schedule to.

3

Adjusted Age

"I have a confession – when my second set of twins were born I needed them to sleep so badly

that I threw out all the adjusted age advice out the window and just went for it based on their birth date vs. their due date – so let me save you from the frustration, tears, more frustration, more tears and despair by saying it doesn't work - PLEASE use their adjusted age!" shares Henderson. What does adjusted age mean? Full term for multiples is typically around 37-38 weeks so if you are lucky enough to make it here, that is great, but you still are two to three weeks away from the 40-week gestation period, so cool your heels – you still have to wait! If you delivered earlier than that (34 & 35 weeks) then you have an even longer time to wait. When it comes to teaching our babies the skill of independent sleep we typically won't start until they are 4 months of age. For us weary and exhausted mommas, pull out the 5 Must Know Sleep Tips for Parents of Multiples calculator app on your phone – we won't judge – just make sure you always follow the guidelines based on adjusted age of your babies.

4

Sleep Environment

You may get sick of hearing this over and over again at every website you visit but the reason why you hear it over and over again is because it is essential in getting a good night's sleep (and nap for that matter). So here are the details: Dark cool room – Garbage bags and duct tape work wonders, black out blinds are cheap and easy to find nowadays. A recommended temperature for the little ones' room is around 68–72°F (20–22.2°C). White noise – This doesn't need to be anything fancy as long as it's PURE white noise; avoid music, ocean sounds etc. We want it simple, boring and consistent. A fan works wonders!

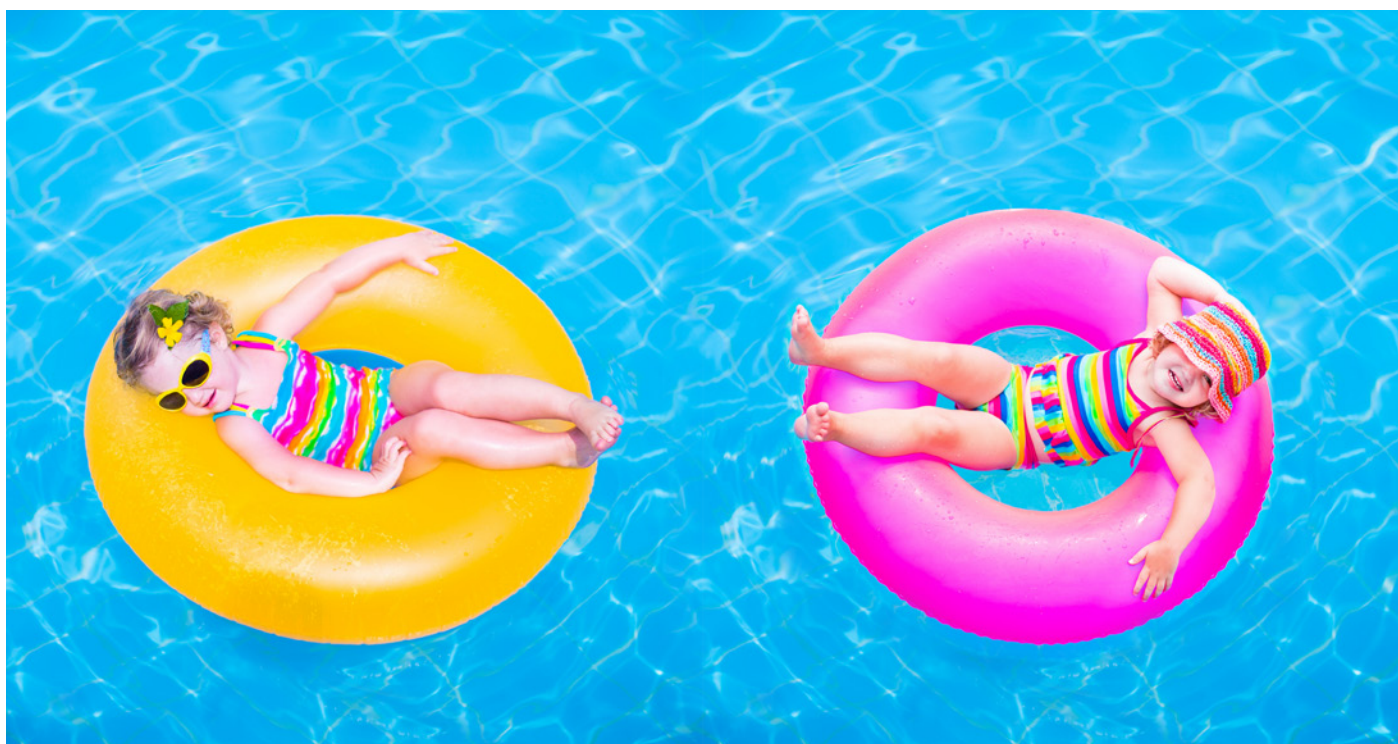


5

To Share a Room or Not

Henderson says, "I always advise families to start as they plan to move forward. So if there is a space issue and the babies will be sharing a room indefinitely, then start them together. If you are fortunate and have the space, I found that my children have always slept better when they were in separate rooms. With my first set of twins it took me a long time to come to terms with separating them so my compromise was to nap them in separate rooms and have them sleep in the same room for bedtime."

If sharing is the decision then have no fear; multiples adapt very quickly, because let's be honest, they don't have a choice. They very quickly get used to each other's noises and nuances. You can also use a curtain style system in rooms to separate multiples while they sleep but then open them up during the day to have a shared bedroom. ■



Keeping Them **SAFE** This Summer

by Christa D. Reed

WATER SAFETY

Swimming pools are the number one drowning risk for preschoolers. Your twins may love splashing in a play pool to cool off this summer; others may be wary. Don't force the issue. They are developing their attitudes toward water. Your main job is to keep them safe.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until the age of four for swimming lessons. Before you jump into the deep water, determine if your twins are ready for swimming lessons. Ask yourself:

- Do they love or fear the water?
- Are they developmentally mature?
- Are they able to follow instructions?

Many swim programs require mom to be in the pool with her child to help him or her learn to swim. With twins, this is not realistic or safe. If you decide to enroll them in swim lessons, consider private lessons, find a program that provides assistants or recruit a friend or dad to help.

Proponents of infant swim lessons claim that babies as young as 6-months-old can learn a back float and save themselves from drowning if they fall into a swimming pool. Teaching children to never go near the water without an adult present is the most important part of any swim lessons. Just because your twins learn to swim does not mean that they are safe in the water. In fact, many parents report that learning to swim gave their twins a false sense of security. Never turn your back on children in the water.

If you don't already know CPR, take a class. In a heartbeat—while you are helping one twin—your other twin could land face down in the water. Always have a helper when you have twins in a wading pool, and be sure to have your phone with you at all times. Don't let an accident spoil more than their play time.

HARD HAT REQUIRED

Dressing for success definitely includes protective head gear when multiples hop on their bikes this summer. Pediatricians and safety experts recommend that little bikers wear helmets

the very first time and every single time they ride. Football type helmets cover the head and ears. The classic oval covers the top and head only. Helmets should fit comfortable close to the head. They must be sufficiently padded on the inside and smooth on the outside so they will slide over the ground if impact occurs. A secure chin strap is essential. Look for helmets that meet the standards of The Consumer Product Safety Commission.

AVOIDING CAR SICKNESS

It's travel season and time to pile the kids into the car and hit the road. Before you do, you may want to consider the following suggestions offered by Traveling Healthy Newsletter. These tips are sure to keep your multiples' tummies settled during summer road trips.

- Offer your multiples plenty of water or juice to drink.
- Don't let your kids ride on an empty stomach. However, avoid large meals before and during the trip.
- Keep the car cool and ventilated.
- Arrange the car seats so kids can look out the windows during the drive. They're less likely to feel ill if they are looking out into the distance.
- Drive at night whenever possible so kids can sleep through the ride.

TREATING CUTS

During the summer months, kids tend to get more cuts and scrapes. It's important that caregivers take them seriously, as an infection can easily set in. Cleanliness is the key to keeping infection away. Always wash the area gently with soap and water. Make sure to stop bleeding by applying pressure with a clean cloth or gauze pad. Then apply a sterile bandage to keep the area clean. Remember that cuts from a dirty or rusty object may require a tetanus shot. Also be sure to see a doctor if the wound is deep or punctured and if bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes of applying pressure.

SURVIVING ALLERGY SEASON

Runny noses and watery eyes can indicate allergy problems. If your twins are affected, it is best to limit outdoor activities in the early morning and on windy days when pollen counts are generally highest. According to Dr. Richard Wasserman, a Children's Medical Center of Dallas allergist, if parents know their children have difficulties during specific seasons, they should start medications before the children react strongly to allergens. He also recommends keeping your home and car windows closed to reduce exposure.

BEE CAREFUL

Most insect bites are relatively minor and can be soothed with cool compresses and medicated lotions. But with twins or more, there are multiple chances that your children could be allergic to insect bites or to bee stings. Symptoms of an allergic reaction to a bee sting include: numbness around the mouth, flushed cheeks and difficulty swallowing, followed by severe swelling of the throat

and nasal passages and wheezing. The biggest concern when this happens is respiratory distress, which can cause a loss of consciousness. Children exhibiting these symptoms should receive emergency medical attention. To help prevent bee or other insect stings, avoid wearing brightly colored clothing outdoors and using scented lotions or perfumes.

PLAY IT SAFE THIS SUMMER ON THE PLAYGROUND

Every day more than 500 playground injuries require visits to hospital emergency rooms. The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Program for Playground Safety have some suggestions for making sure the play area you choose for your multiples is a safe one. This is also valuable information for assessing the recreation area at your twins' preschool or day care facility.

- All equipment must be age-appropriate.
- Areas for preschool and school-age children must be separate.
- To prevent little heads from becoming trapped, ladder rungs and other openings should be at least 9-inches wide.
- Guardrails should be 29 inches high on preschool equipment and 38 inches high on equipment for school-age children.
- Swing seats should be of soft material, not metal or wood.

Inspect the area very carefully. Equipment with missing bolts, broken steps, and sharp edges, splintered wood or rusted parts is off limits. Make sure there is no broken glass or other potentially hazardous material lying around. ♥



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by Jessica Zehr

Irene (L) and Sallie Alderfer (R) enjoy the view

Extra, Extra!

By Kirsten Eve Beachy

Welcoming Twins when Down Syndrome is Part of the Story

Jessica Zehr almost deleted the email. The Zehrs had been waiting a year to adopt, but she felt certain her husband Elias would turn down this particular opportunity. Twin boys were due in a few months, and one had Down syndrome. She told Elias anyway. He was open to the idea. "It actually made it harder for me that he didn't say 'no' right away," Jessica remembers, "because then I had to do some soul-searching... is this something I am ready and willing to take on?"

Jessica and Elias Zehr live in Lowville, New York, where Jessica is a licensed massage therapist and does in-home health care, while Elias works as a computer technician. When they were ready to have children, they attempted In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), because Elias has Cystic Fibrosis, which complicates natural conception. The process was grueling and, in the end, disappointing. They filed for adoption. They did not sign up for a baby with special needs—but then Asher and Lucas happened.

The Zehrs were able to be at the hospital for their sons' births, and Jessica remembers scrambling into scrubs alongside Elias moments before the boys made their debut, thinking, "This is really happening!" At their first meeting, Jessica fell "cautiously in love," wanting to leave room for the birth mother during her time with the babies at the hospital. "They didn't really feel like ours until they came home with us."

Now, more than a year later, Jessica knows, "They were supposed to be ours." Looking back on those early days, she says, "I wish I wouldn't have been so scared... I wish I had known how amazing it was going to be and much in love I'd was going to be with them." As for Asher's extra chromosome, "I just wish that I could have known he was going to be perfect and would just be Asher... Down syndrome would become a part of who we are and a part of our story, but it wouldn't define any of us."



Lucas (L) and Asher Zehr (R) on a sofa.

One in a Million?

Kirsten Eve Beachy and Jason Alderfer

My own daughter Sallie is one minute younger than her twin Irene. She was diagnosed with Trisomy-21, commonly known as Down syndrome, a few days after their birth. I was recovering from an unplanned Caesarean after 24 hours of labor, and was still in shock at the never-ending cycle of feeding newborns, one of them with hypotonia that made her floppy as a rag doll. When the doctor told us, the first fierce thought that came to my mind was, "This changes nothing." Across the room, my husband Jason, who was terrified, thought, "This changes everything."

At first, we felt as if we had won some sort of perverse one-in-a-million lottery in *Ultimate Parenting*—Extra babies! Extra chromosomes! But in the exhausting, joyful, and sometimes frightening months that followed Irene and Sallie's birth and the diagnosis, I encountered dozens of families with situations like ours online.

I overestimated those "one-in-a-million" odds for a twin pregnancy affected by Down syndrome by quite a bit. Nationally, the odds of having a child with Down syndrome are 1 in 691^[1]. The chances of twins are 1 in 30^[2]. The likelihoods of both Down syndrome and multiples increase with the age of the parents.

The best real-world data I found comes from a 2014 study of 14.83 million births in eight European countries between 1990 and 2009, which suggests that the odds of carrying twins, one or both of them with Down syndrome, are about 1 in 23,600^[3], a hundred times more likely than winning a million dollars in the Virginia lottery^[4].

In conversation with other parents, we found that even amongst families with unique twins like ours, there are as many types of normal as there are families.

Each family remembers vividly the moment they learned how their lives were changing.



Irene (L) and Sallie Alderfer (R) conquer a boulder

Finding Out

Ashley and Harmon Davis

Ashley and Harmon Davis didn't get Sarah Grace's diagnosis until 48 hours after their twins were born. The doctor had a heavy accent and the news just didn't compute at first. Ashley's prenatal screenings hadn't indicated that Down syndrome was likely. As the doctor's words began to make sense, Ashley's first fears were for Hannah, Sarah's twin. Would her life be eclipsed by all the complications in her twin's life?

"I didn't know anyone with Down syndrome, so I didn't know what it meant. It was just so scary. I wish I had been better informed," she says. "I felt that I had lost the child I'd come to know over the past—I didn't know or understand. It took me a long time to realize that she was still that perfect baby that I had fallen in love with."



Hannah (L) and Sarah Grace Davis (R) at ballet.



Brian (R) gets caught climbing into Caleb's Sprowall (L) crib.

The Davises currently live in Cumming, Ga., where Harmon works on chemical projects and Ashley is a full time mom to the twins (now 3) and to their baby sister, Hazel. But those early days were difficult. "When we first found out about Sarah Grace, I completely closed down. It was really hard. I didn't want to hear from other parents of a child with Down syndrome. All I wanted was to talk to twin moms," parents who were experiencing a diagnosis with two babies. "You couldn't find that at the time. It was three years ago, before Facebook groups became so popular. I did find one group eventually, but it wasn't very active." Now she runs an online group for moms with twins under the age of five.

Shamell and Brian Sprowall

Shamell and Brian Sprowall learned about their twin's probable Down syndrome early in the pregnancy, and the genetic counselor pressured them to get an amniocentesis done to confirm the diagnosis while there was still time to reduce—

that is, to abort—the twin with Down syndrome. The counselor told them that the baby would likely have heart defects, and that they would have to care for him for the rest of his life. Shamell remembers, "She was just so rude, and so disheartening. She gave the worst case scenario... She said our son would have an IQ of 10!" But Shamell had spent a week connecting with families who had children with Down syndrome. "I had seen the positive side of it," she says, and she knew the counselor's predictions weren't realistic.

Shamell remembers, "I wanted to jump across the table and strangle her. I didn't want to hear another word from out of her mouth. I said, 'I think this meeting is over.'"

People with Down syndrome do indeed have mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (with IQs generally ranging from 35-70), but those with more severe impairments are rare.^[5] With early intervention, careful health screening, and inclusive education policies, their average IQ, functionality, and lifespan is increasing^[6], and more people

with Down syndrome are able to live independently. About half of babies born with Down syndrome have heart defects; some of these can be monitored and may resolve themselves, but some require surgical intervention.^[7]

Shamell, an accountant, and Brian, a policeman and university instructor, live in Philadelphia. When they got married, Shamell, already the mother of an adult son from her first marriage, agreed to get pregnant—once. "He said, 'I want two children,' and I said, 'Listen: the only way you're getting two children is if two come at the same time. I'm not doing it again.'" At the first ultrasound, Shamell was surprised and Brian ecstatic to see two heartbeats.

After the diagnosis of likely Down syndrome, they tried to stay positive. One night Shamell cried a little bit and considered the worst case scenarios for her sons' futures, but then she gave herself a pep talk: "You're sitting here moping and not enjoying your pregnancy because of what you fear is



Sammy (L) and Alex Cianciolo (R) in cart.

going to happen as opposed to what has happened. Stop torturing yourself.”

On the day their sons were born, Caleb emerged with an Apgar score of 9 and the distinctive facial features of Down syndrome. To Shamell, “he was the cutest baby.” The doctors took Caleb away to confirm that his heart was okay, but eventually she was able to hold him alongside his brother Brian. It finally became real to her. She remembers thinking, “I have two babies! We’re going to be okay.”

Like Ashley Davis, Shamell found her best supports online, where she encountered the blogger Tiffany Stafford, who writes about her experiences with her daughter with Down syndrome. “She reached out

to me, wrapped her arms around me, and gave me a virtual hug. I’ve never met her in person...she just gave me some hope, a picture of what life looks like with a child with Down syndrome. I could ask questions and get advice.” Shamell believes parents with a new diagnosis need a person who can be a guide and encouragement, someone who is already living with a child with Down syndrome.

Theresa and Scott Cianciolo

Theresa and Scott Cianciolo hoped for years that they would have a child with Down syndrome—for them, the twins were the surprise. He is a pastor and chaplain, and she is a behaviorist for the state of Connecticut, commuting from their home

in Irasburg, Vt. When they married, they had three older children in their combined family. After Gabriel, now 9, was born, they set out to complete their family, planning to adopt a child with Down syndrome. One of Theresa’s favorite aunts has Down syndrome, and the pair runs a camp for children with disabilities, so they felt prepared and excited.

They spent seven years attempting to adopt domestically. Eventually they looked abroad, applying to adopt a boy with Down syndrome from China. In spite of their stellar credentials, the Chinese government unexpectedly denied the Cianciolo’s adoption application. Their Body Mass Indexes were too high. The couple took this as a wake-up call, saying, “We need to love God and ourselves more than our food,” and lost a total of 240 pounds together. They weren’t ready to give up. When they finally turned their search toward Eastern Europe, they hit the jackpot—or, as they prefer to think of it, “God blessed us with two for our obedience.” Four month old Sammy and Alex, identical twins with Down syndrome, needed a home.

They met their sons for the first time in a Ukrainian orphanage. “There were 22 cribs in a single room with three helpers, all of them special needs kids,” Theresa remembers. Sammy and Alex, 6 months old, shared a crib and were heavily sedated. Lifting the Sammy for the first time, Theresa felt what a big chunk he was at seventeen pounds. This was a sign of thyroid issues, along with his lack of visual focus that indicated problems with his vision. Then she handed him to Scott and picked up Alex.

While Sammy and Alex were still in their arms, the older children in the orphanage mobbed Scott, shouting “Dad, Dad!”—the word they had learned for visiting American men. Soon another group of children was clinging to Theresa, crying “Mom!” The orphanage staff had to peel the children off of the Ciancolos.

Later, when the adoption was made official and Theresa picked up her two sons, she remembers sitting on a bench outside the gates, holding them and crying. “There were 140 other children in the orphanage, and I was weeping because it was devastat-

ing for me that they would not have the unconditional love of a family.”

The Cianciolos had saved funds for one adoption, but with twins in the equation, they needed more. An agency called Life Song gave them a matching grant. Scott works for Corporate Chaplains of America, and the director put out a plea to 500 pastors in the organization to give, promising to match their donation, and “In the blink of an eye, within days, we met our goal,” says Theresa. The story of the twins with Down syndrome moved donors they had never met. People sent funds from as far away as Oregon. One donor gave \$3000 in memory of his own twin.

An Impossible Situation

About two-thirds of pregnancies diagnosed with Down syndrome in the United States are aborted, and the rate is much higher in Europe.^[8] However, families who are not in high risk categories, who don’t see signs of Down syndrome in initial screenings, or who don’t plan to end the pregnancy if Down syndrome is diagnosed, often do not complete decisive diagnostic tests. As a result, an estimated 30 percent of pregnancies with Down syndrome end in elective terminations in the United States.^[9]


The 2014 European study found that mothers who received a diagnosis of Down syndrome were slightly less likely to terminate the entire pregnancy or attempt a reduction if they were carrying twins than if they had only one baby.^[10] However, if the twin with Down syndrome has significant defects, it’s a different story.

I met Ellen^[11] on an internet forum for families living after infertility. One of her twins was diagnosed with Down syndrome and with a significant heart defect at 13 weeks. The specialists believed that if she did nothing, there was about 30 percent chance that one twin would survive, and very little that they both would. If she reduced her daughter, her son had an 80-90 percent chance of survival. Ellen says of her New York City doctors, “They were top notch. They knew their stuff. I felt I was getting very good information. Was I getting comfort? No.”

As older parents, she and her husband had been unsure about how to proceed if they received a Down syndrome diagnosis, “But all that is in theory,” Ellen says. “When we were actually staring at the ultrasound we didn’t care if she had three heads. She was our baby and we loved her instantly and we thought we’d figure it out.”

But the odds were daunting, and in the end, they agreed with their physicians’ recommendation to reduce. “I got the impression that they thought we would have been crazy to make any decision other than the one we made,” she says. Looking back, she does wish that there might have been one calm, thoughtful doctor who could have sat down and said, “here’s what we can do and this is how it will look” if they chose to attempt to save the girl. Though it may not have changed her mind, she might have been less intimidated by the statistics.

The procedure was traumatizing, and the weekly ultrasounds afterwards gave heartbreaking reminders as their son continued to grow alongside his twin’s body. “There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t think of that little girl and what she might look like or act like or grow up to be,” Ellen says.

She is grateful for their healthy son, now 3, and his younger brother, almost 1. “Sometimes the only way for me to think of it is how the Maternal-Fetal Medicine specialist phrased it to me: I made a sacrifice to ensure his life. The specialist actually said I had to lose a battle to win a war but I don’t think that’s right. I don’t see this as ‘winning’ because I lost a child.” 

This feature will continue in our next edition...

Kirsten Beachy lives in Briery Branch, Va., with her husband, daughters, a bevy of backyard chickens and ducks, several hives of honeybees, a small cow, and Sophie the cat. She is director of the general education curriculum at Eastern Mennonite University, where she also teaches creative writing and journalism. She writes about poultry, infertility, twins, Down syndrome, Mennonite martyrs, and bad fairies.

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Which HANDS Do Your TWINS USE?



Twins come in two varieties: identical and fraternal—at least that’s the accepted wisdom. However, the more researchers study twins, the more they’re aware of the fascinating differences within and between twin types. In this regard, hand preference is an interesting characteristic. Approxi-

mately 25% of twins are opposite handed. Why? And what does it mean for other twin behavior?

Left, right?

Most people are right-handed or left-handed and a minority is actually ambidex-

trous, which means they lack a clear preference for using either the left or right hand. Handedness can be classified not only with respect to type, but also with respect to degree (strong or weak). Strong right-handers prefer that right hands for most activities, while relatively weak right-handers may use

the left hand for some tasks or, in some cases, may not have a clear hand preference.

Written questionnaires are commonly used to measure handedness. Individuals are asked to indicate which hand they favor for completing unimanual tasks, such as writing or brushing their teeth and bimanual tasks, such as threading a needle or hammering a nail. Responses are usually ordered along a continuum, such as always left, sometimes left, equal, sometimes right and always right. These questionnaires yield accurate information about hand preference and strength, but investigators should also try to directly observe individuals to be certain that the correct hand is recorded.

Left-handedness in the family

For some time, researchers have been aware of the occurrence of left-handedness in some families with twins. Louise Carter-Saltzman, a University of Washington researcher, found that identical twinning is more frequent among the relatives of identical twins who showed mirror-imaging effects, such as hair whorl or dental patterns, as compared with the relatives of identical twins who did not show these reversals.

Twins showing mirror-imaging effects has lower birth weights than twins who didn't display such features. The birth weight difference was possibly explained by late splitting of the fertilized egg, an event that has been associated with left-handedness in identical twins.

Charles Boklage, an investigator at East Carolina University, found increased left-handedness among parents of both identical and fraternal twins, as compared with the parents' own same-sex siblings. He also suggested there may be a meaningful relationship between twinning and certain defects, such as facial clefting and congenital heart problems, among the relatives of some twin pairs. However, the specific factors linking all these things together are not yet well understood.

Hands and brain structure

Helmuth Steinmetz and his colleagues in the department of neurology and institute of general psychology at Heinrich-Heine University in the city of Dusseldorf, Germany, published a study of relationships between handedness and brain asymmetry in identical twins.

Brain asymmetry refers to whether or not the left and right structures of the human brain are the same size and shape and the same in the functions they perform. The researchers began by pointing out previous twin studies that looked at differences in identical twins' brain organization. Unfortunately, the measured features that could be modified by birth events or social influences yielded a murky picture. The researchers chose instead to measure the left and right sides (degree of asymmetry) of the planum temporale, an area of the brain that's related to language.

There's evidence from post-mortem studies of fetuses and newborns that their structure doesn't change after the 31st week of gestation. Therefore, it was very well suited to the purposes of this study. The findings are important because they suggest new reasons why genetically identical twins may show differences in their brain structure and possibly in their performance on some tasks.

Research Participants

Identical twins were recruited through announcements in newspapers. The final sample included 10 pairs of twins who used the right hand (RR) and 10 pairs of twins who were opposite-handed (RL). Identical pairs who were left-handed (LL) were not included. These pairs are actually quite rare.

The majority of pairs (16 out of 20 or 80%) were female. This is not unusual. Researchers are aware of the 'rule of two-thirds', described by David T. Lykken, which shows about two-thirds of most volunteer twin samples are female twins. In order to be certain that the twins were identical, pair members were compared across 27 different blood group constituents.

The probability of misclassifying twins by the method is minimal. The RR pairs ranged from 10 to 62 years old and the RL pairs ranged in age from 15 to 55 years old.

Handedness of the twins was determined by a hand dominance test where twins were requested to trace the lines, dot the circles and tap the squares.

They were classified as left or right-handed based on which hand proved more skillful. The left and right sides of the planum temporale were measured by the magnetic resonance technique that's able to produce images of the brain.

The right-handed twins from both RR pairs and RL pairs showed brain patterns similar to those found for right-handed non-twins (left asymmetry or larger left side of the planum temporale.)

The left-handed twins showed brain patterns similar to those found for left-handed non-twins (an absence of asymmetry).

Most interesting was that members of both RR twins and RL twins showed very little similarity to one another. This is certainly surprising because these twins are genetically identical. What could be the cause of this?

The study's implications

Investigators proposed ways in which splitting of the fertilized egg might occur that would explain their findings. It was first assumed that before splitting, the cells were already organized according to sidedness (left or right).

They then presented a fascinating series of diagrams suggesting for example, that depending on where the split occurs, some twins would be more alike than others in their brain structure. ❤️

Is it Normal for Twins to Fight?



by Judith O. Hooper, Ph.D.

In our society, we grow up and live with the expectation that we will love and get along well with everyone in our family. We expect to feel positively toward our parents, brothers, sisters, spouse and children. Most of us, however, have at least some times when we not only don't feel very loving toward a family member, but could cheerfully wring their neck! Our relationships with our family are close, both emotionally and physically and also very intense. When the television show

you've been looking forward to watching is being drowned out by the cheerleading practice in the basement, or when the cookie you were saving for a snack is missing from the cupboard or when your spouse is joyfully telling a crowd of friends how you dented the car fender, you are not likely to feel very loving. Because they are so close, family members have greater power than anyone else to make us feel angry, sad, confused and loving.

This is as true for children as for adults. You may be troubled by the amount of fighting, both verbal and physical, that occurs among your children. This is a very common problem in families with school-age and adolescent children, and one that many parents find particularly difficult to handle while also adding extra stress and creating chaos in the home. Because much attention is focused on the harmony and closeness between twins, parents are sometimes especially worried if

their multiples fight. As one father said, “They are constantly bickering and yelling at each other. There’s no peace in the house anymore. They won’t listen to me and nothing I seem to do have any effect on them. My other kids fought at this age, but I’m sure it’s not normal for twins to behave this way.”

MY FRIEND, MY FOE

Probably your children, singletons and multiples have been good friends and good enemies as they have grown. One of the great things about having a sibling is that this relationship provides a safe place to learn to get along with others. Especially when siblings are younger, they may fight bitterly, but will probably be playing together again an hour later. For example, a child may say something hateful to a sibling, knowing, if only unconsciously, that they will still be siblings and friends when the fight is over. If the same thing was said to a friend outside the family, that friend might ‘take his toys and go home for good.’ Thus, children learn from their relationships with their siblings just how certain words or actions will affect another person without the fear of losing the person’s friendship. Siblings fight for a number of reasons:

- They fight because they want a parent’s attention, and the parent has only so much time, attention and patience to go around
- They fight because they are jealous. One co-twin may say to himself, “He got a new bike. I didn’t. They must love him more than they love me.”
- They fight over simple, albeit hurtful teasing, which is a way of testing the effects of behavior and words on another person. The co-twins may say to themselves (or out loud), “He called me stupid.” “But she called me stupid first.”
- They fight because they are growing up in a competitive society that teaches them that to win is to be better. Competitive shouts can be commonplace, such as, “I saw it first” or “I’ll race you to the water and win.”

The child’s biggest task during the middle years and early adolescence is to develop a sense of herself as a unique individual, separate from family, although still belonging to that family. Many multiples find this a particularly difficult time in their relationship with each other because it isn’t always easy to know how to be separate from one’s co-twin. During this time, struggles to be smarter, cuter, more artistic, etc. can become really intense as co-twins try to find their unique selves, separate from their identity as co-twins. If fighting between your children, singletons or multiples, is a concern for you, there are some things you can do to stop the fighting or at least keep it down to a dull roar. Recognize that there are many reasons for the fighting, and make an effort to develop an understanding of those reasons. At the same time, though, you must make up your mind that you will not tolerate the fighting any longer, although it may not be easy to stick to that resolution. However, many parents have found that committing to that resolution is the most important factor in bringing peace to their home.

LAYING DOWN THE LAW

Middle-years children are old enough to be told bluntly that you will no longer tolerate fighting among them. Tell them that while it’s normal to have disagreements and that you recognize that it is not easy sometimes to have a co-twin, the constant fighting upsets you,

and you value peace at home and will no longer be the judge and jury over their disputes. Then, stand by that resolution and make sure your spouse does, too.

The habit of fighting and bickering is not easy to break. If you seem to be making no headway, ask a professional to help you and your children figure out better ways than fighting to resolve disagreements. If you can remain calm in the face of battling co-twins, retain your sense of humor and, with your spouse, put up a determined and united front, you can eventually expect peace to break out in your living room. ♥

PUTTING AWAY THE BOXING GLOVES

Stopping the fighting will make you feel better. But Dr. James Van Horn, a family life specialist at Pennsylvania State University, has some useful suggestions for helping your twins feel better about themselves and even surer of your love and concern. Following some or all of these suggestions will help your children feel less of a need to fight:

- Set aside some time to be alone with each child. While you may have done this when they were younger, it’s easy to forget that middle-years children, too, will enjoy and appreciate some time when they can have your undivided attention. This is good advice for all parents, and especially important for competitive multiples.
- Recognize that each child is unique. It is easy in the midst of busy family life to forget that your multiples are individuals, different from all other members of the family, including their co-twin.
- Make sure that your children realize their unique strengths.
- Praise your children for being who they are, not just for what they do. With so much emphasis on doing—athletics, music, school work—it is easy to overlook personal qualities such as loyalty, a sense of humor, kindness and so forth.
- Avoid initiating competition among your children. Try not to talk about the ‘cleaner’ room, ‘higher’ grades or ‘better’ player. A child who always hears that his co-twin is neater, or did better in school cannot be expected to feel good about his sibling, himself or you.
- Don’t insist on sharing. Everyone is entitled to ownership of some things, and all of us have things that we simply don’t wish to share. Children need to be given the right to decide not to share at least some of the time.
- Be sure that older children are not usually forced to give in to younger ones because “He’s little” or “She doesn’t know any better.”



Hitting the Road With Twins Plus More

Traveling Tips for Larger Families!

by Christa D. Reed

I can remember when my twins were young and we would take family road trips practically everywhere we would go. Even when they were infants we drove from California to Wyoming to attend a family reunion. We really enjoyed driving because it allowed for flexibility (we could stop whenever we wanted) and we liked looking at the scenery outside our car window. Flying always seemed too costly and the thought of lugging all that baby equipment with us onto a plane wasn't that appealing. Life was definitely much easier when we travelled with just the two boys. Skip ahead roughly 10 years and we expanded our clan to include our twin boys plus two more singles so now we are considered a "large" family and traveling with all of us can be tough and challenging.

SELECTING A SPOT

This can easily be a simple or more complicated task depending on how much you include your kids in the decision making of where you will go for your vacation. This summer, because my twins just graduated from high school, we asked them to choose whether they wanted to go to Florida or California this year and after careful consideration, they selected Florida and chose to go to the Emerald Gulf Coast in Destin/Fort Walton Beach where we found the Wyndham Garden Fort Walton Beach Destin. There are numerous accommodations for larger families in the area. There are resort hotels, condominiums and vacation rentals all available based on your budget, length of stay and the amenities you need.





It is best to do extensive research at least six months in advance to ensure you find the best location for your family.

GETTING THERE

We did have to find a family vehicle where we could all ride together so of course we selected a Dodge Grand Caravan... which we love. It is really great for a large family like ours and the additional storage space in our "stow-n-go" really helps. We always pack a cooler with drinks and picnic makings and stop at interstate rest stops to save money and to throw a Frisbee or Football around and get out of the car for a while. It is also important to purchase or borrow a luggage car top carrier to give you even more room inside.

I always have each boy pack a couple days of clothes, swimsuit and other essential items into a smaller backpack so we don't have to open up the luggage car top carrier until we arrive at our destination. In our case, we drove from Colorado to Florida and it took over two and a half days to get there. Most hotels and motels in the US will only allow you to have a maximum of four people inside the room and force you to purchase two rooms if you have more than four people travelling with you. I discovered that Choice Hotels (www.choicehotels.com) offers suites that typically will have two queen size beds and a queen size sofa sleeper so we can all stay together in one room and it is much more cost effective because you are not purchasing two rooms.



Choice owns Quality Inn & Suites; Quality Suites; Comfort Inn & Suites, etc. and they have thousands of properties all over the world.

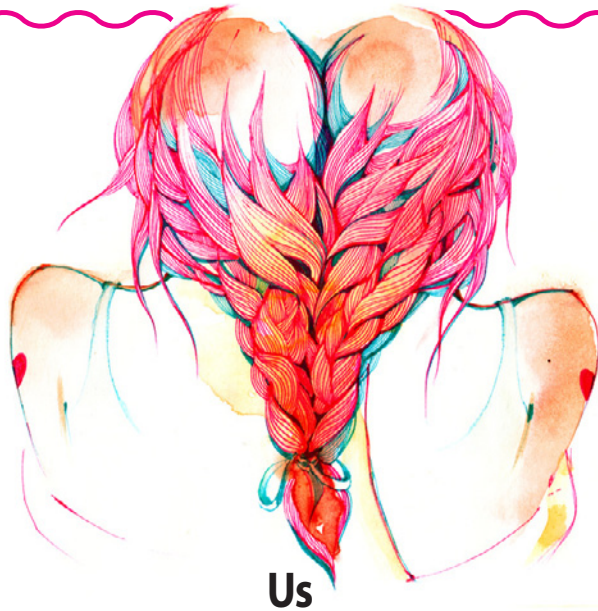
ENJOYING THE DESTINATION

Once we arrived at the Wyndham Garden Fort Walton Beach Destin we were thrilled that this property had a one-bedroom suite that could accommodate our entire family. There were two queen size beds in the bedroom and a pull-out sofa sleeper in the living room plus we were happy to see there was also a kitchenette for our use while we were there. This really helped us save time and money by cooking breakfast and lunch there and enjoying dinner out on the town. We also loved the Wyndham Garden because it had a private balcony with two chairs overlooking the beautiful Gulf of Mexico and because the hotel is located right on Okaloosa Island and steps from the beautiful and pristine white sandy beaches that surround the area, you can't go wrong. Each hotel guest can enjoy a complimentary umbrella with two beach chairs every day and the hotel also has two beautiful swimming pools, rockslide, hot tub, fitness room, a video arcade room, free bicycle rentals, new release DVD rentals, two restaurants/bars and free Wi-Fi throughout the entire property. It was a fantastic spot for families and we will definitely be coming back again.

For us, the hotel resort accommodations really worked well and made for a wonderful, family vacation that we will remember for many years to come. The 28-hour drive home with all four boys, on the other hand, is something I soon would like to forget!

Happy and safe travels to you and yours... ♥

Christa Reed has been the Editor of TWINS since 2007 and lives in Colorado with all her boys (including fraternal twins).



Us

Cut from the same cloth.

Womb mates, born on the same day,
we were bound to be the same.

Kicks, punches, fights and laughter.

We brought joy to our family, but
not to each other.

Instead, we brought resentment, hate, and animosity.

Sibling rivalry at its finest,
Evil twin and good twin clearly established
through fights in childhood.

We were double the trouble, not double the fun.

I would not know who I am without you.

I would not be here without you.

You are half my soul
and half my heart.

Without you, I'd fall apart.

—Danielle Bush



Danielle and her fraternal twin, Samantha, are 30 years old and reside in Houston. Danielle is a teacher and Samantha is a receptionist at an animal clinic.



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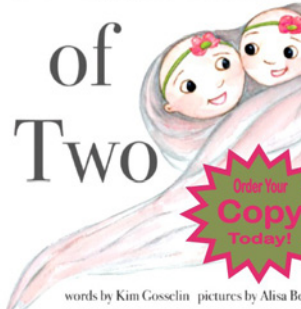
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Double Takes



1

Brody & Nate, FR
Age 2
Destin, FL



2

Gretta & Jack, FR
Age 3-months-old
Como, CO



3

Reighlyn & Delaney, FR
Age 2 ½
Blandon, PA



4

Ian & Easton, ID
Age 18-months
Youngtown, OH



5

Kiera & Jameson, FR
Age 7 ½
North Andover, MA



6

Apryl & Amya, FR
Age 5
Teaneck, NJ



7

Ryker & Sawyer, ID
Age 3
Spokane, WA



8

Avery & Maxwell, FR
Age 3
Aurora, IL

July/August 2016



9

Victoria & Isabella, FR
Age 2 ½
Memphis, TN



10

Cayson & Cruz, FR
Age 6
White Oak, TX



11

Max & Mia, FR
Age 5-months
Dayton, OH



12

Julianna & Savannah, FR
Age 4
Woodbury, NY



13

William & James, FR
Age 2 ½
Minneapolis MN



14

Samantha & Joseph, FR
Age 2
Cincinnati, OH



15

Carsyn & Hadley, FR
Age 3
League City, TX



16

Nicholas & Patrick, FR
Age 6
Baltimore, MD



17

Jack & Emma, FR
Age 11-months
New York, NY



18

Ashlyn & Adelyn, ID
Age 6
Lufkin, TX



19

Weston & Wyatt, ID
Age 3
Roachdale, IN

Double Takes



20

James & Eliza, FR
Age 17-months
West Seneca, NY



21

Gianna & Jade, FR
Age 6-months
Pittsburgh, PA



24

Kylee & Karlee, ID
Age 19-months
Panaca, NV



22

Evan & Eli, FR
Age 4
Ozark, MO



23

Viola & Huxton, FR
Age 7-months
Manhattan, KS



25

Deron & Devon, ID
Age 9
Hollis, NY



26

Kendall & Tegan, FR, Age 3 1/2, AND
Kolton & Starleigh, FR, Age 4 1/2
Port Vue, PA



27

Avery & Ashlynn, ID
Age 10 1/2 months
Ernest, PA



28

Kennedy & Keaton, FR
Age 3
Houston, TX



29

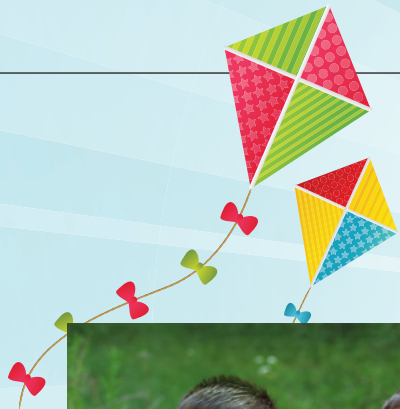
Bodhi & Skye, FR
Age 15-months
Los Angeles, CA



30

Sy'rai & Kenza, FR
Age 9-months
Las Vegas, NV

July/August 2016



31

Dominic & Logan, ID
Age 3
Clinton, MA



32

Cooper & Quinn, FR
Age 3
Middletown, VA



33

Ava & Sofia, FR
Age 6-months
Justice, IL



34

Brady & Jaxson, ID
Age 1
Great Falls, SC



35

Aubree Grace & Christian Gabriel, FR
Age 2
Staten Island, NY



36

Chloe & Caleb, FR
Age 2-weeks
Cincinnati, OH



37

Brennon & Brandon, ID
Age 3
Salisbury, NC



38

Joshua & Grace, FR
Age 2-months
Bordentown, NJ



39

Lola & Sasha, ID
Age 10-months
Queens, NY



40

Nella & Charleigh, FR
Age 3
Montrose, MI

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