

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

**5 STEPS TOWARD A
NATURAL &
REWARDING
TWINS BIRTH**

www.TwinsMagazine.com
September/October 2016

**Conversation
& Your Twins:
7 Tips for
Getting the
Words
Flowing**

**5 Tips for
Better Sleep
for Your
Twins After
Daylight
Savings
Ends!**

**Raising
Financially
Healthy
Twins!**

**What Having
Newborn
Twins Really
Looks like...**



Sep / Oct 2016

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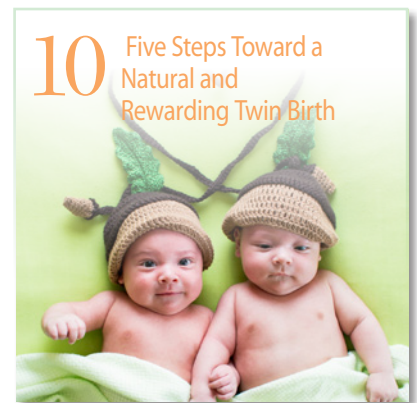


Meet Ryan and Emerson, age 8 and in the 3rd Grade from Plano, Texas. Ryan and Emerson are best buds and practically do everything together! They are even in the same class at school and they really love it. They also do Tae Kwon Do together and recently earned their Yellow Belt! They both love Pokemon and are looking forward to playing Pokemon Go soon! Some of the other things they love to so is swim, ice skate and of course play video games, Minecraft is a big hit! They think being twins is pretty cool, and mom has to agree with them!

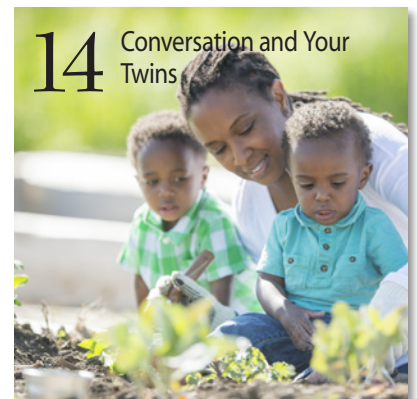
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8 17 Things I Wish I Had Known Back in the Day



10 Five Steps Toward a Natural and Rewarding Twin Birth



14 Conversation and Your Twins



22 Postpartum Eclampsia Almost Left My Husband a Single Dad

Recently I was going through an old file cabinet and came across a hand written notepad with "Questions for Doctor" scribbled at the top. As I continued reading the seven questions I had carefully scribed I quickly realized that this was a list of questions I had for my doctor when I was pregnant with my twins! It was way back in the late 90's (1997) and it was my first pregnancy so I was filled with so many questions and just felt like there was not too many places I could get my answers. There was not a lot of information out there, well at least not at my fingertips like there is today. I couldn't just log onto YouTube and watch a video of twins being born in live time or join a FB group and post my questions to other moms... so the best way for me to get answers to my immediate questions was through the old fashioned way of asking my doctor. I thought there might be other moms that have the same questions I did so I thought I would share them with you and include the answers for you! I also thought it was fun to look back on what I was feeling when I was pregnant with my twins so long ago...

#1 Why do they say lay on your left side while sleeping?

According to AmericanPregnancy.org Sleeping on your left side will increase the amount of blood and nutrients that reach the placenta and your baby. Keep your legs and knees bent and a pillow between your legs.

#2 My right hand keeps falling asleep...why? What could be the reasons? Typing too much? Bad Circulation? This happens especially when I'm sleeping...

According to WhattoExpect.com Pregnancy swelling puts pressure on a key nerve in the wrists and causes the same aching and tingling symptoms most often associated with ergonomic strain and repetitive motion. (Of course, if you're pregnant and doing repetitive motions – like if you work at a desk job – you're twice as likely to experience it.) This symptom happens more at night because the fluids that accumulate in the lower part of your body during the day are redistributed elsewhere – including your hands – when you lie down (think of it as a kind of reverse gravity).

#3 Are the babies positioned vertically or horizontally?

By around the 36th week of twin pregnancy the positions of twins in the womb will not likely change. This is generally because of the sheer lack of space to move around. With the growing uterus at full capacity, there is not much room for two babies to continue switch positions. Possible positions babies can be in are both Vertex (head down); Vertex & Transverse; Vertex & Breech; Breech & Transverse or both Breech.

#4 I'm having troubles sleeping and I wake up at least five times per night what is causing this?

There are many reasons for insomnia during pregnancy. Here are just a few that could be causing sleep issues: backaches; gas; heartburn (hormones relax muscles in your digestive tract, making it easier for stomach acids to burn their way back up your esophagus); leg cramps and restless legs; shortness of breath; snoring and of course anxiety.

#5 Is there only one umbilical cord? If so, how do both babies use it?

Identical twins will often share the same placenta, but usually have separate amniotic sacs. Each twin always has its own, separate umbilical cord. Fraternal twins have separate placentas, amniotic sacs, and umbilical cords.

#6 How long do you recommend I remain working full-time?

It is ultimately up to you and your circumstances and the type of work you do. Listen to your body and as you get further along you will know when the best time for you will be to stop working.

#7 Do you think it would be safe to travel out of state for Christmas? It is dangerous to fly that late in pregnancy?

Most doctors will say no travelling after 24 weeks if you have no complications and are not considered a high risk.

Speaking of a twin pregnancy... Inside this issue we have a great article entitled "Five Steps Toward a Natural & Rewarding Twin Birth" to give you even more tips to help you prepare for the big event! We also get real with an article on what having newborn twins really looks like and teach your toddler twins seven tips for getting their words flowing! We continue our moving piece on "Raising Twins When One is Disabled" and one mom shares her story about how Postpartum Eclampsia almost left her husband a single dad of twins plus, so much more! We hope you enjoy this issue and as we start looking to the coming year, we are honored and excited to soon be celebrating 33 years of being the world's leading magazine and website for parenting twins, triplets and higher order multiples!



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

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Science and Safety the Focus of St. Elizabeth's Principal, Mother of Two Sets of Twins!

St. Elizabeth of Hungary School, has a rather unique safety feature: the principal is a former Dallas police officer. The mother of four—including two sets of twins—Rachel Robb spent a decade as a police officer, then served as a middle-school science and math teacher, and assistant principal at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic School before becoming its principal last year. In addition to her expertise in crowd control as an officer, and mother



Former Police officer, certified emergency medical technician, teacher of science and math, parent to two sets of twins, with a Master's degree in Education, Rachel Robb may just be the most qualified elementary school principal on the planet.

of four, she is following in the footsteps of both her parents who were teachers.

She was a student at the University of Dallas in Irving when she decided she wanted a change from going to school full time so she entered the Dallas Police Academy in 1986. She was just 20 when she began her decade with the police department, including five years as the officer for Methodist Hospital's emergency room, which led her to gain certification as an emergency medical technician.

As she worked for the police department, she continued with her college studies online to finish her degree in education. Next came a stint as a stay-at-home mother as her first set of twins arrived, Cody and Caroline. Two years later twins Travis and Jake arrived. In 2001 she was considering St. Elizabeth's for her chil-

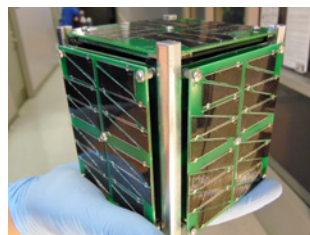
dren when she heard there was a science teacher needed. She applied and began teaching and in 2013-14 was chosen as the school's Teacher of the Year.

She returned to the University of Dallas and earned a master's degree in Catholic School Leadership, and served as St. Elizabeth's assistant principal for six years prior to her promotion to principal. Meanwhile, all four of her children have followed her through Bishop Dunne and are now out on their own, working and attending college.

Robb is now busy raising \$200,000 for a new STEM program which includes a Science lab for St. Elizabeth's, and is working to get local businesses to join her in this venture. Her plan to make St. Elizabeth's an academic shining star in Oak Cliff is under way. ♡

Identical Twins Start Spacecraft Business

Michael and Sean Wegerson identical twins have recently launched a new spacecraft business. Michael recently completed a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of North Dakota and his brother Sean received his B.A. in Financial Management from the University of St. Thomas. Add in Alex Holland, who is a junior at UND studying Mechanical

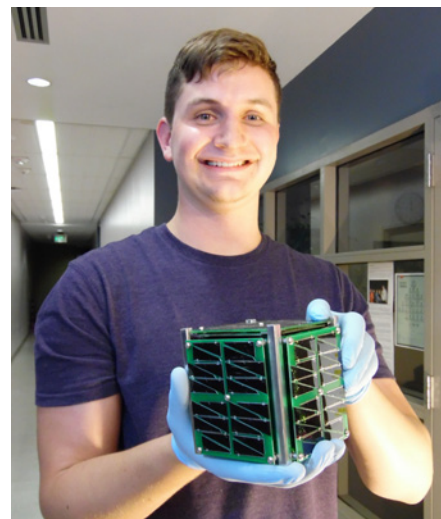


Engineering, and you have basically everything you need to build a spacecraft, except the plans. Fortunately, while studying at UND, Michael actually developed those plans. As electrical design lead of the OpenOrbiter Small Spacecraft Development Initiative, he and his team designed the hardware for a 1-U CubeSat. A CubeSat is a small satellite that you can hold in the palm of your hand. UND's CubeSat will be launched to the

International Space Station this December for deployment into orbit early next year.

"Through developing a satellite, you learn about all the nitty-gritty stuff – the stuff you don't learn in class," Michael said. "I came in to the project having only basic electrical engineering skills; I left having helped build a satellite from the ground up. I want every engineering student to have this experience." Sean's business acumen provides the other critical component of a successful startup. Sean was hooked when he first heard about the project. Initially, though, he didn't see a way to get involved. However, when he heard that Michael and Alex were thinking about commercializing the satellite designs, he immediately knew how he could contribute. He signed on to handle the operation of the business, so the others could remain focused on developing the technology. "I know how tenacious Sean can be towards something he's passionate about," commented Michael. The two competed in high school swimming, setting new school records and securing both a place on their respective universities' teams. "I know Sean will finish what he starts."

Their business, Open Space Frontier



Technologies LLC, is based in Grand Forks, North Dakota, to facilitate Alex's continued involvement while he completes his studies and to stay close to the University of North Dakota's OpenOrbiter program, which provided the initial 'spark' for the business venture. ♡

TWINS PRODUCT ROUND-UP!

Stomp Rocket® Ultra LED

This is an entertaining way to get kids running and jumping outside. (They'll be having such a good time; they won't even notice that they're exercising!) Best of all, thanks to each rocket's built-in LED light, the fun can continue long after dusk! Stomp Rockets are ready to launch in seconds, featuring fast assembly with no batteries required. For children ages 6 and up. www.StompRocket.com



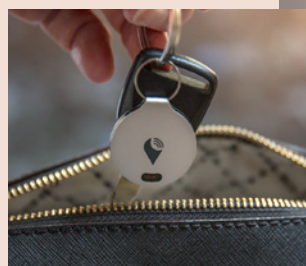
Rollors is a great new game – fun for the whole family!

The addictive outdoor game has been sweeping backyards around the nation. The game combines the familiar with a new and exciting twist. Incorporating the skill sets of Bocci Ball and the scoring system of Horseshoes, Rollors will add fresh new entertainment to any holiday party, corporate event, or weekend outing. The game accommodates 2-6 people, with an expansion pack available to extend the fun to even more players. The best part is that it rings in under \$50, keeping it in the perfect price range for your holiday grab bag. Rollors is available in 500 retailers nationwide including Dicks Sporting Goods, Amazon, Wayfair, and other specialty boutiques. <https://rollors.com/>



TrackR bravo – for those of you that can never find your keys (or other lost things!)

Do you have a hard time keeping track of your stuff? We may have found the best solution for you. Introducing TrackR bravo, a coin-sized Bluetooth device that people can attach to all their important belongings — from keys to wallets to purses to even pets — to make sure they never get lost. Once you pair your TrackR bravo with the free iPhone/Android app, you can use your phone to locate any misplaced item in seconds. <https://www.thetrackr.com/>



The T-fal Color Luxe Cookware Set

Check out these new colorful T-fal Color Luxe Cookware sets. They combine great style with superior performance features. The Hard Titanium™ Non-stick is reinforced with Titanium particles for the ultimate durability and longest lasting performance. The set features T-fal's patented Thermo-Spot™ technology that indicates when the pan is perfectly preheated to seal in flavor. The set is dishwasher and metal utensil safe and guarantees durable non-stick performance during heavy use while still allowing for fast, easy clean-up. This beautiful cookware is available in rich, jewel tones with color matched handles. Available Colors: Ruby Red, Sapphire Blue, Amethyst Purple. Lifetime Limited Warranty. Regular \$99.99 on sale now for \$79.99 here: <https://www.wayfair.com/Color-Luxe-12-Piece-Non-Stick-Cookware-Set-TFL1646.html>



No One Told Me

Having Twins Would Be Like This!

Tasha and her wife recently moved from Harlem to live in the South with their 15 month old fraternal twin boys. She is a former Early Childhood/ Kindergarten teacher and Division 1 basketball player. She loves being a SAHM, spending time with her family, vacationing in the mountains, drinking micro brews and going to the bathroom alone.



by Tasha Lewis

There was no doubt that my wife and I wanted kids. We both taught elementary school for over ten years and were also foster parents for two years. After fostering and teaching we knew it was time to take that journey. We were very fortunate that what we wanted was given to us with only two attempts of IUI. We were aware of the possibility that we would have multiples with the help of Clomid. I knew that there was something special growing inside me before our first ultra sound. We were so excited because we knew we had gotten exactly what we wanted- two babies and on top of that, two boys.

So now they are fifteen months old and they are such big boys. I mean, they think they are big boys. I could write a book about all of the hilarious things that happen every second with these two. My wife and I sit and just watch them and say "No one told us this!" and "No one told us that!"

No one told us that they would do things for no reason to get kicks out of us. We had no idea that they would tag team us to drive us crazy. No one ever mentioned to us that the love that you have for two little people grows every second of every day.

No one told us that they would scream for no reason. They scream like it's the end of the world. For the most part when we're out in restaurants, stores, friends' homes and even at our home they play, talk and laugh; but sometimes, they sound like a swarm of Teridactyls playing and communicating with one another. They get even louder when we try to quiet them or if heaven forbid someone around us finds it amusing! They're not upset. They're actually laughing and smiling the whole time as they look at one another. It's almost as if

they are saying to each other "Hey buddy, it's your turn". We honestly just chalk up their crazy screaming to them finding their voices and playing around with sounds that come out of their little bodies. Whatever the case- It. Is. Loud.

No one ever told us that these little 25 lb people would be so strong! I mean freakishly strong. They will fight you when you're trying to put clothes and shoes on, during diaper changes, while trying to buckle them in the car seats, and even when it's bed time! It's as if we are wrestling with alligators every day. I have had my glasses broken, my earrings pulled out of my ears, my shirt ripped and have even suffered a bloody nose! To top things off they've learned to help each other. When one twin is dressed the other will come and take the other's shoe off, only to run and hide it! Oh, but it doesn't stop there. While I'm searching for the lost item you can be certain that at least one of them will decide that wearing a shirt just isn't necessary! I go to put their shirt back on and the other has found his way into the diaper bag and has taken everything out. After this whole ordeal I realize that it's now nap time- so much for that trip to the store!

Even though all of these things sound a little crazy, no feeling in the world compares to the one you get when they look at you and smile, call you mommy, or hug and kiss you. Our world has been flipped upside down by our multiples. The love, appreciation and pure joy of having two little people that have your heart, and you have theirs, is so unexplainable. There are some crazy things that happen while raising twins, but I think that the craziest is realizing that although these little people cause a lot of chaos- you wouldn't have it any other way! 💖



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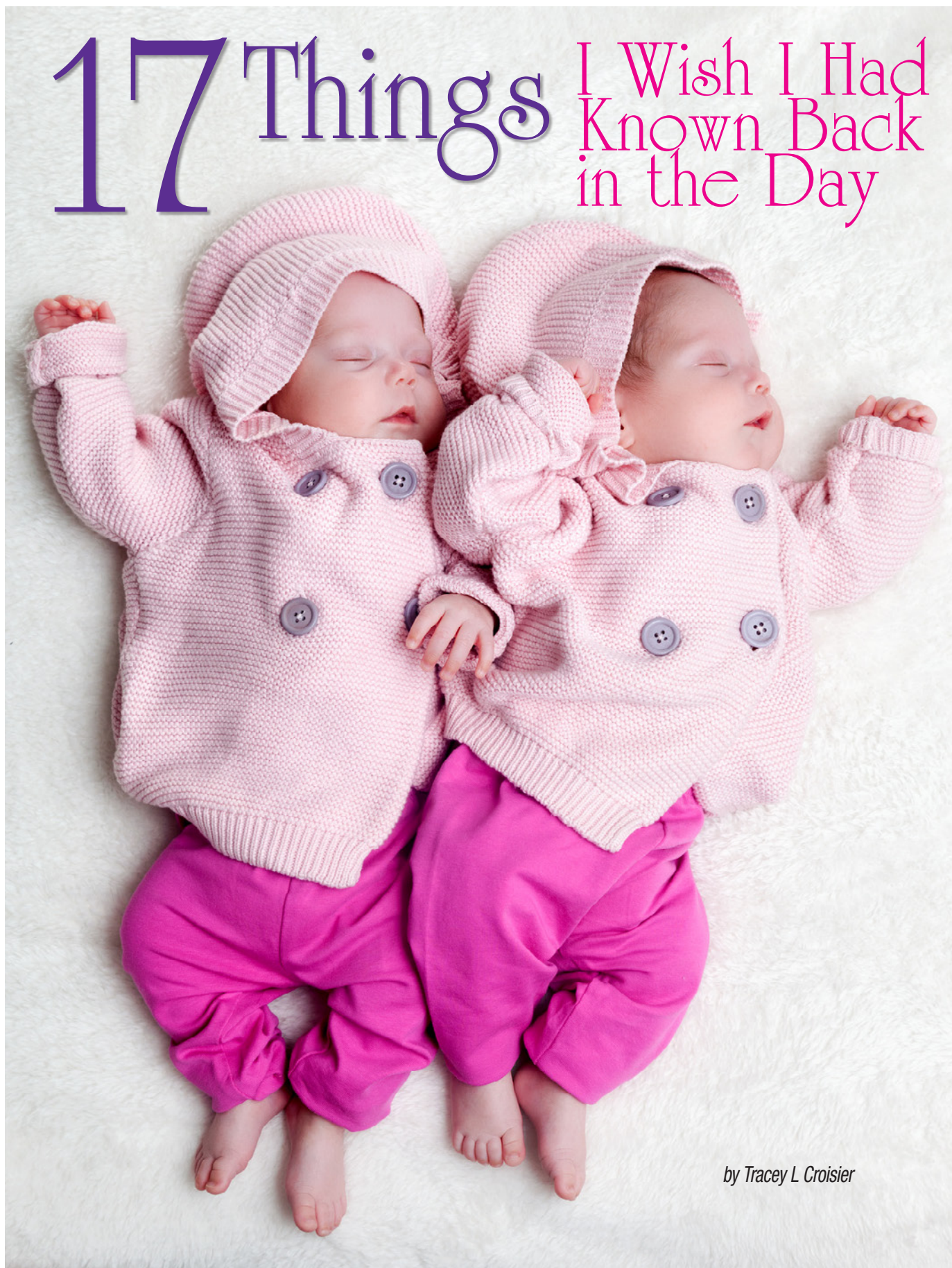
Portapak holds baby from 17-32 lbs.
 Weighs just 1 pound
 Machine washable
 Meets ASTM F2236-14

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17 Things

I Wish I Had
Known Back
in the Day



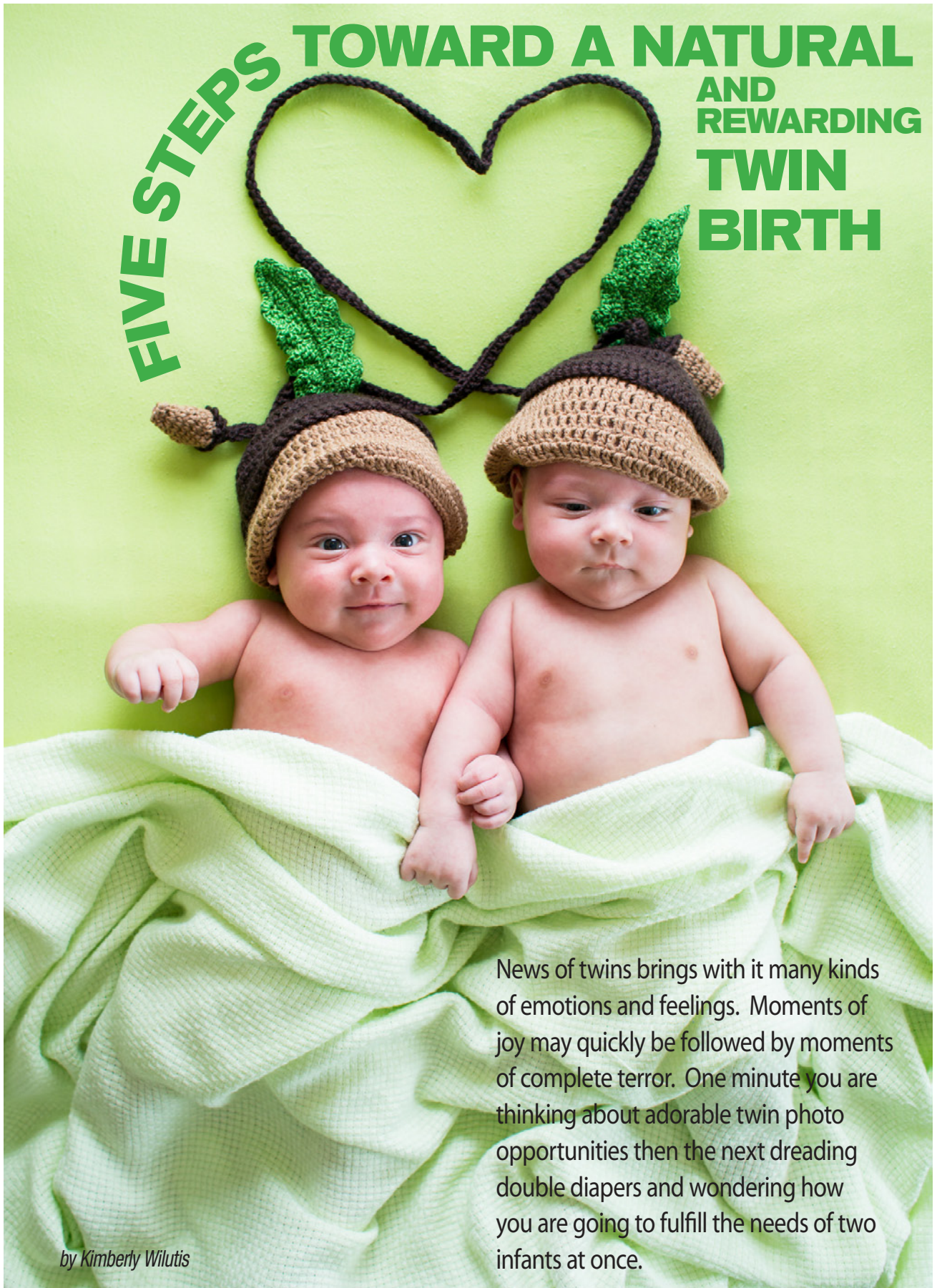
by Tracey L Croisier

- 1 Babies are like little drunks: they need to hit the bottle every 3-4 hours, are unsteady on their feet and you never really know what they'll remember in 24 hours.
- 2 A lot of movie theaters have mom movies. Go! Most babies sleep in the dark, you'll be surrounded by other new (unshowered) moms and at some of the newer Bistro theaters deliver food to you.
- 3 Baby A gets eminent domain (breast, diaper change, cuddles, headbands) on odd days and Baby B gets eminent domain on even days.
- 4 Don't let them steal your peace. Think about it: at the one moment in your life when you are most tired and most vulnerable, they are sitting there in the bucket seat taking notes.
- 5 Breast pump: for twins, only the hospital grade one will do. Also, check frequently for hairline cracks in the pump bits. Even small dents will decrease milk productions.
- 6 Don't throw breast pump accessories. They crack easily.
- 7 Breastfeeding can be trickier than it looks on TV. The mum who can flip out a breast and nurse baby at Starbucks whilst reading The Economist is the same woman with white sofas and white carpeting and an 11-pound pregnancy weight gain.
- 8 Speaking of breasts: nursing twins at the same time is like getting a gold medal in the Motherhood Olympics. Do you want a medal? Maybe. Do you need a gold medal? You do not. You need to feed your babies and remember to cover up the snack bar when you go to the mailbox. (try the "waiting room" method: put one twin next to you on the sofa w/ bottle. put other twin to breast. everyone wins. see also: even/odd days #3)
- 9 Do not try to have good posture when nursing. A schlumpy slouch and unnatural shoulder crick works every time.
- 10 Find a good chiropractor, preferably one with a bottomless toy chest. Big shout out to Dr. Corey at Vitality in Bellevue. All four of us have gotten awesome care there.
- 11 Don't pay retail for all the saucer / bouncer / jump-a-roo gears. Craigslist is your friend here. Added bonus: someone else has assembled and paid the sales tax.
- 12 If you like eating out a restaurants, do it a lot in the first eight, nine months when they are happy in the bucket seats and haven't figured out crawling.
- 13 If some complete stranger offers unsolicited parenting advice, cut them off gently and say "I'm just the nanny." British accent a bonus here. (Jane, you rock!)
- 14 Hire help! Hire someone to clean / vacuum / make baby food while you play with the babies.
- 15 Many people will say "I had three children under the age of five, so it was just like having twins." It is not. Smile nicely, insert earbuds and congratulate them on their fecundity.
- 16 See another twin mom and want to find out if she did IVF? Simply ask "How far along were you when you found out you were having twins?" First off, it's a great ice breaker and secondly, it gives them a chance to mention IVF if they want to.
- 17 People will ask you if you did IVF. All. The. Time. If you don't want to talk about your uterus at Fred Meyer, have a quip ready. My favorite was "Well, I don't know about that, but there were a lot of people in the room during conception!" (Again, with a nod to Jane, a British accent goes a long way under duress.)



PREGNANCY

FIVE STEPS TOWARD A NATURAL AND REWARDING TWIN BIRTH



News of twins brings with it many kinds of emotions and feelings. Moments of joy may quickly be followed by moments of complete terror. One minute you are thinking about adorable twin photo opportunities then the next dreading double diapers and wondering how you are going to fulfill the needs of two infants at once.

by Kimberly Wilutis

Along with changes in expectations about motherhood, you may also find yourself changing your expectations about birth. For my second pregnancy, I envisioned an unmedicated, vaginal birth, complete with soothing music, low lights, and yogic birth positions. When I found out I was having twins, I worried that my natural birth would no longer be possible.

Having a vaginal birth, including with twins, with as little intervention as possible has many benefits. Shorter recovery times and decreased side effects from drugs are well documented. Easier bonding and a faster start to breastfeeding are also likely. Not to mention the sense of achievement and profound satisfaction realized by the mother.

Twin pregnancies do carry more risk and have more complications on average than singletons. Although many twins are born early and greatly benefit from current medical technologies that allow them to thrive when otherwise they would not; not every twin birth follows this pattern. Twin pregnancies are often considered high risk and in need of intercession throughout the duration of the pregnancy and delivery. For many obstetricians, induction is suggested, if not in some ways mandated in a pregnancy lasting longer than 37 weeks. Movement during labor is restricted with electronic fetal monitoring and delivery position is restricted to that which is convenient for the doctor, not the laboring mother. Each of these aspects decrease a woman's innate ability to give birth and with restriction comes a likelihood of intervention, likely contributing to the 75% c-section rate for twins reported in 2008 (1).

However, it is very possible to have a full term pregnancy and natural birth with twins and not necessarily only at a birth center or at home. I know, because I've done it. If a hospital is where you decide to give birth to your twins, know that many interventions that often lead to a medicalized birth are routine. However, you do not have to give up your hopes for a natural birth by choosing to birth in a hospital. As the patient, you have the right to have access to valuable expertise and medical technology while at the same time, choosing how that care is applied to you.

With all of the commotion surrounding the actual event, it is important to make preparations before you go into labor to facilitate your natural birth in the hospital. The people that you surround yourself with on the day are of the utmost importance. Building that team starts early in pregnancy and may be no small feat depending on the common practices at the facilities that are most accessible to you. However, with some diligence and time, you can greatly increase your chances of birthing your twins naturally. Start with these five steps:

1. **Shop around for a supportive and like-minded obstetrician.** Depending on your preferences, you may not find a provider who sees eye to eye with you on every point, but overall, your relationship with your OB will be much better if you agree on most major issues. Ask questions in a respectful manner and be open-minded. Don't be afraid to shop around or leave your provider if you identify problem areas.

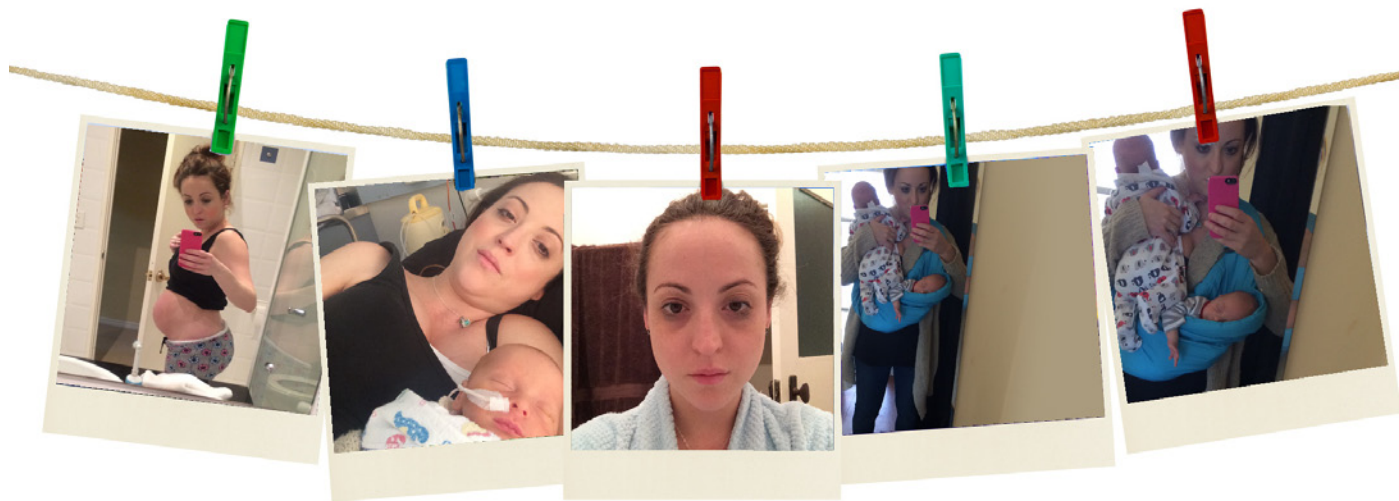
It's better to do this early on rather than have a disagreement in the delivery room.

2. **Cross reference with the hospital.** You will find that your OB is associated with a certain hospital or hospitals which will invariably have its own set of policies and practices. Be sure to tour the facility and confirm with the staff that the practices that you and your OB have agreed upon will be met with acceptance from the hospital staff upon your admittance. Discuss any inconsistencies with your OB and work together to find common ground.
3. **Get it in writing.** A birth plan is a great way to express your preferences to all parties involved. Especially for a twin birth, communication and documentation are extremely important. If your OB has agreed to certain terms that may conflict with common practice at the hospital, outline it in your birth plan. Have your doctor sign the plan and submit it to the Labor and Delivery department at the hospital. Having your doctor's approval for certain practices which nursing staff in a hospital may not commonly see may make the staff more accepting and open during labor. Of course hospital staff will need verbal confirmation from your doctor for certain practices during labor, but others can be communicated using the birth plan.
4. **Be assertive, but flexible.** Identify the things that are important to you and those which are less important. You may need to negotiate a bit with your OB and/or your hospital staff to find some middle ground. This may mean not having every freedom during labor and delivery, but it will keep you on good terms with the staff and doctors.
5. **Do your homework.** Know what the risk factors are for a twin birth and know how you fit into the statistics. Your doctor may suggest an intervention based on data from other twin pregnancies, but understand how your specific situation applies to the data. Be familiar with how a twin birth proceeds so you are prepared for any surprises. Know what your preferences are given the variety of scenarios that could ensue. Talk through the process of a twin birth with your doctor and explore the possible complications that could occur at each stage so you are not caught off guard if an undesirable situation arises.

Ultimately, you are in charge of your own well being and that of your babies. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Be choosy about your providers up front. Know the risks. Think about how those risks specifically relate to you and your situation. Finally, have confidence. Millions of years of evolution have honed your body to give birth. Women have been birthing twins for all of that time. You are not the rare exception, but the result of millions of years of practice. ♥



What Having Newborn Twins



Alyce Bain is a parenting blogger, writer and mum of 2 year old twin boys.

by Alyce Bain

Lately, besides the obvious fact that I have two 18-month-olds terrorizing the house daily, things have been pretty smooth sailing. Sleep wise, nap wise, food wise, I really don't have any complaints. Except the one where they push their table angrily towards me when they want food, almost like those sunny Snickers commercials, they just aren't themselves when they are hungry!

It got me very reminiscent about the postpartum period, in particular the first six months of their lives. Someone asked me how I reflect upon those times and I can't really remember. I can't really remember because it was really, really tough. When I was asked if I missed those early snuggles, I truly do, but there's a lot of things I honestly don't miss either. This is just me being truthful. For months I felt sure of the fact that I had no right to complain, because of what we went through to have children in the first place. Even now when I talk about it I feel a stab of guilt. Infertile woman has two babies, complains, bolt of lightning to the head.

The other day I was scrolling through thousands and thousands of photos I had taken in those early days. Let me backtrack for a minute. I used to take a lot of photos back then. Like a lot, a lot. Like a shit ton, if that's even a unit of measure?

I didn't want to forget anything, not one moment good or bad of my boys' lives. I was going through them to find good photos to print, but instead I laughed, and cringed and some of the many, many, raw and real photos I had taken. Looking back in reflection at each of these moments, as a mother who has twins that are sleeping, eating and kind of behaving, I remembered those moments and could smile at how far we've come. We made it.

To those of you who are going through a rough time, I promise there is a light at the end. We are attuned to the easy, happy photos of that postpartum period of time, when people share things on social media. What we don't see is the pics that ended up on the cutting room floor. The really real ones. Not the happy photos of the two babies sitting and smiling at the same time instead of grunting with colic and reflux. No one saw the tears behind my smile when I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt about cutting myself in two. Or when I was so tired I became a mad woman. Or the loneliness I felt coming home with the twins after being surrounded by nurses and doctors and having a husband who had to go straight back to work and a family who lives 500 miles away. Or the panic and unrealistic expectation I had about bouncing back to my pre-

Really Looks Like...



baby weight (9 months on, 13 months off more like it). And lastly recognizing that overwhelming, deep, deep as the deepest ocean, I would die for these humans love and protection I felt for my boys, and grasping just how powerful this was.

THESE ARE THE THINGS PEOPLE DIDN'T SEE.

I've decided to share some of my photos and while it makes me cringe seeing them and putting them out there, it is amazing to be able to share them with you all. The hard stuff. The tired stuff. The REAL stuff.

I don't take even one quarter of the photos any more that I used to at the start. About 6 months ago I realized that all the time I was spending snapping away meant I wasn't seeing things in real time, just through a camera. Yes, I wanted those precious memories, but I wanted to be present for them even more.

I hope you at least get a smile out of these, as I sit here cringing at the fact you're all probably enjoying them. I'm not ashamed, or embarrassed, I'm purely reminded of a really tough time, and a really wonderful time. Plus, the one thing that's common in all these photos, is that look of overwhelming love, even if it is a tired look. ♥

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TODDLERS

CONVERSATION AND YOUR KIDS **7** TIPS FOR GETTING THE WORDS FLOWING

by Chéla Wallace

Chéla Wallace is the mother of three boys including twins and a freelance writer who lives and works in the Portland, Oregon area. Her articles have been featured in local newspapers, as well as *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Twins and More* and *TWINS Magazine*. In addition to her creative writing, she has been a technical and business writer/copy-editor for over 15 years.



Like many twins, mine were born premature and consequently somewhat delayed in their verbal development. To get the conversational ball rolling, I refined techniques I'd developed with their older brother to draw him out when he was a toddler. The result: the twins (now seven) are confident communicators, having long ago caught up with their peers. Here are some ways to bring out the chatterbox in your children:

1. **Talk like you would to an adult.** Show by not only what you say, but how you say it that you feel what they say and think are important. (Do this even with infants: they will pick up on the rhythm, tone, emotional meaning and context of what you're saying, even if they don't get the precise meaning.) This approach makes talking with your children more enjoyable for you, while at the same time teaching them the art and rhythm of give-and-take conversation.
2. **Listen and respond with enthusiasm.** When in the presence of a bright idea or sudden insight, take a second, smile broadly and acknowledge the intellect behind it. On a recent trip to Costco, I had forgotten my list. I muttered out loud, "I know I'm forgetting something..." One of my twins piped up, "We need nuggets!" He had heard me mention it earlier in the day—and beamed with pride as I said, "Thank you SO MUCH! You've got a great memory, buddy. And you just saved Mommy a trip to the store!" This positive event stayed with him: the next few times we went to Costco, he happily mentioned how he had remembered nuggets and helped Mom.
3. **You don't have to be an expert to know what you're talking about.** OK, I confess, I do know the names of all the Thomas the Tank Engine characters (and will soon know all the LEGO Bionicle names). You don't have to know everything about your children's latest passion to listen attentively. Just occasionally interject an appropriate comment and/or ask a meaningful question. By validating your children's passions, you are acknowledging their interests are worthwhile in and of themselves. And by treating your children and their ideas with respect, you are teaching them how to not only treat others, but how they should expect others to treat them.
4. **Share your interests with your children.** An easy way to strike up a conversation with your children is to share with them what you enjoy. My husband loves to design and build things; when my twins were four, they all went to a woodworking show, where the boys amazed onlookers with their ability to accurately identify miter saws, lathes and drill presses. It was a great bonding moment for father and sons. Sharing your enthusiasm for your passions also gives your children permission to discover and share their own passions.
5. **Expand on what your children are telling you.** Use what your children are talking about as a conversation-builder.

If someone mentions that it's foggy outside, tell them that fog is just clouds that are really close to the ground and that even though you can't see the sun, it is still there. You can then ask your children what they think will make the fog go away. After they respond, give a brief explanation of what really happens (this is a good opportunity to throw in a new vocabulary word like "dissipate"). All the details of this little weather lesson may not stick, but the next time your child talks about fog (for example, when doing the daily weather calendar in school), they will gain a better understanding since it won't be a completely new subject for them. And who knows—maybe it will awaken the little meteorologist within!

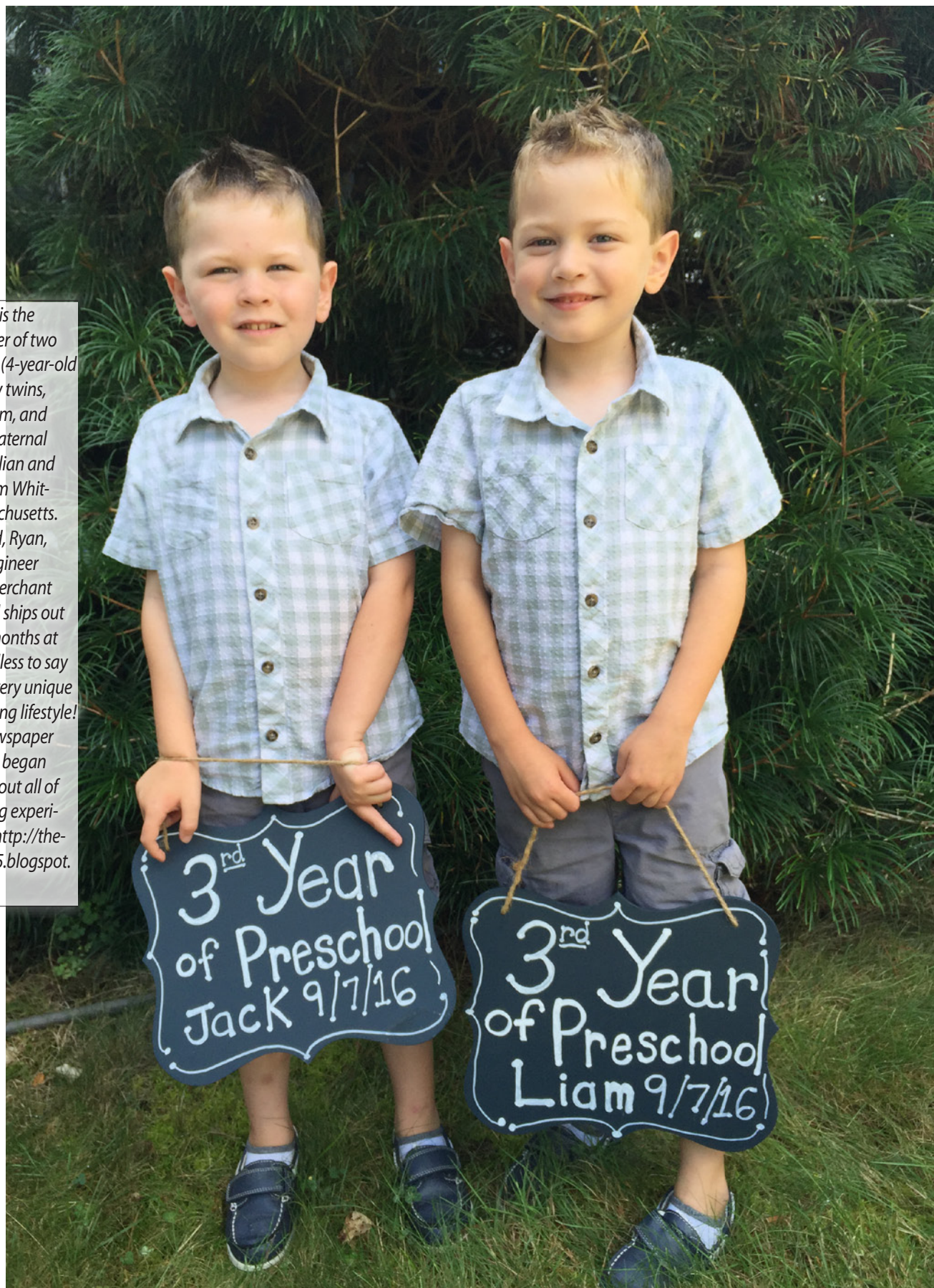
6. **Whenever possible, praise your children's decision-making,** even if what they're deciding isn't what you'd necessarily do (within reason, of course, and never agree with anything that would do harm). This is a great way to reinforce you are listening to them and encourage them to share their thoughts with you. While in preschool, my twins went through a phase of dressing in all one color: red means Superman; brown means Indiana Jones. One evening while picking out school clothes for the next day, one twin said, "I'm going to be brown tomorrow." After a moment of reflection I replied, "That sounds like a really good idea to me." As long as it fit and was seasonally-appropriate, I was on Cloud Nine he could dress himself! I responded to him in such a way that 1) he knew I had heard him, 2) I took his decision seriously, and, 3) after thoughtful (albeit brief) consideration, I concurred that, indeed, dressing in all brown clothes was an exemplary idea. The look of satisfaction and confidence on his face was worth the small effort it took on my part.
7. **Keep it upbeat.** You will not only convey the idea that communicating and interacting with others is an enjoyable experience, it will help you maintain your own mood throughout the day. Being a parent is the hardest, most rewarding job you'll ever have, with aspects that are downright drudgery (insert "doing laundry" here). When I'm having an off day, reaching down inside myself to create a little enthusiasm as I talk to my children helps me regain my footing and reminds me that even though what I'm saying isn't news to me, it is to my children and therefore, interesting to them and possibly even—dare I say it—exciting.

As parents, every day we have opportunities to teach and encourage our children to express themselves verbally, as well as learn how to be good listeners. Open and easy conversation lets your children know they can talk to you about themselves and their lives, laying the foundation for good communication throughout your relationship. With the right attitude on your part, conversing with your children—no matter what the age—can be a fun and rewarding experience for everyone. ♥



PRE-SCHOOL

Sarah Wall is the proud mother of two sets of twins (4-year-old fraternal boy twins, Jack and Liam, and 2-year-old fraternal girl twins, Lillian and Mallory) from Whitman, Massachusetts. Her husband, Ryan, is a Chief Engineer in the U.S. Merchant Marines and ships out for several months at a time. Needless to say she leads a very unique and interesting lifestyle! A former newspaper reporter, she began blogging about all of her parenting experiences here: <http://the-se4walls2015.blogspot.com>



Decisions Decisions

SEPARATE WAYS FOR MY TWO!

by Sarah Wall

As I read through people's posts this week, it became strikingly apparent that the start of a new school year tends to bring up a multitude of emotions for parents—particularly the mamas out there. It is tough to see our babies growing up so fast and gradually leaving our grasp. We watch them grow and mature—all the time hoping that we are making the best decisions for them until it's time for them to start making their own decisions. Sometimes the decisions we have to make in parenting are gut wrenching even when we know we are doing what's best for our kids. This year, my husband Ryan and I decided to place our elder set of twins--Jack and Liam--in separate classrooms for their final year of preschool. We weighed and measured the pros and cons of separation, but in the end, decided that we want to encourage the boys to grow as individuals and become more independent of each other as they are so incredibly close. We listened to the experiences of other twin parents and we talked with the boys' teachers as well as other family members to compare insights.

With the decision made, Ryan and I dreaded the conversation we would have to have with the boys about school. We waited until the night before school started so as not to let the anxiety build for too long. We sat down with the boys and explained to them that even when people love each other a ton, it is sometimes good to have a break from each other and that this way they can make even more new friends between the two of them, etc. They seemed a bit confused as to why this was all happening and Jack got teary-eyed saying, "But I want to be with Liam." It was not easy, but overall, the conversation went better than we had anticipated.

When it was time to leave for school, Jack started resisting leaving the house a bit. My heart was breaking as I knew Jack was anxious about walking into his new classroom without his twin and best friend by his side. On the way to school, I heard Jack whimpering in the backseat and kept hearing Liam reassure him by saying, "It's ok, Jack. I'll be right next door."

Upon entering the school, Jack clearly started to have separation anxiety and watching Liam hang up his backpack on a hook not next to his truly bothered him. I tried everything to coerce Jack into entering his classroom as Liam entered his classroom with much more ease.

The teachers luckily knew the situation and were wonderful in assisting me.

When we finally got him into the classroom, I knew I had to leave. As I started to head for the door, he grabbed my leg, his eyes flooded with tears. It was awful. My heart was in my throat and I felt tears well up in my own eyes. I kissed his head, told him I loved him and



slipped out the door. As soon as I was out of the school, the tears streamed down my face and I just sat in my car crying. Did we make the wrong decision? Is he traumatized? Is he going to cry all day? As I sat wrestling with these thoughts, a text popped up from Jack's teacher saying that he was fine and not to worry. Such an amazing text for a heart sick mama. She later sent me a photo of Jack happily playing at the water table.

Although I hated to see Jack so out of sorts without his brother, I know that they need to be their own people and this is just the first step on their journey. They will be Besties for life and separate classrooms will certainly never change that. ♥

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Extra, Extra!

Welcoming Twins when **Down Syndrome** is Part of the Story

By Kirsten Eve Beachy

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



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

Children First

Asher loves his plastic drum stick and has discovered that you can make music by banging on anything. Lucas loves sorting shapes, kisses, and exploring outside. Sarah Grace dances to the music of her Elsa doll. Hannah loves to paint. Caleb likes pounding on his exercise ball. Brian has an affinity for the kitchen. As soon as Sammy could crawl, he would drag himself towards his swing. Alex gravitates toward musical toys—and his brother. Irene pursues the cat. Sallie shouts until we pick her up and “fly” her through the air.

Each one likes certain forbidden things, too: Pulling out his brother’s pacifier to make him cry. Eating the dog’s food. Getting into the kitchen cupboards, or climbing to the top of them. Grabbing her sister’s ponytails. Hiding his mother’s keys.



Lucas (L) and Asher Zehr (R) in the leaves.

Scribbling on the walls. Phones, cups of coffee, computer chargers. Rolls of toilet paper. His brother’s toys.

They are all twins, womb-mates. Some of them have Down syndrome, each with a unique set of delays or differences linked to the additional chromosome. But most of all they are babies and toddlers—squeeze-able, inquisitive, doing new things every day, developing at their own paces.

Shamell Sprowall doesn’t want Down syndrome to define her family. She still hasn’t told everyone she knows. “I tell people as I see the need, though recently I’ve used #T21 on some of Caleb’s photos. But I haven’t made any grand announce-

ment. I just want people to treat him as a child first, not see him as Down syndrome first. Just treat him like a normal baby.”

The “Easy” Twin

The first months at home with the twins were tough. As a first-time mother, Jessica Zehr says, “I’m glad I didn’t know how hard it was going to be the first year, especially those first four months.” The Zehrs’ typical twin Lucas turned out to be the most demanding because he suffered from reflux. Asher, with Down syndrome, was so easygoing that Jessica says, “to be completely honest, I don’t feel that he got everything from me he deserved...I don’t feel like he got all of me.”

The same dynamic played out in our own household, with Irene screaming for an hour or more most nights and Sallie lying peacefully in her crib. In the Davis home, Hannah Davis was “Hannah the Hellion” from birth. In contrast, Sarah Grace didn’t cry at all—ever. “She would have starved to death as a baby if she had been a singleton,” jokes Ashley. “The only reason I knew that she needed to be fed was because Hannah was screaming.”

Health Concerns

In their first month together, the Cianciolos went through an exhausting process of weaning both boys off the sedatives they had been given in the orphanage. Although Sammy and Alex were nine months old, developmentally, “It’s like when we took them out of the orphanage, they were just born,” Theresa says. In the orphanage, “there were no toys, there was no stimulation, there was nothing.” Because of the lack of physical contact, the boys engaged in lots of self-stimulating behaviors, like rocking. Alex had difficulty attaching. Sammy, whose thyroid wasn’t monitored, has permanent vision and hearing damage. Almost a year later, they



Sammy (L) and Alex (R) in penguin pajamas.

are working hard to eat food that has not been pureed.

In the United States, children with Down syndrome are guaranteed access to early intervention therapies, and they are regularly screened for medical issues. We check heart, vision, hearing, and thyroid. A certain kind of leukemia is more common, but most cancers are actually rarer in people with Down syndrome—that extra chromosome comes with a few benefits. Most of our babies and toddlers with Down syndrome are in physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy, ranging from monthly visits to several times per week.

Our twins with Down Syndrome do have quirky hearts. Almost all of them had one or more minor holes in their hearts, which were detected only because of careful screening. Most of these holes have already closed on their own, the others are monitored.

Sarah Grace Davis’ cardiologist suspected that the more substantial hole in her heart was slowing her growth and physical development. At 20 months, she spent two days in the hospital to have a plug placed in her heart. The surgery was a success, and she doesn’t even have a scar. The worst of it was when Sarah Grace was coming out of the anesthesia. Ashley says, “She was very groggy. You could hear her screaming from the other side of the hospital; she was that hysterical.” Ashley remembers thinking, “If she can scream like that at this point, we’re doing pretty darn good.”

Premature birth is a common risk of twin pregnancy. I was placed on “house arrest” for two months of my pregnancy when



Hannah (L) and Sarah Grace Davis (R) as flower girls.

the girls showed signs of coming soon. None of the families I spoke with had to spend time in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, but the possibility was in the back of our minds throughout pregnancy, and we were relieved to carry both babies to term.

Jennifer Groneberg, in her memoir *Road Map to Holland*, writes about the NICU where her twin sons (one with Down syndrome) stayed for months and discusses the challenges of the long commute to the hospital. When one baby was finally ready to come home, the other remained in the hospital. "It seemed very wrong," she writes. "While they'd both been in the NICU, my main consolation was knowing they had each other." [12]



Brian and Caleb Sprowall (with duck) enjoy playing outside this summer.

The Twin Dynamic

As the twins grow, the differences between a typical twin and a twin with Down syndrome become more apparent, but they retain a special bond. At a year old, Asher Zehr is finally reciprocating in play, and Lucas will bring him toys. Jessica Zehr says, "When they started to really interact with each other, that was really fun to see. As a twin parent, that's what you crave to see—that twin connection, that special bond." However, she recalls, "When Lucas was mobile and Asher wasn't, that was really hard for Asher. He wanted to be where Lucas was, and he would just sit on the floor and whine all day."

As Sarah Grace Davis was learning to walk, she needed to hold someone's hand for security. Soon, she would hold Hannah's hand and follow her around the house. Sarah Grace still pauses when she transitions from carpet to a different floor surface, and Hannah is right there pulling her along. In the social sphere, it's Hannah who hangs back and Sarah Grace who is simply fearless. The sisters are inseparable, says Ashley, "two peas in a pod—they play together, they do everything together, they always have."

This was an asset during in-home physical therapy sessions for Sarah Grace. "The therapist was really good about getting them to work with each other," says Ashley. The girls would throw a ball back and forth, or the therapist would line up blocks for the girls to walk along. The therapist would tell Hannah what to do, Hannah would follow directions, and then Sarah would do it too, because she liked to imitate Hannah.

The twin dynamic helps Shamell Sprowall keep track of Caleb's progress. "If Brian wasn't here to be a measuring stick... I wouldn't pay so much attention to Caleb's [delayed] development... but as a positive, Brian shows me what Caleb is going to do."

The Cianciolo twins are inseparable, too, at 18 months. After lots of therapy, the boys are mobile. Both of them "commando crawl." Alex is "mama's boy" and gravitates

toward Theresa, while Sammy prefers Scott. Sammy's vision is limited, but he is able to see red, so the Cianciolos always dress Alex in red so that Sammy can find him.

Parents of "mixed" twins express their hopes that these relationships can remain close as their children grow. Shamell Sprowall hopes her sons will have a close relationship, and that Brian will see Caleb primarily as a brother and not a person with Down syndrome. She wonders if he will feel burdened by responsibility or if it will just feel normal, and he will think, "This is what families do for each other. This is my brother."

The statistics are promising. Researchers at Children's Hospital Boston surveyed 822 siblings of people with Down syndrome. Siblings reported feelings of affection (96%) and pride (94%) for their brother or sister with Down syndrome. Few reported feelings of embarrassment (under 10%) or a desire to trade their sibling in for a typical child (under 5%). About 9 out of 10 brothers and sisters feel they are better people because of their relationship with their sibling with Down syndrome and plan to be involved in their siblings' adult lives.[13]

Victories

These twin pairs face unique challenges, but the victories are all the sweeter. Sarah Grace Davis wasn't able to sit up independently beside her sister until her first birthday. "She chose to sit for the first time the day we happened to have professional photography done for their first birthday," says Ashley. "We have all these amazing photos of her just sitting up super solid like she'd been doing it forever. It was something we had worked on for so long."

Jessica remembers longing to see Asher smile. When Lucas smiled, Asher would just stare. He wasn't making much eye contact, either. "I remember the day he was laying in his Boppy, and he locked eyes on mine, and he smiled. And it was instant tears, because I finally knew what his smile looked like. It was so beautiful, and I just

felt connected with him...I had been waiting an eternity for him to smile."

The Cianciolos celebrate the impact that their twin boys are having. They have been inspired to do ministry work in Ukrainian orphanages. Here at home, Theresa and Scott are opposed to abortion and include crisis pregnancy counseling in their work, and they rally annually at the Vermont statehouse in a Walk for Life. They wish that more families who are not able to care for babies with disabilities would consider adoption, rather than aborting them. Recently, the Vermont House passed a resolution promoting international adoption, and named it for Sammy and Alex Cianciolo. The boys were present when it was read on the floor of the statehouse. Theresa says, "I can't tell you how moved we were, and how profound that was for a state that has one of the highest abortion rates to support an adoption resolution and to have the boys there."

Twins might be double the trouble, but they are also double the fun. Shamell Sprowall says, "I get the best laughs...not just superficial laughs, but those real hard, therapeutic belly laughs." The Sprowalls can tell when their sons wake up in the morning because Caleb starts playing the piano in his crib, and Brian wakes up to join the dance party. Shamell had to rest quite a bit during her pregnancy, and she binge-watched *Law and Order*. Now when the intro music to the show comes on the television, both boys will pause in their play and look up. It's their song.



Sarah Grace (L) and Hannah (R) with little sister Hazel.

The Future

The Davis family, with daughters turning 3, now face the challenge of separating their twins. Private preschools are unprepared to accept Sarah Grace, and the public system—though it will serve Sarah Grace with her special needs—does not serve typical children like Hannah at this age. "It makes me nervous because they've always been together," Ashley says. But now Hannah will have something of her own after the focus being so heavily on her sister's therapy appointments.

"I know that the twin bond is always going to be strong. That's something that I've heard from other moms over and over again."

The Cianciolos likewise have concerns about schooling; their hoped-for home-school experience may be complicated by Sammy and Alex's need to receive services through the public school system. They have created a group of support and hope that the boys will be able to continue to have a supportive community throughout their lives. Theresa says, "Our hope is that wherever God calls them that we will be there to support them, because God has an even bigger plan for their lives than for ours. We feel very strongly about that."

Shamell Sprowall tries not to wonder whether Caleb will be independent, will read and write, will talk coherently. "We know what our children's diagnosis is, but in our minds we still want them to be as close to typical as they can be, and if anyone says something different, I don't think they're being honest," she says. "As much as I want to know the future, it also scares me, because I don't know. I know what to expect with Brian...you kind of have a vision or blueprint of what Brian is going to do, but you don't have that with Caleb. He's going to make his own." She focuses on the present, asking, "Am I doing what I need to do today for Caleb so he'll be better tomorrow?"

Jessica Zehr hopes, for both of her sons, "that they will be able to accomplish whatever they set their minds to. I think it's really amazing how life for adults with Down syn-



Irene (L) and Sallie Alderfer (R) rockin' out

drome has changed over the past few years and how options that people once thought weren't options are now available. I hope that if Asher wants to go to college, he goes to college; if he wants to get a job, he gets a job (I really hope he gets a job, actually!); if he wants to get married, he gets married. Those are the same hopes I have for Lucas."

Jason and I are laying the groundwork for our daughters' futures now. Alongside the 529 education savings account for Irene, there will be one of the new ABLE savings accounts for Sallie. Our will includes a special needs trust. We're buying more life insurance, for a longer period, than we might have done under other circumstances. This feels like the easy part, much easier than speculating about future limitations or moments when we may feel we can help one twin only at the expense of the other.

But right now with the girls a year and a half old, with good health reports and better nights of sleep, life is sweet. Irene tries to feed us Cheerios and imaginary soup. Sallie greets us with sticky, fervent kisses—and we have to remind her not to bite our noses. The girls grab hands to dance whenever I turn on the radio, Irene standing, Sallie bouncing on her bottom. Every morning I whisper to Sallie, "I'm so lucky to be your Mama." Every evening I whisper to Irene, "I'm so lucky to be your Mama." And it's true. I wouldn't trade this opportunity for a million million dollars. Take that, Virginia lottery. ♥

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by Christine Johnson

Postpartum Eclampsia

Almost Left My Husband a Single Dad

I was 36 weeks and one day pregnant with my twins when my doctor told me they would be born the next day. The babies were both healthy, it was my body that was giving up. I had been hospitalized overnight a few days prior due to severe abdominal pain.

While I was at the hospital my right leg had swelled to more than twice the size of my left. Thankfully, I didn't have a blood clot, it was just my uterus putting too much pressure on my nerves. I got to go home the next day.

Oh Jan. 16, 2015 my husband (Chris) and I headed to the hospital for my C-section. My parents stayed at our house with our two-year-old, Evie. It was a long day waiting for an OR room to be available, but at 3:10 p.m. our six-pound, six-ounce son, Theodore, was born and his six-pound, four-ounce sister, Arielle, followed about 20 seconds after. We spent the next few days in the hospital being well taken care of.

My headaches started the day after we came home. I figured they were just spinal headaches, so I didn't worry too much. I was also extremely swollen but remembered being swollen after my first C-section, too. I had a couple of random nose bleeds which I chalked up to the dry January air. Other than those things, I was recovering nicely and was too tired to be worried.

When Arielle and Theo were 11 days old, everything changed. I was getting confused, I would read things multiple times and nothing was making sense.

At around 11:00 a.m., I went to the kitchen to start making lunch. I remember staring at the fridge wondering what the little things were on it (magnets).

I then opened the cutlery drawer and pulled out a spoon. I had no idea what it was. I held the spoon up and asked Chris what it was, he told me it was a spoon, I started to panic and cry and told him that I didn't know what it was, so he asked me to sit down.

When I sat, I started frantically pointing at my arm asking Chris what it was, he kept telling me it was my arm but it made no sense to me. I then told him that I was going to faint and dropped to my knees. I have minimal memory of the rest of that day.

I had seizures, two or possibly three.

Chris rolled me onto my side and called 911. He had a friend look after Arielle & Theodore, then drove to the hospital with Eve to see me. I don't remember that day in the hospital,

I have one memory of Eve wearing a little dinosaur mask, that's it. I don't remember the spinal tap or the multiple other tests they did throughout the day.

According to Chris, I didn't even know who he was. I have also been told that I was so swollen that I was hardly recognizable.

If you are pregnant or a new mom and have severe rib pain, major headaches or any of the other symptoms I listed, please seek

medical attention. It's worth it to have it checked even if it turns out to be nothing.

I woke up the next morning in the ICU with two IVs and a catheter, I didn't know why I was there. My doctor came to see me and couldn't believe how small I was, my swelling was completely gone. I couldn't speak properly cause my tongue was huge, apparently I had bitten in when I was seizing and had bled all over the floor.

When Chris came to see me, he was relieved that I knew who he was. My parents also brought Evie for a visit but weren't allowed to stay for long.

My blood pressure was high and the doctors were having trouble getting it down, so they added a second medication to help lower it. There wasn't an official diagnosis at that time but all things were pointing towards postpartum eclampsia.

I had to take an ambulance to a city hospital for an MRI because our local hospital didn't have an MRI machine. After that MRI, the diagnosis was made official, I had had postpartum eclamptic seizures and I was lucky to be alive.

On day three I was moved out of ICU and taken to the maternity floor which meant I could finally see my babies. Chris brought Arielle & Theodore to see me for a short visit, I was overwhelmed and emotional. I spent the next three days on the maternity floor and was released with two different blood pressure meds and orders to have my blood pressure checked twice a day for the next couple of weeks.


I had my driver's license suspended due to the seizures, so we had to pack the whole family up twice a day just to get my blood pressure checks done.

My blood pressure was coming down nicely and I was slowly weaning off the medications. After less than six weeks, my pressure was down to its normal state and I was completely off the meds. My body was healing itself nicely, it was the emotional aspect that became the hardest part for me.

I was having panic attacks when I would forget little things, I was crying a lot while trying to deal with the reality that I almost wasn't here anymore and I was just an overall emotional mess.

Postpartum pre-eclampsia isn't spoken about as much as regular pre-eclampsia. We're led to believe that we have our babies, then we're supposed to be in this land of happiness where everything is sunshine and roses. I'm told that eclamptic seizures often cause coma and death. Thankfully I am one of the positive statistics that avoided that.

It's been over a year and the emotional trauma still haunts me. I want my story told, I want it shared and I want more women to know about this condition and the dangers of it.

If you are pregnant or a new mom and have severe rib pain, major headaches or any of the other symptoms I listed, please seek medical attention. It's worth it to have it checked even if it turns out to be nothing. 

Cost and Availability of Child Care

CONTINUES TO BURDEN AMERICAN FAMILIES



Did you know that the cost of full-time, center-based care for two children is the highest single household expense in most parts of the country? Child Care Aware® of America, the nation's leading voice for child care, is leveraging the growing pressure for positive change by launching a movement and giving it a name—Child Care Works. The goal of this grassroots initiative is to further escalate the need for a child care system that works for all American families.

Child care has become a major topic among policymakers this election season as presidential candidates continue to highlight the issue in their campaign platforms. Child Care Aware® of America will be partnering with child care leaders, parent and family advocates, and policymakers to ensure that child care remains a top priority this election season and once our new president takes office in January.

"Most parents in our country today either can't access high quality child care or can't afford it," stated Lynette M. Fraga, Ph.D., Executive Director of Child Care Aware® of America. "We want all parents to have quality choices and children to have quality care—care that is both a setting for learning and a support for parents to work or attend school," she stated. "Our goal is to improve child care through legislative victories, policy solutions, and shifting public opinion," Dr. Fraga concluded.

According to the 2015 Parents and the High Cost of Child Care report released by Child Care Aware® of America (CCAOA) shows a continued trend of child care costs that put a strain on families, rivaling what the average family pays for one year of college tuition at a four-year institution.

While families continue to struggle with child care costs and finding affordable, quality care solutions, U.S. businesses also pay the price for employee absenteeism due to child care breakdowns, losing approximately \$4.4 billion in 2014.

The latest report finds that the average child care can cost as much as \$17,062 annually for an infant, or \$12,781 annually for a four-year-old (double those for twins!) The cost of child care is especially difficult for families living at or below the federal poverty level. For these families, full-time, center-based care for an infant ranges from 24 percent of family income in Mississippi, to 85 percent of family income in Massachusetts. For single parents the costs can be overwhelming — in every state annual costs of center-based infant care averaged over 40 percent of the state median income for single mothers.

Child care providers with strong professional preparation are essential to providing a high-quality early learning program, and the quality of adult-child interactions is one of the most

Adjusted for inflation, U.S. businesses lose approximately **\$4.4 billion annually** due to employee absenteeism as the result of child care breakdowns.



powerful predictors of children’s development and learning. However, in every state, child care workers would need to spend nearly 50 percent of their income in order to afford child care for their own children. In 6 states plus Washington, D.C., over 100 per-

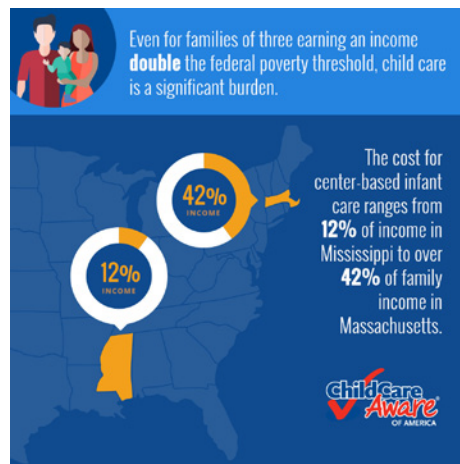
cent of the median child care worker’s income is required to put two children in center-based care.

will require an investment from businesses, families, and state and local governments. Child Care Works will be mobilizing advocates at childcareworks.org, a new microsite that will serve as the hub for information and resources on child care issues and legislation, and an advocacy center where constituents who ‘join’ the movement will be encouraged to sign the pledge to make child care affordable, ensure quality care for all, and support the child care workforce. There will be opportunities to sign online petitions and contact your elected officials’ campaigns in support of child care issues.

Child Care Aware® of America has been advocating for quality, affordable child care for all American families for nearly 30 years. Working with our members, partners, funders, volunteers, advocates and friends, we celebrated the passage of the Child Care Development and Block Grant legislation in 2014, and have worked to help elevate the importance and prominence of child care as a national economic priority.

“The time is ripe for a movement,” said Dr. Fraga. “It’s time we all work together to champion policy solutions to help support working families, and holding lawmakers accountable, so that child care becomes the national priority it deserves to be.”

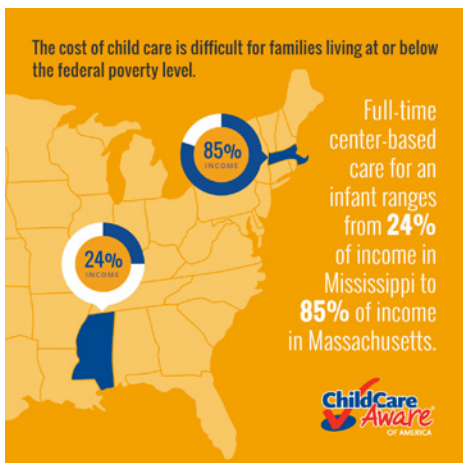
Copies of the 2015 Parents and High Cost of Child Care report, CCAoA recommends three areas to work on as a country to improve the child care system:



Empower providers with a living wage and affordable professional development opportunities; help families make good child care decisions with reliable and accessible information; and create a seamless, affordable child care system that works for families, which

This year’s report also includes an interactive map that allows users to quickly access a variety of cost data for each state. Find out child care costs in your state here: <http://usa.childcareaware.org/costofcare>.

Follow the conversation on Twitter: @USACHildCare #CostOfCare About Child Care Aware® of America Child Care Aware® of America is our nation’s leading voice for child care. CCAoA works with state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and other community partners to ensure that all families have access to quality, affordable child care. CCAoA leads projects that increase the quality and availability of child care, offer comprehensive training to child care professionals, undertake research, and advocate for child care policies that improve the lives of children and families. To learn more, visit usa.childcareaware.org. Follow them on Twitter @USACHildCare and on Facebook at facebook.com/usachildcare. ♥



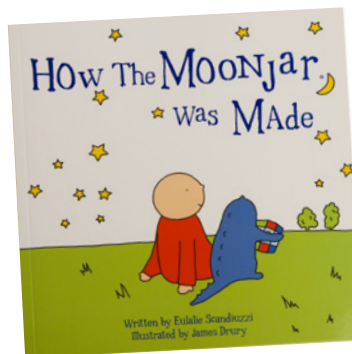


Save Spend and SHARE TIMES TWO

by Eulalie Scandiuzzi, founder of Moonjar



Helping kids learn about money ought to be as regularly taught as street safety! If we used the words SAVE, SPEND and SHARE with our young kids the way we teach them to stop, look and listen - we might save some potentially difficult conversations during young adulthood.



At Moonjar LLC, a company founded in 2002 by Eulalie Scandiuzzi in order to help make the money conversation active, inclusive and interesting, we believe each child has a money personality from the get-go and no two are exactly the same. For a family with twins, the early learning money conversation about setting goals will offer a great look at the differences between the twins. When we encourage our children to set goals around what matters to them, rather than what might be important to us, we are opening a wonderful opportunity for “yes” conversations.

The “yes” conversation about how a donation can impact an organization or how a certain purchase can be achieved helps children to understand that each of them has a responsibility and certain choices to make around how money is allocated.

We have created some tips to help families talk about money to each individual child.

- 1. Get the conversation about money started early and use tools.** Start talking with your 4 and 5-year-olds about money concepts. Keep in mind most children are visual learners, so using hands-on tools like cash registers, checkbook registers and money boxes can



better help them learn concepts such as allocating funds and what interest means.

2. **Develop a system of allowance and stick with it.** Whether you follow a "learn to earn" format where children earn allowances through performing small chores or a "family as community" format where a stipend is given, keep on a regular schedule and avoid giving advances.
3. **Teach your child to save money.** Work with your children to establish an ongoing system of saving. Help them to determine how much to save, setting short and long term goals then discuss where the balance should be spent and shared.
4. **Set goals and prioritize.** Use pictures to help them visualize their goals and then prioritize what they are saving for, what they want to spend their money on, and with whom or with what they want to share their money.
5. **Money is a means, not an end.** Money represents the power and freedom to purchase or give as you see fit. Discussing the difference between wants and needs with your children, as well as working with them to set goals will help in overcoming the desire for "instant gratification".
6. **Don't be too critical of the choices children make.** They have different values and mistakes are a fine way to learn. The important thing is that they save, invest, spend and share with goals in mind.
7. **Encourage young giving or youth philanthropy.** Help your children understand that they are part of a larger world community through discussions about sharing their money and/or donating time to causes of their choosing.
8. **Mutual funds are great gifts.** Purchase a mutual fund for the child for special occasions such as birthdays or special accomplishments. Children love receiving mail, so have the statements addressed to the child and review the account values regularly with them.
9. **Continue learning more about money and investing.** Make use of great online resources. Here are some websites for you and your children: www.moonjar.com / www.youninvestor.com / www.kidsmoney.org / www.strongkids.com / www.justgive.org /
10. **Be a good role model.** Make sure your children see you doing the things that you are teaching them. Let them in on your bill paying, savings and investment plans and charitable giving. ♥



Pictured are identical twins Abby and Avery Heinnickel, age 8 from Greensburg, Pennsylvania

Thoughts on Twins....

Submitted by Teresa Heinnickel

A few things I've learned about identical twins.

They always have a best friend.

They always have an enemy.

They have to share everything (which I must admit would get old.)

They get to share everything... (Which could be cool)

They do everything at the same time (kind of creepy.)

If they miss a word on a spelling test it's usually the same word misspelled the same way (did I mention creepy?)

They make each other laugh.

They make each other cry.

In public they are always looking out for one another.

At home they drag each other through the house by the hair.

Building Dreams by Learning to Save, Spend and Share



BIRTHDAY CAKES

Other Important Stuff to Consider

by Ryan Swan

Today's big question was "Do we need two birthday cakes or will one suffice?" 51 weeks have passed since we welcomed E. and L. into our family and we are getting ready to celebrate a year of life(s). I would like to tell you that it has all been smooth sailing, but the truth is that some of it has been tough, much of it I do not remember and almost all of it presented questions that I did not have readily available answers to. While the two birthday cake question seems relatively minor, it does breach the topic of when we can parent in a collective model and when it is essential to set

individual expectations and attention to our children and their development.

E. and L. have been on very different development pathways from the very beginning. While both gave us the heart stopping experience of coming into the world without a sound or breath (apparently this is not unusual for a caesarian section birth, but no one bothered to tell dad that!!!) L. settled into life at home pretty quickly, while E. would wake up screaming at 11:00pm every night and would not settle down again until 3:00am. Fast forward three

months and E. is sleeping through the night, while L. would wake several times. At seven months E. discovered crawling and has not sat still since. Pulling up and free standing soon followed and we are now on the brink of the magical first steps. L. on the other hand, was perfectly content to lie on his back and take things in from there. No amount of prompting, strategic positioning, pleading, demonstrating, or panic reading (and explaining to him) about what your baby "should" be doing could get him moving. Not too long ago he realized that E. was taking all of the good toys, so he decided that it was time to change his perspective on the world and get crawling. He is now pulling up and free standing also. L.'s head and shoulders start bobbing as soon as any musical notes start playing, while E. is a little more vocal in her expressions (think velociraptor from Jurassic Park).

With all of the above said, my wife and I still try very hard not to assign roles to our children. Personalities are certainly becoming more evident every day, but so are their communication and intellectual skills. I have made the mistake of saying E. is the more verbal one (just as I did in my example above), only to have L. start babbling at that very moment. We recognize the danger of making the same mistake with personality traits. We do not want them to be pigeon holed into roles just because they are currently expressing certain traits.

This brings me back to arguably our greatest challenges as parents (in terms of development). When can we employ collective parenting/teaching moments and when must we individualize our interactions? We tried to make story time one of our collective moments. However, even this quickly became a challenge as L. enjoys listening to the words, while E. likes to literally digest the

story by eating the book. Now story time is a mix of collective and individual work as one of us reads to one child while the other parent gets the other child ready for bed. We then switch roles. The story is told twice, and each child gets what they want out of the experience. Our truly collective moments have organically developed on the creative development side. Older brother, C. (5) likes to play an X Factor type competition, where each of us showcases a song and/or dance of our choosing. As E. and L. have limited dance and lyrical skills right now, they are incorporated into one of the parent's performances. While this might seem like a simple or inconsequential time, we believe that this is a significant social and creative moment for all involved (I am now a slightly better than awful dancer). We can see this game continuing but also expanding into art projects, and an introduction to music.

The concept of individual teaching seems much more simple. When one of our children is showing an interest in something (for example, building blocks), one of us will sit down with them, join in the activity (without giving too much direction) and talk while we play. The obvious challenge is doing so, when only one of us (parents) is available to interact. In such cases, it really does become more of a juggling act and keeping everyone safe and sane becomes the priority. The plan/hope is that we can continue to evolve this model to ensure that we are meeting the individual developmental needs of all three of our children as they progress through school and life.

With regard to the birthday cake question? We are getting two cakes. You only turn one once... ♥

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5 Tips for Better Sleep for Your Twins After Daylight Savings Ends

by Nicole Johnson, Founder of The Baby Sleep Site®, <http://www.babysleepsite.com>

The end of daylight savings, or “Fall Back,” is fast-approaching! While those adults without children are looking forward to an extra hour of sleep, those of us with children are wondering how much coffee we’ll need to get through the early mornings ahead of us. And, with twins, there is double the chance they will get even more off-track! Why haven’t they cancelled daylight saving by now anyway? So how can you skate through the time change like a pro? Simple: use the 5 strategies below!

5 Tips To Better Sleep For Your Twins After Daylight Saving Ends

1. If you’ve had your twins on a by-the-clock schedule since they were very young and they’ve always slept well, do nothing when the time changes. That is, do nothing but put them on the new schedule once the time changes. Sure, they will wake early the first day, but stick to their normal nap time(s) and bedtime and give them a few days to adjust just like we do. If you prefer to have their schedule shifted ahead of time, read on.
2. If your twins are very sensitive to schedule changes, gradually adjust the schedule ahead of time. In the 2-3 weeks prior to the change, move your twins’ schedule forward in 10-15 minute increments every day or every other day until their schedule is an hour shifted forward. Once the time changes, you will be back to your present schedule. Done! If you are a working parent who can’t do such a thing, read on.
3. If your twins are somewhere in-between or you can’t adjust the schedule 2-3 weeks ahead of time, split the difference and adjust the schedule just a few days prior. The time changes on a Sunday, so on Friday night, put them to bed just 15 minutes late and then shift all nap times on Saturday later by 15 minutes. Encourage full-length naps as much as possible to get to a later bedtime, which is now 30

minutes later than before. Once the time changes on Sunday morning, you are only 30 minutes off your normal schedule. Shift again that day and then by Monday or Tuesday, you will be back to your present schedule. Voila!

4. Whether you adjust ahead of time or not, keep in mind that it takes about a week for anyone’s internal clock to fully adjust to the new time, similar to jet lag. If one or both of your children begin to wake super early even more than the one hour, put them to bed a little early for a day or two and then try the new schedule, again.
5. If your twins are already waking too early for your taste, consider shifting their schedule before the time change and afterward! There is no rule saying you can’t keep going with the schedule adjustments.

The first week will likely be “off” but keeping your twins on the same schedule will be a sanity-saver! If one of your twins is a more sensitive sleeper than the other, have him or her “drive” the schedule the most and let the other adapt to his or her sibling. Following these tips will have all of you back on track in no time!! ♡

Nicole Johnson is a married mother of two wonderful boys and owner of The Baby Sleep Site. When her eldest son was born, he had a lot of sleep problems – he would wake every one or two hours, all night long! She got busy and thoroughly researched literature and scientific reports until she became an expert in sleep methods, scheduling routines, baby developmental needs, and more. She overcame her son’s sleeping issues in a way that matched her own parenting style, and knew it was her mission to help other tired parents “find their child’s sleep”. If you have your own sleep issues, Nicole and her team at The Baby Sleep Site® can help!



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TWINS MARKETPLACE

Double Takes



1

Theo & Thomas, ID
Age 23-months
South West London, England, UK



2

Maxwell & Avery, FR
Age 3
Aurora, Illinois



3

Madison & Emerson, FR
Age 5-months
Quantico, VA



4

Paxton & Knox, FR
Age 1
Findlay, OH



5

James & Caroline, FR
Age 4
Woodside, NY



6

Avalon & Lexington, FR
Age 19-months
Seattle, WA



7

Caleb & Joshua, FR
Age 7-months
New Albany, MS



8

Cole & Lucy, FR
Age 10-months
Foster City, CA

September/October 2016



9

Brooke & Brianna, FR
Age 9
Fairless Hills, PA



10

Camille & Gabriel, ID
Age 4-months
Honolulu, HI



11

Arielle & Theodore, FR
Age 8-months
Petawawa, ON Canada



12

Jazlynn & Gianna Raber, ID
Age 7
Byron, IL



13

Joshua & Jairus, FR
Age 3
Maiden, NC



14

Angelina & Saia, FR
Age 7-months
Long Beach, CA



15

Kinley & Adriana, FR
Age 6-months
Spokane, WA



16

Weston & Easton, FR
Age 5
Panama City Beach, FL



17

Mason & Ellaina
Age 2.5
The Pas, Manitoba, Canada



18

Addison & Brooklynn, ID
Age 4
Harrison Township, Michigan



19

Preston & Kieran, FR
Age 14-months
Fitchburg, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Stacy Tippeneslum

Double Takes



20

Mavis & Maverick, FR
Age 1
Cedar Hill, Texas



21

Jaycee & Jayden, ID
Age 5
Atoka, OK



24

Landon & Elise, FR
2-weeks
Charlotte NC



22

Roman & Tyson, FR
Age 7
Denver, CO



23

Gemma & Freya, Fr
Age 17-months
Colorado Springs, CO



25

Calvin & Liam, FR
Age 2
Oromocto, New Brunswick,
Canada



26

Sierra & Bridger, FR
Age 9-months
Reno, NV



27

Saige & Cheyenne, ID
Age 2 ½
Highland, CA



28

Peyton & Landry, FR
Age 5
Denver, CO



29

Copper & Tatum, FR
Age 7-months
Ooltewah, TN



30

Riley & Reagan, FR
Age 12
Bamberg, SC

September/October 2016



31

Madison & Makenzie, ID
Age 3
Newark, Ohio



32

Bentlee & Brian Walden, ID
Age 1
Swartz Creek, MI



33

Arthur & Jessica, FR
Age 4 1/2 months
Loma Mar, California



34

Crew & Cal, ID
Age 1
Trophy Club, Texas



35

Taylor & Alexander, FR
Age 3
Culver City, California



36

Timberly & Willowm, ID
Age 5-months
Baxter Springs, KS



37

Paxton & Paisley, FR
Age 8-months
Wayne Michigan



38

Riley & Payton, FR
Age 5
Howe, Oklahoma



39

Christian & Haven, FR
Age 9-months
Owensboro, KY



40

Marissa & Miley, FR
Age 4
Tweed, Ontario, Canada

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