

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

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March/April 2016

10 TIPS FOR BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM WITH YOUR TWINS



March-April 2016

**Fighting,
Biting, Kicking
& Other
Peaceful
Pastimes...**

**How to Get
Your Young
(City) Twins
into the Great
Outdoors!**

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







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On the Cover:



Introducing Mason and Ellaina, 3-year-old fraternal twins from Northern Canada, in The Pas, Manitoba. Proud parents Sara & Darnell describe their twins as “miracle babies” who will be turning three at the end of April. Both are so full of life and personality and remarkably Mason looks identical to Darnell and Ellaina looks identical to Sara. While the twins have some similarities, their differences are night and day. They have the most amazing imaginations and love to play together. Their twin bond is incredible. Mason is 3 inches taller than Ellaina and nearly five pounds heavier and they love each other very much.





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One Sock, Two Socks, Red Socks, Blue Socks. . .

I live in a man's world... literally. I proudly live with (5) five males (*my husband and four sons*) and wouldn't change my life for anything... it is what it is. However, with that said having four boys that range in age over a span of 10 years (*ages 8, 13 and 18-year-old twins*), you can only imagine what my laundry piles look like. Yes, I said piles (plural) as I don't think I have actually ever gotten completely caught up in the 18 years of parenting and don't even recall when I only had a "as in only one" laundry pile. I do remember way back in the fall of 2012 getting pretty darn close (*for about a minute*) but then I was back to pile(s) within no time.

My laundry room is located downstairs on the bottom level and is not really that big. It functions to strictly clean and dry clothes only. Clothes will get washed and dried (*and sometimes re-washed a few times because I get so busy that I have to leave the load in the washer, thus creating that beloved 'moldy smell' that makes me have to re-wash the load over and over again.*) It's a vicious cycle...

But that's the easy part... washing and drying. Folding on the other hand, gives me the most troubles. Our folding room or "ground zero" as I sometimes refer to this very special place in our home takes up our entire downstairs family room. Typically, on any given day, "ground zero" is filled with large piles and piles of clean clothes. Often times, these clean piles end up looking like the Swiss Alps (*mountains of laundry*) and it becomes an overwhelming task nobody in the family wants to tackle.

So, with my coffee in hand, Netflix on the TV and sheer will and determination, I set out to do what no "man" (*in my house*) will do and that is an all-out, folding marathon. I proceed to fold and stack clothes with great precision and accuracy. I don't have time to group socks, though, so I use the "throw all socks in one basket" method and pronounce to the household "this is the official sock box" find socks on your own (*that's the least they can do, right?*)

There comes the time when I finally get down to the final item to fold and I am sitting there surrounded by these huge stacks of folded clothes, I take a deep breath and look around only to see another dirty pile forming on the floor yet all I can do is smile. That's right, smile. Why? Well, for now, this is the season of my life... washing (*re-washing*), drying, folding, stacking and caring for these men in my life is what I do now. However, it will not always be like this and there will come a time where I will miss all the action of my folding marathons and stacking sessions. That is why when I recently came across this wonderful quote by Thomas S. Monson about this very topic I thought it was worthy of sharing with all of you...

"If you are still in the process of raising children, be aware that the piles and piles of laundry will disappear all too soon and that you will, to your surprise, miss them profoundly."

Happy spring! We have another fantastic issue packed with a ton of great tips and information all parents of multiples can use, no matter what age and stage you are currently in! From pregnancy to pre-school and beyond... we include practical and informative help and advice that you can't get anywhere else on this planet. I hope you enjoy this beautiful season of new beginnings and fresh starts and be sure to create fun memories with your kiddos that will last a lifetime! Always remember, they want your TIME and ATTENTION way more than any material things you can give them... (wrinkled clothing and all!)



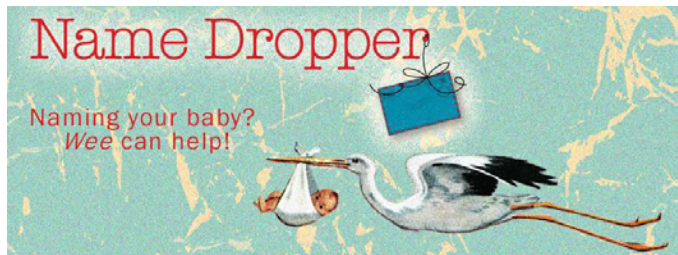
Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa Reed,, Editor-in-Chief
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Name Dropper Helps Parents Find 'Multiple' Names

By Kirsten Cash, Name Dropper



The first surprise is the news: More than one baby is in there?!? After you regain consciousness, you typically begin celebrating or panicking...depending on multiple (insert snare drum) factors surrounding this news. Then, the other surprises start to manifest: you will need multiple car seats, multiple cribs, multiple swings, multiple bouncers....Oh. My. Gosh.... you will need multiple NAMES!!!! Well, get the color back to your face and relax, Name Dropper is here to help!

Name Dropper is the premier baby naming service designed to assist people in the baby naming process. If you have had any previous children, you know what a challenge naming a new little human being can be! There is so much responsibility with choosing a child's name! Will it suit them; will it be strong/masculine/feminine/smart/popular/unique...the list of thoughts that go into choosing a baby name goes on and on. And that is just the fear of naming one baby! Here you are facing naming two, three or more all at once!

The goal of Name Dropper is to make the naming process, fun, meaningful and, most importantly, EASY! You, the parent-to-be, fill out our information form regarding things such as the names of your babies' parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, your cultural background, religious background, your interests, and other information that helps us get a sense of you and the names that you would be most likely to choose for your babies. We, the name droppers, utilize our knowledge of names, sounds, popularity, sensibility and other onomatology to offer name suggestions that will help lead you to the perfect name choice!

At this point, you are most certainly thinking, "Onoma-what??" Onomatology is "the science or study of the origin and forms of proper names of persons or places" as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Our name droppers are onomastic specialists who have a variety of backgrounds, knowledge and experiences which enable us to formulate names that work best with what you are wanting for your children as well as those that sound good with your babies' last name.

Collectively, we have six children of our own and all too well remember the challenges of baby naming. Every name choice that is proposed to our customers has been given time, consideration and genuine care in its selection. We study the informa-

tion you provide and research names that we believe would be the most suitable possibilities for your babies. After individually hand-selecting names for your babies, we notify you that your names have been dropped! You receive a list of six to ten names per baby. With multiples, we take the time to respect what you do and don't want for your multiples' names (e.g., start with the same letter, not have rhyming names, etc.). We want you to have one less concern in the anticipation of your new arrivals!

Let's say you have one name already chosen, but need two more for your remaining triplets, that's where we come in. Tell us the name you have and fill out the other information and we will come up with names that go well with your chosen name and that follow the guidelines you provide to us. When you find yourself needing assistance with choosing names, visit our web site at www.NameDropperBaby.com and you can begin taking steps toward alleviating one of the stressors of anticipating having multiples. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @NameDropperBaby.

Discovering you are having multiples enter your life does indeed come with many responsibilities. Name Dropper can relieve one of the most daunting challenges you will face: naming those precious bundles of joy. We help make one of these intimidating tasks a little less overwhelming. We look forward to helping you!

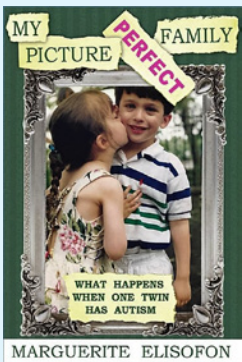
HOT OFF THE PRESSES...CHECK OUT THESE NEW BOOKS ABOUT TWINS...



Babies of Two
by Kim Gosselin

Babies of Two is written from the perspective of adorable baby twins shortly before birth. Mollie and Maddie's secret is out! What do they see? What do they do? So much fun for me and you! Join the twin's journey as they slip and slide into a brand new world where Mama and Daddy wait to greet them with loving arms and beating hearts. Written by Kim Gosselin, an award-winning author, she penned the book upon learning she'd

be a grandmother of twins. Known for writing picture books to help educate children living with chronic conditions and special needs, Kim discovered sparks of new inspiration while cuddling precious grandbabies rocking in her lap. *Babies of Two* is filled with lyrical lines of rhyme and wondrous waves of illustrations by the talented artist, Alisa Belzil. http://www.amazon.com/Babies-Two-Kim-Gosselin/dp/1519412959/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

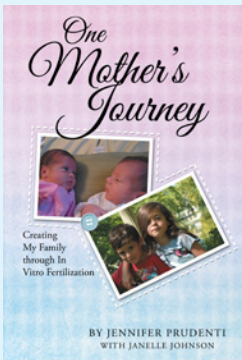


My Picture Perfect Family: What Happens When One Twin Has Autism

by Marguerite Elisofon

On December 26th, 1990 Marguerite Elisofon gave birth to premature twins: Samantha and Matthew. Marguerite and her husband soon noticed their daughter lagged behind her brother in ways that scared them. Samantha, they learned, was on the autistic spectrum. Most “experts” weren’t optimistic about her chances for leading a normal life and prepared the Elisofons for the worst. But Marguerite and her family refused to accept these limitations. Twenty-three challenging years later, Samantha graduated from Pace University . . . cum laude! *My Picture Perfect Family*

is a universal story about the struggles and successes of a family determined to leave no child behind. It’s a tale of unconditional love, a portrait of authentic parenthood, and a message of hope to all families. Most of all, it’s a true story about never giving up on your child, or your family. http://www.amazon.com/My-Picture-Perfect-Family-Happens/dp/1938595041/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1453759038&sr=8-1&keywords=my+picture+perfect+family



One Mother’s Journey: Creating My Family through In Vitro Fertilization

by Jennifer Prudenti

In *One Mother’s Journey: Creating My Family Through In Vitro Fertilization*, author and twin-mom Jennifer Prudenti writes candidly about her path to motherhood in the hopes that it will dispel myths and empower other women. “I want to help women who are embarking on this emotional journey to know that they are not alone,” Prudenti said. “I want to talk about my experience; share my struggles, my fears, my insecurities, all of it.” Through her honest retelling and personal experience, she hopes to change the stigma associated with I.V.F. and start an open and honest dialog about

it. “My hope is that by relaying intimate details that people generally do not share, couples can prepare themselves for the demands that this journey will elicit from them should they decide to take this route.” <http://www.amazon.com/One-Mothers-Journey-Creating-Fertilization/dp/1490883975>



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Many Happy Returns

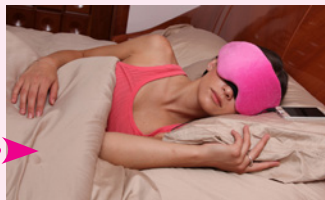


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products, each product heals, rejuvenates, softens and energizes. <http://www.mixedchicks.net/>



5

Steps for Finding Lost Library Books

I used to consider myself an organized person who rarely lost anything, definitely never a library book. Now that I'm the mother of twins and a daughter who love books, I can no longer attest to this fact. In an attempt to reclaim some sanity, I have come up with the following five step plan to use next time a book goes missing. You, of course, could apply these principles for any lost item, but I know it's the library book you are searching for. The library has deadlines. The library wants money. And most importantly if you don't return the book, they will know the truth, you were unable to keep track of a large 10 x 12 picture book.

STEP 1. CHECK THE LIBRARY SHELF

This may seem like wishful thinking, but on more than one occasion I returned the library book and it was never checked-in. So before you ransack your house, berating yourself with, "I could have sworn I returned that book. I must be losing my mind," make sure it isn't at the library.

STEP 2. LAST KNOWN LOCATION

The true crime genre has inspired the next few steps. You can apply some of their investigative techniques to your search. I always start with this one, "Where did you last see the library book?" Granted, the kids usually never remember, which requires you to answer it, but it's important to figure out since it is almost always there, somewhere, hiding.

STEP 3. USE A FLASHLIGHT

This might seem a bit of stretch to use a flashlight like an actual detective, but it works. I found gift cards, earrings, DS games (obviously designed by a childless person who never searched for a pin-size lost one), and library books by using a flashlight. Even in a well-lit room, the flashlight reflects off the item in such a way to help you see it. And, of course, it helps you to see into dark places like under the couch, inside the couch and behind it (books are swallowed up by that darn couch--always check the couch).

STEP 4. LOOK AGAIN

Do you remember the last time you saw an optical illusion? You tried to see the face, but couldn't, even though it is right there in front of you. Or when you are staring at the "look and find pictures" and your kid finds the apple in two seconds, yet you can't see it? The same rule applies here, it is in the location you looked, you didn't see it, so look again. Trust me it is there (most of the time unless you skipped step 1 and the book is on the library shelf).

STEP 5. LEAST LIKELY PLACE

You have reached the last step. You tried all the of the above yet you are still empty handed. You start to panic a little about having to admit to the librarian "the truth" and then you realize, maybe you haven't searched everywhere. Now it is time to check the least likely place you would expect to find it. I am referring to under the mattress, inside another book or at the bottom of the toy box (all places I have found lost library books). I realize you don't want to search these places such as the toy box because it is time consuming and would require you to dump the box of toys and then clean it all up, but you are out of options, it's either clean or confess, it's up to you.

Hopefully these steps will help you feel less frustrated, more in control and find that pesky library book so the truth can remain where it belongs, concealed. ♥

Cheryl Maguire's writing has been published in AAA Newsletter, Chicken Soup for the Soul: Count Your Blessings, It's Twins, and Twin Connections as well as TWINS Magazine.



I Fought My Dog for a Bagel

My Unsolicited Advice to Mothers of Multiples

By Annette Motroni Vazquez



Annette Motroni Vazquez is a full-time working mother and has 5-year-old fraternal twin girls. She lives in New Jersey with her husband, stepson and bagel thief Jack Russell Terrier. She is an active member and web administrator for her local mothers of multiples support group.

Last week, I registered my twin girls for kindergarten. It's hard to believe they are already going to be 5 years old. It seems like just yesterday, I was proof that the walking dead really do exist and I was just dreaming of that magical moment when I would get a full night's sleep again. Now, they will be heading off to kindergarten.

When I first joined my moms of multiples group, someone told me "the days are long but the years go by fast" and they were so right. The years have flown by. It has gone by in a blink.

In the world of moms of multiples, surviving 5 years seems like an impossible feat. There were so many days where I didn't think I could do it; that somehow, I was just messing it up every second of every day. But I realized I needed to ease up on myself. I'm a perfectionist by nature and if everything isn't perfect, then I am failing. But the truth is...I'm not...WE are not. We are strong. We are survivors. Life is perfect in its own way...it's perfectly chaotic and that's exactly how it is supposed to be.

As an "experienced" mom of twins (and I use the term

"experienced" very loosely), the number one question I am asked by new moms of multiples is "when does it get easier?" The truth is, it doesn't. It never gets easier. It gets different. There will always be challenges. My newest challenges? One twin who declares she "hates listening" and another who spends more time at the table moving food from one side of the plate to the other than actually eating.

As I look back on the craziness, I remember one particular day when my girls were about 6 or 7 weeks old. I was just starting to get into the groove of life with twins, figuring out how to survive one day at a time. I was starting to pick up on the girls' cues and knew just about when they'd be hungry. Since I knew that time was approaching, I came up with an idea. We had fresh bagels in the house that my husband had bought the day before. I was ahead of the game, for once, so I figured I would toast my bagel and have it all set. Then I'd change the babies and nurse them while I ate my bagel. It was a brilliant plan. I'd get a chance to eat with some sort of peace since the girls never made a peep while they were nursing.

The bagel was toasted perfectly and had just the right amount of butter. I put it on my nightstand so I could get all my nursing supplies in place before bringing the babies in. I brought in the nursing pillow, my phone, burp cloth, and remote control when I look up only to see the horror of my life...my dog licking my bagel and preparing to take it for himself. My heart sank. That was likely the only decent thing I'd be able to eat all day. I ran over and yelled "no, it's mine!" and began a tug-o-war with the dog. He gave up pretty quickly but not before he dropped it on the floor and slobbered all over it. At that point, I didn't care. I got the bagel back, that's all that mattered. I picked off the dog hairs and dust from the floor, and I'm not going to lie...I ate it. I was THAT exhausted. I was THAT desperate for some sort of normalcy in my life. I fought my dog for a bagel and I won (of course, "winning" is relative considering I won a dog slobber-covered bagel).

Life with multiples is challenging. And we all have our own other life challenges to stack on top of life with multiples. But know that you are doing OK. Cut yourself a break. Take a breath and keep on going. We've all been there. And when you're having a really bad day, just remember that I fought my dog for a bagel. ♥





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

BIG

is
Beautiful

by Ruby Coats Mosher

Jane, the mother of 2-year-old identical twins was miserable throughout her pregnancy. "The nausea was bad," she says, "but worst of all was the weight gain. I was huge. I felt like a fat hippo waddling around. I loved my babies, but I hated my distended abdomen. I wanted the pregnancy to hurry up and be over which made me feel very guilty."

Women expecting multiples go through some big changes during their pregnancies. While singleton mothers may say, "I was as big as a house," mothers of multiples would say, "I was like the Houston Astrodome, and the Green Bay Packers came to play ball—for nine months!"

There's no doubt about it. Two or three (or more) babies take up a lot of room in the abdomen. As the babies grow, her abdomen seems to grow from the size of a balloon to that of a blimp.

KEEPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

During this growth period, some women, like Jane, may experience intense dislike for their bodies, perceiving themselves as fat. And it's not surprising that this perception brings on negative feelings. So it is understandable, in our thin-worshipping society, when a woman feels uncomfortable watching her weight steadily rise. But it is important to remember that weight gain is a normal, healthy and necessary part of pregnancy.

It helps to know that most of the normal weight gained due to pregnancy is not fat; only a small amount of fat is stored in the body in anticipation of breastfeeding. Most of the weight gain is due to the babies themselves, their placentas, amniotic fluid and increased maternal blood volume.

Since there is really no such thing as an "average" multiple-birth pregnancy, professionals disagree on how much weight a woman should gain. "A ball park figure is about 44 pounds," says Cheryl Thole, M.S., R.D., L.D.

But more important than quantity is quality. A woman will gain the right amount for her particular pregnancy if she eats properly. Thole recommends sticking to a healthy diet of milk products, meats, fruits, vegetables, breads and cereals. Thole warns that, "even though a woman needs an extra 300 to 500 calories per fetus, those calories need to come from good food. Being pregnant is not a license to splurge on candy bars and potato chips."

And certainly, even though a woman may be overweight or just feel overweight, pregnancy is not the time to diet. This is the time for women to relax their ideal image of their bodies; for some women, pregnancy can be a time to come to terms with their physical selves.

Susan, mother of 3-year-old fraternal twins, had been a chronic dieter since adolescence. "When I got pregnant," she says, "I knew I had to eat better. Gradually, with my doctor's and dietician's help, I came to respect my body. After all, I told myself, if my body could bear twins, it is a truly remarkable body!"

REASSURANCE FROM LOVED ONES

Even the most upbeat and optimistic mother-to-be may not be able to prevent having occasional bouts of negative feelings about her pregnant body. Jane, with her intensely negative self image, felt guilty about it. She wondered if it would hurt the babies. "Although I wanted the pregnancy to be over," she says, "I didn't want my babies to be born prematurely because of my attitude."

Jeanine Roembach, M.D., a psychiatrist at Menniger's Institute in Topeka, Kansas, stipulates that a woman can adversely affect her fetus if her body image is so negative that she stops eating. Women in this situation may want to seek professional aid in feeling better about themselves. Another way to boost self esteem during pregnancy says Roembach, is for a woman to focus on the positive aspects of her pregnancy. She should think about what a wondrous feat

her body is accomplishing by creating two (or more) new lives at the same time.

"A woman's husband can also be a great source of support and positive feelings," Roembach says. He can help reassure her that he loves her pregnant body just as he loves her unpregnant body. A woman can also obtain support through an intimate friend or family member.

SAY WHAT?

When a woman conceives multiples, it is as if a neon light turns on above her head proclaiming, "MULTIPLE PREGNANCY...PUBLIC PROPERTY... NO QUESTION TOO RUDE, NOR TO PERSONAL!"

Jane agrees. "I always felt fat," she says. "It didn't help when people came up and said, 'Wow, you're really big! Just how much weight have you gained?' Can you believe their nerve? Sometimes it made me so mad I replied, 'Quite a bit, but I'm pregnant, you know. What about you?'"

People's unthinking comments can cut to the quick. Their words can be especially sharp when the tumultuous hormones of pregnancy already have a woman on the edge.

Just what is the proper way to respond to inappropriate questions? That's difficult to say. It depends on several factors, such as what kind of person you are, whether the questioner is a friend, relative or passerby, and whether the question was meant to hurt feelings or was simply inquisitive.

For someone like Jane, who has no trouble speaking her mind, the tart response she gave could be appropriate when the remark was meant to hurt her. It is good to remember, however, that most people don't mean to be rude when they ask a question about your pregnant body. In most cases, they're just curious about the miracle of a multiple pregnancy. The creation of two or more babies at the same time is an awesome occasion, and many people just can't restrain themselves from trying to find out more about it.

Although it is understandable that others are interested in a woman's pregnancy, that doesn't give them the right to roughshod

over her feelings. Another mother of twins, Susan, gives a tactful response to personal questions such as, "How much weight have you gained?" by saying, "Just the right amount my doctor says." Then she changes the subject. She has recognized the harmless intent of most questions and has refused to let them diminish her self-esteem.

The questions people have asked Liz, another mother of twins, were very different from those posed to Jane and Susan. Liz has a long waist and is 5'9". When she was in the eight month of her twin pregnancy, she barely looked pregnant with one baby, let alone two. "I just got thicker around the waist," she says. "I still had all the discomforts—nausea, bloat, shortness of breath, toxemia. I just didn't look like it."

THE ADORING PUBLIC

Liz was elated to be carrying twins and wanted the world to know, and to share her joy. But many people looked at her in disbelief when she told them the news. "You don't look big enough to be carrying twins," they said. "Are you sure there are two in there?"

"Of course I was sure!" Liz says. "They kicked me in the ribs and bladder every two minutes." Those comments made Liz feel inadequate—as if her pregnancy wasn't as good as other women's just because she didn't appear ready to burst at any minute. "I know I was lucky to have so much room for my babies to grow in, but I would look at other women in my doctor's office and wish I could be huge like them."

Liz, Jane and Susan all agree that people's comments bothered them during their pregnancies. They also agree that you can't stop people from asking rude questions, even though they mean no harm. "Try to let their words run off your back like water off a duck," Susan suggests.

And mothers-to-be can take heart, Liz adds. "As soon as those babies arrive, all the attention is off your body. Everyone's eyes are on the babies. Then their big question will be, 'Are they twins?'" ♥



Anne Marshall is a mother of twins and blogs on Huff Post Parents U.K and at www.mumming-up.com about twins, raising multiples and more, mothers, society etc. She currently resides in Cardiff, Wales.

Top Tips for Twins 0–12 months



by Anne Marshall

1) Feeding

For any feeding method you use, feed them together. I had been intending to breast feed, but ultimately ended up bottle feeding. When my partner first went back to work, I would feed them one at a time. One would be screaming while the other had their bottle. It was stressful for all of us. Then another twin mum told me how she propped hers up with cushions so she could feed them at the same time. Perhaps if I hadn't been so sleep deprived I could have thought of this myself? So I put them in their car seats on the sofa, and fed them together. No waiting, no tears, genius! – the other mother not me!

2) Routines

Routine, routine, routine. From a very early age mine had a routine. They were fed at the same time, napped at the same time, played at the same time, we went for a walk after lunch at the same time which was also a nap time, and went to bed at the same time. Funny enough, a mother of a singleton said to me that this must involve a lot of crying. Perhaps it sounded very regimented. I wasn't a believer in crying it out, so this wasn't the case, and if you get a feel for what your babies do naturally, getting them on a routine can happen quite cohesively and naturally. The routine will change and adapt every



couple of months as they change, but I found the structure helped me to organize myself, prevented me from getting overwhelmed in chaos, and allowed the babies to feel secure.

3) Quality time

Don't worry about quality time when they are infants. Obviously it's nice, when there is two adults around and they can have extra cuddles, or you can go a bit further afield more easily, but don't worry that you aren't doing swimming classes, or any other class. Of course there are ways around these hurdles, but don't put yourself under unnecessary pressure. Your babies are happy just to hang out with you, walk through the park, have a dance party at home, go for

coffee. They have you, and they have each other. They don't need to be adding to the special skills section of their C.V at 5 months old.

4) Prematurity


If your twins are born prematurely, you might want to read up a little on that. Mine were born 5 weeks early and I really didn't know anything about it. My best baby- mama friend had a full term singleton, who could put his pacifier in and out of his mouth all by himself, while we were at coffee, while mine were always fast asleep in the buggy (bonus, really). Don't compare what a full term baby does to a premature baby. It usually all evens out pretty quickly, or there may be things that show up in the future. For instance, my daughter is hyper-mobile which was picked up on by a physiotherapist when she was only 6 months. This has affected some of her fine and gross motor skills. However, we can't say for sure this was because she was born prematurely or not.

5) Stages

Every stage moves on. Sometimes when you're in the thick of it, especially in a first year with twins, it can feel as if this stage is how your life will always be, and that can be overwhelming.

So remember, if your twins don't sleep through the night yet, or you're alone a lot and your friends don't understand what you're going through, or whichever stage you're at, 'this too shall pass'. These stages, especially in the first year, move past so quickly as I mentioned before in the routines section. Just when you think you can't go on any more, they'll start sleeping through the night, or you'll meet a new friend etc., or they'll start sitting up and playing differently, and life will change all over again.

6) Look After Yourself

Look after yourself. People like to say 'if Mums not happy, the kids won't be happy'. That's a little harsh if you are feeling unhappy, so don't be hard on yourself. But, I do believe it's O.K. to be selfish. Take time for yourself. Take time out. Keep something for yourself that makes you feel good, whether that's yoga, a trip to the cinema, painting, work, or something where you can express yourself. It's important to keep nourishing yourself, because motherhood can be overwhelming and you really can feel that you've lost your self. You're still you. Don't worry, you haven't lost anything, only gained. You don't have to be the perfect Mum either, you're just fine as you are, and you are perfect to your babies. The first year goes so fast, it really is only 12 months of little infants before you drift on to toddler hood. Good luck Mama, you can do it!). 



How Do Emotions Affect Learning?

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

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

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

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

But our attention turned back to the front when the lecturer threw his notes down and stomped into the wings. The audience gasped and held its collective breath. Before we could

let it out, the lecturer returned to the podium and asked, "Well, how are you feeling, and have you learned anything yet?"

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

Think of toddlers in the bathtub faced with a furious parent trying to teach a lesson about keeping the water inside the tub. What lesson do the children remember? It's hard to tell. Think of toddlers who live in a household where angry feelings between parents are the rule. How does it affect them? Even a little lesson like staying off the coffee table changes when emotional overtones in the house are present.

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

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

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

THE POWER OF FIRMNESS

Being firm is a real switch for many parents. Infants don't call for firmness – but rather, responsiveness. Reading their signals and meeting their needs are the primary concerns. The question is, what are my babies trying to tell me, and how should I respond? Toddlers still have needs, of course, but those needs often lead them into behaviors their parents never even thought of! And besides having needs, they also make impossible demands. The best parental response in the face of a good deal of toddler behavior is firmness.

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

It's hard, but important, to create an emotional climate that is conducive to learning. If you understand that whatever you're trying to teach the child is probably lost when you blow up, it may help keep you calmer. And worse – it

isn't just lost for the child who is the target of the anger, but probably for his co-twin as well.

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

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

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

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



DON'T CRY OVER SPILLED MILK

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

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



PRE-SCHOOL

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



by Patricia Edmister

Are You TEACHING Your Twins to Be SICK?

During the preschool years, many behaviors become regular responses to specific situations. In the case of childhood hypochondria – the imagining or exaggerating of medical symptoms – it's important for parents to decide if their twins are reacting to one of several different situations in which "acting sick" brings them some type of positive feedback.

Complaining of feeling sick is certainly not only a twin-specific problem, of course. (See "Twin-Specific Watchwords") Many toddlers and young children go through periods of voicing physical complaints as signs of anxiety about something going on in their lives. In children, just as in adults, this anxiety can lead to the physical sensation of muscle tension, headaches, stomachaches and nausea. Such symptoms may be found

more frequently in children whose nature seems to classify them as 'worriers'.

Sometimes, too, children will use physical problems to avoid certain types of situations, such as being punished for something, having to take swimming lessons or visit someone they

don't like. They may also use them to get attention, if they feel they are being ignored.

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

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

Lessons in Good Health

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

- Look at your own behavior and attitudes about being sick to be sure you aren't modeling illness as a pattern for getting attention or avoiding situations.
- Develop certain 'rituals' for determining if an illness is feigned or real – taking the child's temperature, feeling her forehead, etc. Then, if she persists in complaints of illness, put her to bed; darken the room; and be kind, but don't over-reward.
- Don't reinforce the 'sick child's' role – all children seek to have a separate identity, but you don't want to make the sick role seem attractive.



- Don't over-do the care giving and kindness, even when the child is truly sick. It is easy for caring parents to get caught up in making the child's convalescence as pleasant as possible; but giving extra favors, new toys and special foods can reinforce how nice getting sick is. Show your caring equally, whether your child is healthy or ill.
- Analyze the time or situations which surround the occurrence of your child's illnesses. Can you identify particular stressors which may be causing the symptoms? If so, then focus your attention on alleviating those stressors rather than on the physical symptoms. If, for example your child has a stomachache right before swimming lessons, maybe the message she's trying to send is not that she's sick, but that it's too early for this particular youngster to accept this activity, even though her co-twin might do just fine adjusting to the lessons.
- Watch for the occurrence of illness in one twin when both co-twins are engaging in a competitive activity in which one is either more confident or competent. Again, this may be an indicator that a particular activity isn't appropriate, developmentally, for both children.
- Be careful not to accuse your child of lying or making up his illness. To a child experiencing stress or anxiety, the physical feelings of illness are very real, not imagined, so parents need to look for the underlying causes rather than to deny the symptoms.
- Never ignore a child's complaint of illness, even if she has a history of having exaggerated or imaginary illnesses. The illness may, in fact, be real, and medical attention may be needed. If, however, you repeatedly encounter these complaints, your child's physician sees no illness upon exam and you have not given the child a lot of positive attention for her illnesses in the past, you may want to consult a mental health specialist to assist you in determining the cause of the behavior. ♥

"Twin-specific Watchwords"

Some twins may be especially prone to imagined illnesses in two commonly encountered situations.

Situation #1

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

Situation #2

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

10 Tips for **Building Self-Esteem** with your Twins



by John Clark

When helping to build your children's self-esteem, never under-estimate the power of your positive influence. Here are 10 suggestions that will help you in the process.

1. REMEMBER, YOUR CHILDREN ARE EACH A UNIQUE TREASURE.

Recently, I was entrusted with the care and keeping of our five children for several days. As we ambled through the zoo one afternoon, I pushed the double stroller that carried our 2-year-old twins, while the other three children competed for hand-holds on either side. Soon I became aware of an interesting phenomenon. As we made our way from one cage to the next, the visitors at the zoo began turning their attention from the animals to our own little menagerie, staring as we passed. I know we were a sight to behold! I thought about the beauty and interesting behavior of each of our children – no two being exactly alike, even our twins! I promised

myself at that moment that I would make sure I told each one of my children every day that she or he is a precious gift!

2. MAKE SURE YOUR MARRIAGE IS SOUND.

Children seeking self-esteem need the security of a strong marriage. However, it's important to realize that a marriage relationship does not remain static. The two partners either grow together as a couple or move apart. All couples are going to experience some stress in their relationship, but to foster their children's security and self-worth, parents need to reassure them that they love each other and will stay together as a family.

3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INTERRUPTIONS.

"Dad, can you play ball?" "Mom, can you read me a book?" Many times parents' standard response to such requests is, "Just a minute." Waiting 'a minute' does not damage children's self-esteem, but sometimes the minute becomes 10 minutes, then an hour, then it is forgotten. No child wants to face the fact that his request – and, in his mind, he himself – is forgotten.

Therefore, part of the secret of helping children feel important is to learn to view their unplanned requests as opportunities to do some self-esteem-building instead of as inconveniences to their parents' schedules.

4. PLAN SOME 'DOWN TIME'.

Be sure there is a "nap time" scheduled – not for your children, but for you! Especially if you are a stay-at-home mom with young ones around, you will not be as effective in helping your children feel good about themselves if you come to the task tired and worn. Try to schedule at least 15 to 30 minutes in the afternoon that is yours to do with as you please.

I know what you're thinking – this is impossible. It will, indeed, take some effort at first, but even toddlers can be taught to rest quietly for awhile. It will be a discipline worth developing.

5. TAKE YOUR KIDS TO LUNCH.

Our children learned at an early age that some of their dad's most important meetings take place over lunch. So I began having a standing appointment for lunch with each of our children one day a week. I must say that most of our conversation has centered on the acquisition and consumption of food. But that's OK. My main objective is to have a good time and communicate how special each child is to me.

Sometimes the conversation takes unexpected turns. Just the other day, I was at lunch with Julianne, our 7 year old, who was admiring the playground toys. "Daddy, do you remember when I



used to hide in the big hamburger and you would act like a monster and try to get me?" She remarked, adding wistfully, "Those were the good ole days."

To me, those...and these days of more recent lunches are warm memories!

6. DON'T BE AFRAID TO APOLOGIZE.

When you have made a blunder in your relationship with your children, tell them so and apologize. When we choose to gloss over or ignore our gaffes, we project the notion that we are infallible. Instead of helping our children see that it's OK for them to make mistakes, we simply reinforce the idea that they must be something they are not.

7. UTILIZE YOUR CHILDREN'S MISTAKES.

When your son walks in and says "Dad, I broke a window with the baseball," or your daughter says, "Mom, I failed a test," do not overlook the fact that these are opportunities for the building of self-esteem. Use your children's mistakes to demonstrate your unflinching acceptance of them, and then problem-solve with them how to learn from their mistakes. When children realize that their parents accept them at their worst, as well as their best behavior, they will much more readily accept themselves unconditionally.

8. TAKE PLENTY OF PICTURES.

My wife has prepared five small photo albums for our children; each features a particular child. I have been amazed at how much time my children spend reviewing their albums. The albums remind our children that they are a part of a family who cares about the experiences its members share.

9. LOOK FOR WAYS TO INCLUDE YOUR CHILDREN.

Although you may be busy with many professional and domestic responsibilities, look for ways to include your children in some of them. For example, take each of your children with you to the grocery store, on a rotation basis, perhaps. If you are working on your car, ask one of your children if he would enjoy some instruction about automobile engines.

10. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.

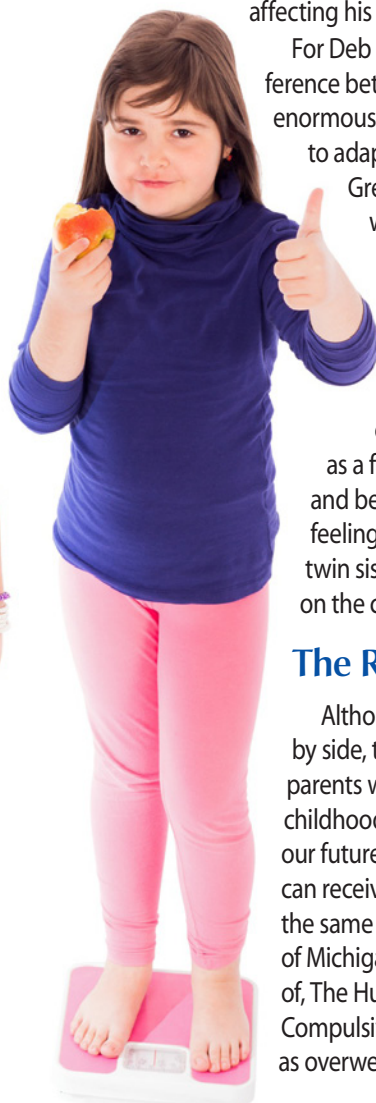
Take advantage of those times when you can give encouragement to help your multiples become more self-reliant. Simple tasks such as getting themselves dressed, making their own beds and washing their own hair are invitations that are uniquely yours to use in helping your children feel good about who they are and their abilities to take care of themselves. ♥

John Clark of Kansas City, Kansas, is a pastor and the father of five children, including twins.

Weighing in on the issue

When Twins Have Much Different Weight and Body Types

by Christina Baglivi Tinglof



As parents of twins we've all gotten used to constant comparisons tossed around at our twins' expense. You know what I'm talking about. "Which twin was the easier baby?" or "Who's more athletic?" Or, my personal pet peeve, "Which one is smarter?" Over the years we've learned to ignore these well-meaning busybodies who think they're simply making a joke. But there's one comparison that as parents even we can't ignore—what if one twin is much heavier than the other?

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

"We have the opportunity to shift our focus on what's wrong to what we really need," says Dr. Michelle May, a family physician and author of, *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle*. "And that's tackling the unhealthy relationship most kids have with food, whether they are overweight or not." Dr. May believes that young children naturally tune into their personal hunger and fullness cues but with America's fondness for large food portions and parents' plea for a clean plate, kids quickly lose touch with their internal signals. Many gain too many pounds as a result. For parents of multiples, however, helping an overweight twin get on the fast track to a healthier lifestyle can be doubly tricky—how do you help your twin lose weight without it affecting his relationship with his thinner co-twin?

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

The Role Family Plays in Weight Gain

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

more closely monitored or restricted more than the other twin, that twin can begin to feel resentful or 'less than,' and may withdraw or rebel." Furthermore, some will begin to crave and sneak food that is considered "off-limits." This pattern or "life script," Migliore says, can continue well into adulthood.

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

When Praise Has Unexpected Consequences

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

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

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

Make Healthy Eating a Family Affair

Families should work together to create a healthy lifestyle. When it comes to dinnertime, for example, let your twins have a voice in the weekly menu planning, grocery shopping, and even meal preparation. Get the kids in the kitchen with you and cook together. "This is a great opportunity to teach them about nutrition," says Dr. May. "And they're more likely to try new food that they picked out."

Make mealtime a pleasant experience where family members get together and share the events of the day, not a battleground where food becomes the enemy. Furthermore, avoid strict food rules such as insisting they clean their plates in order to get dessert. And avoid labeling food as either "good" or "bad," or using food to reward or even punish your kids. This, the experts say, could lead to rebellious eating. Instead, lead by example by modeling healthy eating and providing your children with a variety of good food from which to choose.

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

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

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

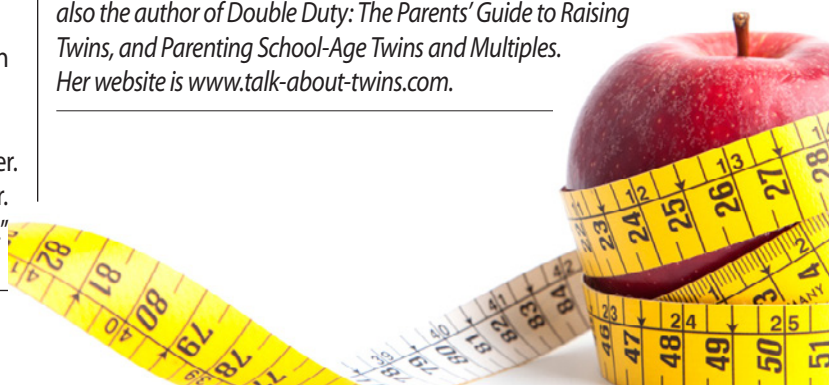
Start Today

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

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

And that's good advice for every family. 

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including fraternal twins and a 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.



Fighting, Biting, Kicking & Other Peaceful Pastimes...

by Joshua Coleman, Ph.D.



Ah, it's a beautiful summer morning...the robins and finches fluttering in the elms, the smell of coffee brewing in the kitchen, warm breeze coming through the screen door and the sound of my school-age twin boys trying to kill each other in the living room.

"You idiot!"

"Get off me! Urggh, get off me!!"

"Da-uh-ad!! He kicked me!!"

"Well, he spit on me!"

"I didn't spit on you, you stupid dog!"

"You fat LIAR! GET OFF!"

Get up and intervene? Or get up and turn on the stereo? If I don't intervene, they will likely inflict lasting bodily harm on each other and my medical insurance will go up. On the other hand, I may be able to finally see what it's like to raise a singleton.

So, what's a parent of twins to do when things are getting aggressive?

Break it up. Step one, we gotta stop it. Even though they're small, a young twin can inflict serious harm on a sibling through bites, kicks or shoves. So, we have to intervene right away to protect them from each other.

Aggression is not a solution. We also want to make it clear that the use of aggressive behaviors isn't the way to solve problems. While this is obvious to most parents, it's less obvious to children who are just learning how to deal with the wild horses of their emotions.

Keep cool. One of the most important and sometimes difficult steps is to maintain your control when intervening. I'm the most likely to lose my temper when I feel stressed out, sleep deprived or I'm trying to relax (in other words, 99.9% of the time.) It's inevitable during this time that one of my twin boys will yell because his brother is experimenting with a new choke hold or determining if an appendage is double jointed. I used to start out with an educational approach such as, "No son, the arm doesn't bend in that direction." Now, however, I just hope my wife, Ellie, will intervene so I can finish my cereal.

"Honey, the kids are murdering each other again. Would you mind?" "I did it last time, dear," she'll say, taking out some low-fat yogurt. "That was two days ago, I broke it up yesterday." "I got it last night before they went to bed, remember?" Right she is. Maybe tomorrow I'll get all the way through three paragraphs of the newspaper.

Model appropriate behavior. It's important to maintain control of our own reactions, even if we have to fake it. The tried and true "count to 10" before intervening works well. Or, as one of my kids told me, "You're the one who needs to take a

time out!" It's a natural protective response to want to aggressively intervene if someone hurts our kid—even when that someone is also our kid. If, however, we hit the one who's doing the hitting, we're not modeling how to respond to feeling upset. In addition, if twins fight—and they will fight—it's in reaction to powerful feelings over which they have little to no control. If we hit them, we just add to the pot of painful feelings and increase the probability that an aggressive event will happen sooner.

ESTABLISH CLEAR LIMITS, DESCRIBE AND SEPARATE

I often use the three steps recommended by Siblings Without Rivalry authors, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, for handling aggression with siblings. Let's look at these using an example from my home, since I have no shortage to draw upon.

Last week, my son Daniel was furious with his twin brother Max because he was playing with his prized rock. Now, to my feeble middle-aged eyes, it looks remarkably like the hundreds of other nondescript brown rocks we have scattered across our driveway, but what do I know? I'm a psychologist. As a result, he grabbed Max by the shirt and spun him hard to the ground, yelling at him all the way. Using Faber and Mazlish's structure, I intervened as follows:

1. Established clear limits: "Daniel, we don't use our hands when we're upset."
2. Described: "I know you're really mad that Max took your rock without asking."
3. Separated: "You need to get off Max now and I want you both to go to different rooms and cool off. I'll tell you when it's time to come out."

In this case my words were enough. Sometimes, however, it's necessary to physically pick one off the other or hold them each at arm's length while you direct them away from each other.

PRAISE WHEN THEY'RE NOT FIGHTING

Children are more motivated to control their behavior when they know we are pleased by it. Thus, we should offer praise when our twins resolve conflicts without aggression or when they play well together. Some examples are, "I really like how the two of you worked that out using your words! You're getting really good at talking it out, huh? That's great." Or when they're not fighting or arguing, "The two of you really play nicely, together. That's great to see!"

AVOID SHAMING, GUILT-TRIPPING, BLAMING OR FAULTFINDING

We all do it, but we should strive to do it less. It's easy to lose one's temper with a child, especially if he or she consistently provokes a sibling to tears. The use of shame, guilt or fault finding may

stop a child's behavior in the short term, but can increase it in the long run by giving children negative ideas about who they are. If one child hits the other, focus your attention on the one who's hurt, rather than punish or blame the aggressor. As Faber and Mazlish write, "We intervene, not for the purpose of settling their arguments or making a judgment, but to open the blocked channels of communication so they can go back to dealing with each other."

WHY CAN'T THEY JUST GET ALONG?

Twins fight for a lot of reasons. Let's examine some of the most common:

They fight to express hurt, disappointment, fear or anger.

It's human nature to want someone or something on which to vent our frustrations. Like adults, children have to endure disappointments and hurts that are sometimes hard to contain. Part of maturation is the ability to channel those feelings into non-destructive behaviors. Most twins discover that it isn't a brilliant move to take out aggressive feelings on their parents, and take it out on their co-twin, instead. If they are aggressive with us, we should be as firm in the protection of ourselves as we are of the other twin. In addition, a lot of aggression gets directed at the other twin because they often share toys, friends, bedrooms and that most precious of resources, parental attention.

They fight for parental attention. All kids learn that if they can't get parental attention for good behavior, they can always get it for bad behavior.

They fight out of boredom. Many fights begin as play and escalate to aggression when someone gets hurt or doesn't want to continue.

They fight because of problems. While aggressive behavior is common in young children, you should consult your pediatrician if you're concerned that it's age inappropriate or if their aggression seems tied to other behavioral or psychological concerns of yours. For example, aggression in children can sometimes be a function of attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity), childhood depression or oppositional defiant disorder. The frustration caused by a learning disorder may also increase aggression in children, as does feeling less valued than the other twin or other children in the home.

I do believe that we should not intervene for normal bickering. In those situations, we want our twins to learn to negotiate and solve problems without involvement. When there's aggression or name calling, we always should intervene quickly and clearly, for their sake, and to maintain the peace and quiet of the household. Did I say peace and quiet? Oh, I forgot. That's what you get when they go to college. ❤️

Joshua Coleman, Ph.D., is a psychologist in private practice in Oakland and San Francisco, California. He is the father of twin boys and a girl.



10 Tips for Getting Your Young (City) Twins into the Great Outdoors!

by Erin Sweeten

It's spring, and you've finally traded your multiples' parkas and boots for jeans and t-shirts. The air smells good again and the wildflowers are blooming along the roads. It's time to gather up the family and head outside. You've always wanted to get your kids out on a trail or even into a tent in the woods, but especially with children under age five, the task can seem daunting. Too much planning, too much packing, too much whining, too much dirt and too many bugs. Better to just buy tickets to the zoo and call it good. Right? Not necessarily. Getting your kids into nature doesn't have to be hard, and the lifelong benefits for your family make every minute worthwhile. Regularly exposing your young children to the outdoors can do far more than just help your kids burn off energy. The National Wildlife Federation recently collected and shared some of the excellent research about the health benefits of outdoor play (<http://www.nwf.org/What-We-Do/Kids-and-Nature/Why-GetKids-Outside/Health-Benefits.aspx>). Spending time in natural settings can:

- Increase the vitamin D in your children's bodies
- Reduce chances of needing glasses
- Prevent or reduce the symptoms of ADHD
- Increase sense of well-being
- Improve coordination and balance
- Increase emotional affinity for nature

A visit to a neighborhood play structure or a walk around the block is a great start! Your child gets fresh air and exercise. To get the full benefits of outdoor play, children should also spend time in wilder places with uneven ground and natural elements such as bushes, trees, and rocks that can be explored. For parents in urban areas, locating such spaces can be tricky. There are likely spots much closer to home than you think. Your city parks web page and your network of fellow parents can help you find them.

How to get started with kids ages two to five:

1. Start small. At your local park, lead your kids away from the play structure and sand to the undeveloped edges of the park to find interesting rocks, sticks and leaves. Invite them to climb boulders and logs. In my city, Phoenix, a nearby park has a large wash to catch rain runoff. When it's dry, we explore it, scrambling over river rock. When it's wet, we throw rocks in the water and dig in the wet sand at the water's edge.

2. Find an easy hike less than 45 minutes away. The closer, the better! Many urban areas have parks in or near city limits designed for hiking—check your city parks webpage. Pack sunscreen, a snack, and a water for each child. Dress them in long pants to reduce scrapes. Bring along a tube of antibiotic ointment and a few Band-Aids. I usually wait until we arrive to apply sunscreen so that

my kids get the benefit of extra Vitamin D for the fifteen minutes or so it takes for sunscreen to become fully effective.

3. Set a few simple rules before you get out of the car. Some sample rules: 1. Stay in sight. 2. Ask before touching a plant or animal. 3. Everyone must walk on his/her own the whole time.

4. Be experience-oriented, not goal-oriented. It is not unusual for my children (a six-year-old and two three-year-olds) to make it only a quarter mile up a trail. Travel as slowly as the slowest person in your group, and take side trips to examine rocks and vegetation.

5. Double-check rules for collecting items. Some places allow hikers to pick up leaves, sticks, and rocks to take home. Others are photography-only. At home, find jars for your children to keep and display their treasures, or stick them to clear contact paper.

6. Use google or a library book to learn the names of local plants, animals and rocks. Your children will love learning them with you and shouting them out as they spot each type.

7. Let your children take reasonable risks. Because you are close to home and not far from your car, a child running on the bumpy path and falling down is not going to ruin the entire day. Allow your children to climb tall rocks and steep hills or walk along fallen logs with (or without) your help. These activities build confidence, strength, coordination, and balance.

8. Look for teachable moments. Teach your children to be gentle with plants and to take care of their world. Make picking up litter a routine part of your activities. Take a moment to sit very quiet and still. Ask your children what they smell, hear, feel, and see. Try to guess what different noises might be.

9. Save big trips for vacations and weekends. Bring another adult along for adventures that are farther away. Pack a picnic lunch and extra clothes and shoes in case someone gets wet or muddy. Allow your children to bring home a keepsake—if that giant piece of wet bark means so much to your child that he lugs it all the way to the car, reward him by letting him put it in the trunk.

10. If you want to camp, go with an experienced family the first time. That will save you having to buy a bunch of expensive gear up front. Borrow whatever gear you can from friends. You also have built-in playmates for your kids and a chance to observe the family's camping hacks and routines. ♥

Erin Sweeten lives in Phoenix, Arizona with her husband and three young children. She has traded her glory days of long backpacking trips for the fun of inching slowly along desert trails with her trio, filling her pockets with sparkly rocks. She is a member of PVMOM.

Purr-fectly Paired



by Melissa Richeson

My middle son loves animals. For years he wanted a pet - and not just any pet. He wanted a furry pet. (He caught on to the whole "How about a fish?" game and wasn't about to play along.) But with infant twins in the house, taking on the responsibility of a pet wasn't high on my priority list for quite a while.

However, when the twins turned three, we decided it was time for a pet - a furry pet. After much deliberation we decided to adopt a kitten. We saw a flyer posted by a lady who rescues stray cats. She had found tiny kittens under a car, and she was now ready to give them away to their forever home. Perfect! I took my four boys over to pick out a kitten after school. One kitten. One sweet little fur ball. Or so I thought.

We went to the cat lady's home and played with the kittens, trying to find the one that would be the best fit for our family. But as we talked with her, it became clear that she was not willing to give us just one kitten. We had to take two. Two?! I had just gotten used to the idea of one pet! "Single cat syndrome," she said. "Go home and look it up." Sigh.

So I looked it up. Apparently single cat syndrome is a real thing. Many kittens who grow up without a feline playmate can develop an aggressive personality. Nipping and clawing at children can become commonplace, not out of meanness necessarily, but out of an instinctive desire for cat-play. Kittens bite each other, wrestle each other, pounce on each other. It's adorable! But when a cat decides to bite, wrestle, and pounce on a child - not so adorable. All of a sudden having two pets seemed less like a burden and more like a blessing.

"Great," said the cat lady when I told her our decision. "One for each of your twins, after all." We went to pick them up while the older boys were in school. Surprise! Two furry pets! We named them Vader and Obi because Star Wars is the thing in our house these days.

That night after the kids were in bed and the trauma of a new place started to diminish, the kittens came out to do their thing. They pounced. They chased. They wrestled. They were so happy and cute! My husband and I laughed and laughed at their antics. Then they curled up right next to each other and went to sleep in companionable comfort. No single cat syndrome here.

I understood. I had seen it before, after all. My twin boys are the best of friends. They invent games that no one else understands. The pounce. They chase. They wrestle. And ever since my twins were babies they were my best sleepers. Like most twin mamas do, I laid them side by side in the same crib when they were tiny. Somehow they knew they had their best friend there, and they slept easily and peacefully in that comfort.

Yes, having two cats has been wonderful for the cats' sakes. But having two kittens has been particularly wonderful for our family. For one thing, the cat lady was right - one for each twin. Daytime playtime with the cats is even-steven, which is a nice benefit for twins. There are much deeper benefits as well. For instance, my twins and their brothers have learned how to care for the cats

collectively and as individuals, in a way that would not be possible with just one in the house. There's no competition for who will take care of Vader or who will play with Obi like I feared there may be. Instead, I've watched them learn empathy by gaging what the cats' unique moods may be. Sometimes they're playful, sometimes cuddly, and sometimes they just want to be left alone. And because both cats may not be feeling the same way at the same time, the kids have learned to respect each one individually. This is a valuable life skill that will translate to dealing with humans for years to come, in my opinion. And it's especially helpful in a household that contains twins, who naturally tend to be seen as a "set" when they actually are not. Having our cats has helped all my kids learn selflessness and responsibility as well. The cats share bowls and a litter box, much like my twins share clothes and cups - out of convenience. Therefore, my kids trade responsibility for the cats' food, water, and cleanliness, forcing them to take turns and think about equality and service.

Getting two kittens was definitely the right decision for our family. The cats are happy. The people are happy. And we're even more keenly aware of something we already knew - that having two is never a burden; it's always a blessing. ❤️

Disclaimer: Getting kittens was the best decision for us, but each family should do their own research before making this forever commitment. The website bestfriends.org has a great resource section for your consideration.

Melissa Richeson is a freelance author and mother of four boys, two of whom are twins. She and her family live on the Florida coast. When she's not writing or wrestling with her boys, you can find her at the beach with toes in the sand.





My Journey from Darkness to Light!

by Crystal Olquin Duffy

I stared at the pregnancy test, willing the lines to appear. Then faint blue, beautiful double blue.

“Oh, my gosh! There are TWO blue lines! I’m pregnant!” I think I might have been levitating off the bathroom tiles.

“Wow! That’s amazing.” Ed’s focus shifted from the blue lines to my face, beaming and melting. We squeezed each other while tears of elation streamed down my cheeks.

We had just returned from Paris, the city of love—my husband had planned the surprise trip and even arranged child care for our 18-month-old daughter Abigail. It was over a bottle of champagne at a French bistro that we had decided to start trying for another baby. A few weeks later we realized that we had returned home with

a little Parisian souvenir. We were thrilled that our little girl Abigail was going to be a big sister!

At the seven-week mark however, I began experiencing throbbing and painful cramps accompanied by strong pelvic pressure and heavy bleeding. Oh no, I’m having a miscarriage I thought. Preparing for the worst, I immediately contacted my OB/GYN. I remember my doctor performing the ultrasound and then looking at me and asked, “Was this a spontaneous pregnancy?” What the heck is a spontaneous pregnancy? Is that like the Immaculate Conception? I was so confused and then he pointed to the monitor and said, “Look Crystal—there are two heartbeats, two amniotic sacs—you are having twins!” We had tried for Duffy baby #2 and instead

got babies #2 and #3! My husband and I were ecstatic, we felt so lucky to be given this special gift of twins.

The ultrasound unfortunately also revealed a blood clot in my uterus, which was the cause of the cramping, bleeding and discomfort. I was then placed on bed-rest for a month with the hopes that with good nutrition and rest—the blood clot would reabsorb itself—which was exactly what happened.

“I want them to be mine.” I kept saying over and over again. I was so terrified of losing these babies; I cannot describe how grateful we were when we were in the clear. I thought our prayers had been answered and I could finally enjoy and relax the rest of the pregnancy.

Overwhelmed with happiness, I began the nesting process—this time double time. I was working to prepare for what would soon be a very full and busy household. Between shopping for three matching girly outfits, building a custom closet for the nursery and finishing up home-improvement projects, I was at the peak of healthy, energetic, and excitement. We even snuck in a family trip to SeaWorld for spring break to chase after our toddler at the splash pad.

But at 22 weeks, my physician found something concerning—during a routine ultrasound—it revealed that there was an abnormal amount of fluid around one of the twins. I began to panic, I knew my babies were in danger, especially after I saw how seriously my physicians took the news.

TWIN TO TWIN TRANSFUSION SYNDROME

After targeted tests were performed, I was diagnosed with twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS), a serious condition that affects 10 to 15 % of identical twins who share a placenta. TTTS occurs when the blood vessel connections between the two babies produce an imbalance, or uneven sharing of the blood. In these cases, the blood from one twin, (the donor) is pumped into the other twin (the recipient), requiring the heart of the donor to do extra work to support the recipient twin and the recipient twin in turn receives too much blood while the donor twin does not get enough. This unequal distribution of blood can lead to severe issues for both babies, and in cases where it is left untreated yields a 95% rate of mortality in the babies.

I was terrified once again of losing our precious babies and overwhelmed by everything. I couldn't wrap my mind around the tragedy of TTTS when there were two babies in my womb that had been healthy, without genetic defects, who suffered consequences because they shared a placenta. It was heartbreaking situation to be in. My obstetrician immediately referred us to a maternal-fetal specialist, who specializes in high-risk pregnancies. Because our condition had already advanced to stage III TTTS (Four stages total), our MFM determined that the best treatment for us was to undergo laser ablation surgery.

Laser ablation surgery aims to interrupt the blood flow in the vessels that connect the twins through the insertion of a small telescope and a laser device into the uterus. Once the abnormally connected vessels are identified, the surgeon uses the laser to coagulate or seal the vessels. Laser ablation surgery is recommended for the more advance stages of TTTS and can only be performed between weeks 16 and 26 of gestation. I was so grateful that we were diagnosed in that window of time where there was a chance for our girls to survive.

Our surgery was scheduled quickly, a day after our consultation, two days after the diagnosis. In total, the surgical team lasered 11 blood vessels and drained an excess of two liters of amniotic fluid from the recipient twin's sac.

After surgery, I was placed on strict bed rest at home to recover. Later that week, we learned that despite the surgery's success, there was a further complication—specifically a hole, septostomy, in the membrane separating the twins. Although the hole was initially small, one of the girls apparently tore at it, making it large enough to swim through, and joined her sister, so that they were tumbling around each other. As a result, I was now carrying Mono-Mono twins, meaning my girls were in the same amniotic sac. This rare condition carries with it its own host of complications, including umbilical cord entanglement and compression. For my sake and the twins' health—my OB admitted me into the hospital for bed rest and strict monitoring, where I would stay for the remainder of my pregnancy until the twins were delivered.

I loaded up on magazines, movies, snacks, pictures of my family and my daughter Abigail, a countdown calendar—even a lamp to make my room feel more like home. I had no idea how long I was going to be there—I arranged for visitors, friends, family to come visit me in the hospital every day. We had a barbeque, baby shower and even a surprise anniversary dinner during my stay. I also attended an antepartum support group every week where I met other moms going through my same situation. One of the hardest things I found, was being away from Abigail for so long, so with my therapists help I wrote and

recorded a song about that called Together Again. It was so special to me because not only did it help me pass the time, but it was also therapeutic in helping me process the stress, anxiety, and loneliness of going through my last month of pregnancy at the hospital.


OUR DRAMATIC DELIVERY

On the evening of June 18, 2014, I felt sick and alerted my nurse that something felt off. By the next morning, I was having full-blown contractions. They put me on magnesium to try and stop the labor. But when my OB came to check on me he saw that I had dilated more and said the words that will forever ring in my head. "It's time—after a month of hospital bedrest—we are having some babies today."

I went into C-section surgery unalarmed, excited to soon be meeting these little survivor babies of mine. As my OB would later describe, as soon as they started the surgery they knew something was wrong—I was bleeding heavily. I had had a placenta abruption—a rare and dangerous occurrence in which the placenta detaches itself from the inner wall of the uterus. Completely unrelated to my surgery, or the TTTS, it was so unbelievably lucky that I had been in the hospital for observation and continuous monitoring. Additionally, placenta abruption is one of the primary causes of maternal mortality. Never, not once through all of this did I think for a second about my own life being in danger. I had remained positive and strong in my faith through it all.

Katherine Maria and Lauren Elizabeth each weighed 3 pounds when they were born. They spent 38 days in the NICU at Children's Memorial Herman in Houston, Texas. They are healthy, happy and rambunctious little toddlers.

As I think back on all of it I still can't believe what had to happen for us to all be here together. Despite all our complications—my twin daughters and I are healthy, happy, and extremely blessed to have one another. It took not just one but a series of miracles to us to emerge healthy—we are walking miracles. ♥



The Facts of Life for Twins

by Patricia Maxwell Malmstrom

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

Like everyone else, teenage twins have the usual challenges that come with puberty – adapting to their physical changes and evolving adult identity. But unlike other teens, a twin must also cope with constant comparisons with his or her co-twin and balance two essential parts of his own self-concept – being both an individual and a twin.

Children absorb information about the facts of life gradually during childhood. Little by little, as a child's understanding deepens,



FIRST THE FACTS

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

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

Fraternal or dizygotic twins have different biological makeup. Fraternal twins, form when two eggs are fertilized by two different sperm, are far more common than identical twins; they may or may not look more alike than any two brothers or sisters. And like any two siblings, they may or may not have similar interests and talents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

parents add information – sometimes casually in answer to a question; sometimes more formally when the parent believes the child is ready for a serious discussion.

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

Double Takes

Your Adorable Spring-Themed Photos!



1

Brody & Brennon, FR
Age 6
Farmington, MO



2

Aiden & Emerson, FR
Age 7-months
Greensboro, GA



3

Abbey & Charley, FR
Age 2
Riverside CA



4

Patrick & Asher, ID
Age 4
Sonoma, CA



5

Walt & Eleanor, FR
Age 6-months
Anaheim, CA



6

Ember & Hazel, FR
Age 1
Oakland Park, FL



7

Crew & Cal, ID
Age 2
Trophy Club, TX



8

Bella & Brody, FR
Age 7-months
Norfolk, VA

Spring 2016



9

Valerie & Amelia Petersen, ID
Age 3 1/2
Cleveland, TN



10

Angelo & Nicholas, FR
Age 3 1/2
Scottsdale, AZ



11

Zoe & Ace, FR
Age 5-months
Hemet, CA



12

Avery & Addison, ID
Age 2
Brilliant, AL



13

Josiah & Jensen, FR
Age 1
London, KY



14

Matthew & Ma'Kenzie, FR
Age 2
Fort Wayne, IN



15

Elizabeth & Evelyn, ID
Age 7-months
Louisville, MS



16

Ryker & Sawyer, ID
Age 2 in photo
Spokane, WA



17

Eastyn & Brynlee, FR
Age 7-months
Graysville, PA



18

Scarlett & Salem, FR
Age 11-months
Mobile, AL



19

Winston & Curtis, FR
Age 3
Ada, OK

Double Takes



20

Gaia & Eris, FR
Age 2-weeks
Roncerverte, WV



21

Sophie & Surrie, ID
Age 6-months
Oklahoma City, OK



24

Kayla & Kelsey, ID
Age 5 in photo
Kent, WA



22

Connor & Jaxon, FR
Age 3
Henderson, NV



23

Emerson & Venelope, FR
Age 18-months
Cincinnati, OH



25

Braxton & Preston, FR
Age 8
Williamsburg, Ontario, CANADA



26

Harper & Alexis, FR
Age 17-months
Brewer, ME



27

Miyah & Milah, ID
Age 3
San Jose, CA



28

Ryan & Drew, FR
Age 16-months
Hermitage, PA



29

Gardner & Maisey, FR
Age 4 1/2
Shreveport, LA



30

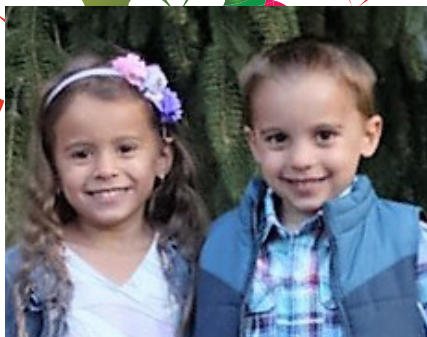
Jaylee & Paislee, ID
Age 3
Raymond, IL

Spring 2016



31

Dyson & Desmond, FR
Age 2
Cross Junction, VA



32

Summer & Hunter, FR
Age 4
Manalapan, NJ



33

Amari & Keona, FR
Age 3-months
Dallas, TX



34

Mason & Michael, FR
Age 6-months
Chazy, NY



35

Penelope & George, FR
Age 10 days
Liverpool, England UK



36

Amelia & Addison, ID
Age 10-months
Bowling Green, KY



37

Maddox & Myles, FR
Age 2 ½
Oakland, MD



38

Anabella & Jason Champion, FR,
Age 22-months
Brownsville, TX



39

Mia & Mya, ID
Age 1
Silvis, IL



40

Isabella & Olivia, ID
Age 7
Knoxville, TN

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