

Q & A: impacts of having twins on parents and older singletons

This issue we focus on the siblings of twins and the added pressures and delights having older children has on a family with multiples. We have some fabulous insights from a few members of our club on how they coped and cope. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did.

JULES AND JIMMY GLADWIN

Parents to Chloe (6 years), Lottie (4.5 years) and Tessa and Sophie (2 years 10 months).



1. How old was/were your singleton child/ren when the twins were born?

Chloe was 3.5 years and Lottie was 22 months old.

2. Did you do anything specific to prepare them for the arrival of the twins?

Not really. Chloe understood that I was going to have two babies but this news didn't seem to phase her, maybe because she already had a younger sister and was used to sharing her mum and dad? Lottie was possibly too young to understand as she didn't even acknowledge that anything different was happening. We had discussed whether the twins could be boys or girls or a mixture, and asked them to suggest potential names (Chloe wanted to use her own name again if we had another girl) but other than that, we didn't do anything specific.

3. What was the most challenging part of juggling newborn twins with your singletons demands?

The lack of sleep. Without a doubt. I was up all night with the twins and then had to be awake all day for the older two, there wasn't

a chance to "sleep when the baby(ies) are sleeping". Chloe had dropped her day sleep when I was pregnant so she needed an awake parent at all times during the day. Plus, due to the ages of the older two, they were very active and needed activities and stimulation during their waking hours, which was a challenge on a lack of sleep.

Logistics were always (and sometimes still are)...interesting. Chloe was entitled to 20 free ECE hours when the twins were born, but it was extremely hard to drag three other children in and out of the car and the pick up / drop off would usually coincide with a sleep (no matter how I planned it).

4. Do you think there was an impact on your singleton children, particularly in the early days?

I'm sure that there was, I just can't remember ;). I know that they were extremely happy that there were two babies so they didn't have to share. Maybe the fact that they still had an older sibling to play with kept them both entertained and accepting that this is the way that it is...but neither of them changed their behaviour significantly or had any negative responses to their sisters' arrival.

5. What were the positive aspects of having other children?

There was always someone to go and fetch the baby wipes ;).

The twins were always entertained by watching their sisters and gave them smiles and giggles all the time.

Having had newborn babies before, I was a lot more relaxed with my parenting with the twins. I didn't worry too much about "the small stuff". In the early stages when I was suffering from extreme sleep deprivation, it was good knowing that things would definitely get easier

as your children move through each stage of development.

I guess the fact that they had older siblings, my twins just accepted that "that's just the way things are" and follow behaviour of the older two girls. They just imitated their sisters. For example, Tessa just watched her sisters using the toilet and decided that she needed to use it too so toilet training wasn't an issue for her. I guess in a big way, having sisters helped Sophie becoming toilet trained too...she wasn't interested for several months after Tessa was fully trained. When she did decide to use the potty / toilet ALL of the girls got a treat and so they were all very motivated in making sure that Sophie was dry and she got lots of positive feedback from her sisters.

Having four girls in 3.5 years, they all share clothes, bedrooms and toys really well. At the moment anyway, it may be very different in ten years time!

6. Now that your twins are older, do you think there is still an impact of having twins on their singleton siblings and if so how?

It's less nowadays, but we still stand out when we're out in public and we do get attention (even when grocery shopping) about how we have our "hands full" which I'm sure they don't like as who wants to hear that they are hard work for their parents? I'm not sure if this is twin related or just a family group all close in age thing though?

Other than that, I don't think there is a specific impact of having twins on the older two singletons. At the moment, they just like having multiple playmates close to their own age.

7. Anything further you would like to add?

The Work & Income Multiple Birth hours were useful with having an older child when the twins were born. However, I did initially find it very difficult to organise and find a suitable caregiver to help me with these hours as I didn't know anyone who had time available (they either were already working or had a child themselves and therefore couldn't

provide the appropriate childcare ratios) or have a family member to assist (we're originally from the UK). I was very grateful for the help, but for me, it was very stressful organising and setting up the assistance when I had just had the babies.



ELLA AND SHANE JOHNSON

Parents to Ava (6 years), Ollie and Summer (3 years).



1. How old was/were your singleton child/ren when the twins were born?

Our daughter Ava was 2 years 9 months when Ollie and Summer were born.

2. Did you do anything specific to prepare them for the arrival of the twins?

We involved Ava in the pregnancy from the beginning and talked a lot about her new brother and sister who would be arriving soon and what it would be like when they got here. Ava bought Ollie and Summer a little present to give them when they were born and they bought her a 'thanks for being our big sister' present too.

3. What was the most challenging part of juggling newborn twins with your singletons demands?

I found the balance between trying to make sure everyone was getting enough attention the most difficult thing. During my pregnancy I had worried about this a lot, however, it wasn't as bad as anticipated. I tried to take each day as it came....the good with the bad, and not to

be too harsh on myself. It was also nice to take the opportunities when they came, spending some time with Ava when Ollie and Summer were sleeping. I was fortunate that my very kind mother in law, offered to pick up Ava from day care three days a week so that I didn't have to interrupt Ollie and Summers sleep times, which was a godsend. She did this for the first year or even more I think.

4. Do you think there was an impact on your singleton children, particularly in the early days?

I think with any new baby, there is always a settling in period, where everyone gets used to the new dynamics and extra people joining the family. However, it is probably a greater adjustment for siblings when it is multiples. Something that I found hard, was when we were out and people would be so interested in the babies hearing all about them and totally ignore Ava. I would always introduce Ava first and then Ollie and Summer. When people came round to visit for the first time, I would ask Ava if she wanted to take the visitors to where Ollie and Summer were so introduce them to her new brother and sister. Helped to make her involved at a time when there is a lot of attention going to the babies, and it seemed to work pretty well.

5. What were the positive aspects of having other children?

I felt much more relaxed the second time around and confident in my parenting abilities, not to say there weren't challenges, but at least I knew that I could do it! Its fun seeing the different bonds and relationships develop between them all and I think that the three of them make up a pretty cool little crew!

6. Now that your twins are older, do you think there is still an impact of having twins on their singleton siblings and if so how?

I would like to say no, the impact of being an older sibling to twins is the strongest in the early days and I think as they all get older and also with having a boy/girl combo the twin factor is much much less now. It has worked out to Ava's advantage for birthdays as for Ollie

and Summers first birthday, Ava also received many presents from friends and family 'so she didn't feel left out' and this has continued on each year.....Ollie and Summer on the other hand don't get the same treatment.



SARAH MONEY AND WAYNE RAMSHAW
Parents to Riley (4 years), Paige and Josh (2 years).



1. How old was/were your singleton child/ren when the twins were born?

She turned 2 the day before they were born.

2. Did you do anything specific to prepare them for the arrival of the twins?

Talked about Mummy having a baby, read kids books about the arrival of a new baby in a family. She knew Mum was having 2 babies but we didn't make a fuss about 2 babies being different or special.

3. What was the most challenging part of juggling newborn twins with your singletons demands?

Not much time to spend with her was really hard and sad for me. She went from being the centre of my world to 3rd on the list!

4. Do you think there was an impact on your singleton children, particularly in the early days?

Yes and we talked about it lots with her - the fact that I wasn't able to give her as much attention, that she wasn't happy cause mummy had to spend so much time with the

babies etc. Luckily the babies slept well so we got a bit of time together in the mornings. Sometimes she'd ask if we could put the baby/babies back in bed :)

5. What were the positive aspects of having other children?

Previous parenting experience of feeding and sleeping. And knowing everything was just a stage that would pass.

It was gorgeous watching Riley imitate me feeding and doing mummy things with her dolls. And she loved her baby brother and sister which was so cool to see.

6. Now that your twins are older, do you think there is still an impact of having twins on their singleton siblings and if so how?

Paige and Josh are still very time consuming/demanding of attention. Because they're younger they seem to be helped first, and I'm sure there's more conflict at the moment because we have two the same age so that sucks up lots of time that we as parents could be putting in to playing and having fun with the older sibling.

But Riley loves having a brother and a sister who can talk and play with her now so that's a bonus.



SANDRA AND DANNY RUDELL
Parents to Sophie (9 years), Charlotte (6 years), Ashley & Isaac (3 years).



1. How old was/were your singleton child/ren when the twins were born?

Sophie 6 years 10months, Charlotte 3 years 3 months.

2. Did you do anything specific to prepare them for the arrival of the twins?

We found out we were expecting twins at 20 weeks, and they were born at 36 weeks, so girls didn't have a lot of time to prepare for the arrival of twins, just explained to them we were now having 2 babies!! They were very excited.

3. What was the most challenging part of juggling newborn twins with your singletons demands?

The most challenging part was trying to keep up with the demands of the singletons while battling with sleep deprivation as our twins weren't good sleepers particularly one with reflux. Finding the energy to keep up with their day to day schedule, of the school run, daycare, after school activities, etc, school activities, parent interviews. Realising that you can't do it all yourself, having to accept help from family and friends in the early days to help out was difficult. Having to cut down on after school activities, sports and playdates at home. At times it felt like we had two families with very different needs.

4. Do you think there was an impact on your singleton children, particularly in the early days?

Yes definitely, suddenly Mum didn't have the same time to spend with them as before, as their were two babies who needed lots of attention. We are extremely fortunate to have a very supportive family in Tauranga who helped out in those early days with the singletons giving them lots of attention. Memories of dropping my younger singleton at kindy with her waiting at the window to wave to me, being so tired I forgot to wave!!! I think she has now forgiven me!!! We also had a set back when the twins were 6 weeks old, Ashley was in hospital for 16 days with Strep A sepsis, I stayed with her for that time only coming

home a couple of times. For the second week I had Isaac in hospital also as a border. One of the nurses offered to look after the twins for a few hours so Danny and I could spend some time together with our older girls. When they dropped me back at hospital the girls said "here's mums new home".!! We got through that time with the help of family and friends with as little impact as possible on the girls routines.

5. What were the positive aspects of having other children?

Our girls just adored the twins when they were born, they couldn't wait for them to come home. The twins always have someone to play with, never a dull or quiet moment, they love the attention they get from the big girls. The twins try to keep up with the girls as much as they can, even learning a few choice words and phrases you wouldn't expect to hear from a two year old, the best one being "Your a loser poo poo dad"!!!! Thanks for that one girls!!

6. Now that your twins are older, do you think there is still an impact of having twins on their singleton siblings and if so how?

Yes although our twins have just turned 3, we are still restricted on what activities we can do all together when Danny is working shifts. The twins are very active busy little people who often like to go in two different directions. If the singletons want to spontaneously go to baywave or the beach or shopping, all of which is extremely challenging on my own, I have to say not today. Our twins attend daycare part time so on these days we can do "big kid" stuff. This works really well in the school holidays.

Sports can also be a juggle, my eldest daughter played netball and volleyball last year, when Danny worked I wasn't able to go and watch all the games. Recently I took the twins aged 2 yrs 10 months to the school Duathlon on my own, Twin 1 decided it was a great idea to run across the track just as the race had started, so running after Twin 1 with Twin 2 on my hip to try and coax twin one off the field was really challenging, (especially without uttering

any expletives!!), needless to say I only saw a fleeting glimpse of my daughter running, (the older one that is) completely missed the cycling and the end of the race, (as bribery of a sausage and help from a teacher to remove twin one from the field meant I missed the whole thing)! Did get to the hall in time to see my singleton receive her certificate and got to say "awesome work sweetheart, great job"!!!! Time to go home and have nervous breakdown!! First have to retrieve bike from field!! AARGH!!!



Thank you to all our fantastic members who contributed the stories to this article. The generosity of members sharing their stories helps us publish interesting and topical articles each quarter. If you have a story to share please email Tracey: editor@tmbg.co.nz



Car Seat Rental
471 Devonport Rd
Tauranga
☎ 578 7813

Discounts for Multiples
Double Snap & Go
strollers available

Tauranga ☎ Mon-Fri 9:30am-2pm
Te Puke ☎ Thursdays 12:30pm-2:30pm
Katikati ☎ by appointment
Ph. Tracey ☎ 549 2409



Come along to the TMBG Playgroup!

Mondays 9:30am – 11:30am
(closed Public Holidays)

Welcome Bay Plunket Rooms
260 Welcome Bay Rd
(Behind the Caltex Station)

Casual & friendly playgroup for all TMBG members

A weekly chance for parents to relax and catch up over morning tea, make new friends and seek each other's advice

Fantastic indoor/outdoor facilities with slide & sandpit!

Lots of great toys for kids of all ages

Borrow books from our resource library

Plenty of easy access parking

Coffee & Tea provided

Willing hands to help with newborns



*Gold coin donation please

Also available at Tauranga Playgroup...
BORROW RESOURCES FROM OUR CLUB LIBRARY



We have several **NEW** helpful booklets published by the NZMBA on topics such as breastfeeding, formula feeding, toilet-training and sleep routines.

If you are interested in borrowing any of our library books on raising multiples they are available at Playgroup, or contact our Tauranga playgroup coordinator Eleanor. Here are just a few of the titles on offer...

BOOKS (AUTHOR):

A Contented House with Twins (Beer & Ford)
And One More (Brown/Gillies/Parkinson/Williams)
On Becoming Babywise (Ezzo & Buckman)
Raising Boys (Steve Biddulph)
The Sleep Book (MacDonald/The Leslie Centre)
Toilet Training Without Tears or Trauma (Warner & Kelly)

Having Twins (Noble)
Kiwi Twins (Robinson)
Mothering Multiples (Gromada)
The Joy of Twins (Novotny)
Toddler Taming (Green)

TETHER BOLTS

Tether Bolts are used to anchor car seats and are available from Plunket for just \$10 each

Plunket recommends fitting at:

The Seat Belt Shop

By appointment Phone: 571 8064

Cost - \$15-\$20 per bolt

