

Being a Twin

Also by the author

Poems You'll Love: A Collection of Lyric Poems and Haiku

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Being a Twin

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For Twins

And Their Parents

Twins Are Special

CONTENTS

Introduction

My Arrival

Competition

Separating from Your Twin

FAQS

For Parents to Think About

Twins Learn from Each Other

The Controlling Dad and the

Overprotective Mom

Anger: The Angry Twin

Anxiety: The Anxious Twin

Conflicting Feelings

Twin Identities

Twin Roles

The Extended Family

Friends

Mixed Messages

Your Twin Affects Your Entire Life

A Twin with an Inferiority Complex

A Hypothetical Case

Adolescence: The Adolescent Twin

College

The University

Adult Twins

My Adult Struggles

My Yearbook

Conclusion

Glossary

Selected Bibliography

Back Cover

Introduction

My brother and I are opposite-sex fraternal twins. I would like to share my experience being a twin, discuss the unique problems of twins, and suggest ways to solve those problems.

The problems of twins apply to other multiples, and to singletons (but not to the same extent) especially singletons who are only one year apart. The closer in age children are the greater the competition. A child who's six years younger or older than other siblings is raised like an only child.

Raising a child is a formidable task, but raising twins is daunting. The more information parents have, the more power they have. The more flexible their approach to parenting, the more options they have

Being a twin can be an incredible experience. You have an extremely close connection; perhaps the closest you'll ever have. You have a playmate, an ally, a traitor, a tormenter, a confidant, a source of jealousy, a competitor, a collaborator, and a role model. And you have a feeling of belonging not only to a family, but also to a twin.

But being a twin is also difficult with intense competition, separation issues, independence, and identity issues. These issues can be minimized when parents offer the most appropriate solutions.

With any relationship come conflict and change. Parents need to make their twins aware of this before teaching them the basics of *conflict resolution skills*.

Doctor: “Congratulations! You’ve just had twins”

Father: “Twins? Oh my gosh! Wow! I don’t believe it! Twins? Wow!”

My Arrival

After my brother was born, the doctor informed my father, “You have a healthy baby boy. Congratulations!”

The doctor had barely finished congratulating my father when the nurse shouted, “Doctor, you’re wanted in the delivery room.”

And to everyone’s astonishment, I was born. There were no ultrasound machines in those days, so my parents had no idea they were expecting twins. And it was a difficult birth because I had to be repositioned.

Once again, the doctor approached my father, “You have a healthy baby girl. You’re the father of twins. Congratulations again! Both mother and babies are doing well.”

My father was astounded. “Twins?”, he asked.

“Yes, twins,” the doctor reiterated. My father couldn’t believe it. And that was the beginning of my parents’ problems: opposite-sex fraternal twins.

My Relatives

My parents were staying with my maternal grandparents. We were my grandparents’ first grandchildren and my uncle’s first niece and nephew.

I can just imagine what went on at my grandparents’ house the first few years of our lives. Of course, I didn’t remember any of it, but I’m sure everyone was elated, though exhausted.

My uncle was still a bachelor, and I’m told he lavished us with attention and gifts. My grandmother and my great aunt, who I called Tanta, were constantly knitting outfits for us. And my grandfather doted on

us. Everyone oohed and aahed over us. No one could get more attention than we did.

My First Memory

I remember my brother and me looking out the window at our neighbor's house across the street. Their dog—an old, fat chow—was usually outside in the afternoon.

When my brother would see the dog, he would shout, “Hurry up and come to the window. The dog's outside.” And I would stop whatever I was doing and join my brother at the window.

“He has a very loud bark. Why do you think he's barking?”, I would ask.

“I don't know,” my brother would answer, as we laughed at that silly dog barking his head off. He entertained us for hours.

And we couldn't have been more comfortable as we rested our little elbows on the window ledge as we watched the dog going through his antics.

We Were Admired

People admired us. More than that, they were fascinated with us. What is it about twins and other multiples that cause people to respond with such adoration and curiosity, sometimes to the point of intrusiveness? Perhaps, it's the maternal or the paternal instinct, or it might simply be the intrinsic love people feel for a child augmented by the multiple phenomenon.

Wherever we went strangers would stop my parents as they pushed us in our stroller, and a barrage of comments would ensue:

Are they twins?

Oh, what cute twins!

How adorable!

How sweet!

Are they both girls?

Are they both boys?

Which one is the boy?

Which one is the girl?
Are they identical?
How old are they?
Which one is older?
Do you have a favorite?
I always wanted twins.
You're so lucky to have twins.
You certainly have your hands full.
What do you do when they cry at the same time?
I could never do it.
We'd like to take them home with us.
They don't look alike.
They look alike.
The girl looks like you, but the boy doesn't.
The boy looks like you, but the girl doesn't.
They both look like you.
She's so petite.
And so on.

We Were a Pair

My brother and I were a pair. We were always together, and we belonged together. We loved sharing and being close. It felt normal and natural. In fact, we were so close that we were *inseparable*.

And we didn't have a care in the world. Everything we needed we got from each other and our parents. And our parents didn't have to discipline us because we were well-behaved.

Life was easy, idyllic, and sublime. *I had no idea what was to come.*

Parents Please Eliminate Comparisons

Competition

Competing with Your Twin

I felt *intense* competition with my twin, even though we are opposite sex twins. Parents mean well, but they tend to compare one twin to the other. “You’re good at math, but your brother’s better at history.” Or, “You’re more outgoing than your brother.”

Comparing one twin to the other encourages competition, and twins are already overwhelmed by competition. They compete for their parents’ love, acceptance, approval, attention, and time. And they’re in competition over intellect, school grades, popularity, and appearance.

My parents and well-meaning relatives would inadvertently and constantly compare us, which resulted in my wanting to beat my twin brother at everything. I needed to excel, but of more importance, I needed to do better than my brother. An example of this was report cards. I felt less anxious and more confident if I received more A’s than my brother.

Please eliminate comparisons, or at least lessen how often you make them.

Help from the Mother

Instead of validating myself, I would expect my mother to validate me. I would repeatedly ask her, “Am I smarter than my brother?”

A response that can decrease competitiveness is, “I can’t compare you to your brother or to anyone else because you’re unique. And I love you for being you. You’re extremely smart. You do know that without having to ask me, don’t you?”

Because you’ve told your twin daughter how you feel about her without comparing her to her twin, you’ve encouraged her to move towards separation and independence. And you’ve also encouraged her to answer her question without your help, further encouraging independence.

Twins in the Same Classroom: Competition at School

In fourth grade, my brother and I were put in the same classroom. We had previously shared the kindergarten classroom, but had different teachers in first through third grades.

The principal was conducting an experiment: is it beneficial for twins to be in the same classroom? He suggested to my parents that my brother and I be put in the same classroom, so that question could be answered. My parents respected his educational status and allowed it. Anything to help others must have been their motto.

How Did I React to Sharing a Classroom with My Twin Brother?

That year was torture. I had been an angry child, but during that year I became an enraged child. I had enough competition and sharing at home. I didn't want to compete with my brother at school, too. And I wanted to be my own person, the individual that I was, and not be known as so and so's twin sister.

Ernie, a cute classmate, and my teacher, helped me get through that year. Ernie had a crush on me (which was reciprocated by me), and I was one of Miss Mills' favorite students. They both offered a diversion from my anger as well as a boost to my floundering ego.

When our class was going on a trip, Ernie's mother volunteered to drive some of the students. Miss Mills asked the students whose parents were driving to choose who they wanted to go in the car with them. Ernie picked me first.

At first, I was elated. Then anxiety set in. "What if I disappointed Ernie, and he didn't like me after the trip?", I pondered. I allowed anxiety to control me.

Where was my self-confidence? I was unaware of the thought processes (most likely caused by low self-esteem) that began early in my life, which evoked anxiety and caused me to avoid anxious situations.

As it turns out, I came down with the flu, and the doctor had to make a house call. I remember my mother asking him, "Can she go on the trip?"

"If she feels well enough," the doctor responded. But I didn't feel well enough, and I was disappointed that I couldn't go on that trip. But I was also relieved.

My parents thought that the flu had psychosomatic roots; a defense brought on by fear of disappointing Ernie and subsequently being rejected by him. I agree with them to a point; that this defense mechanism probably worsened my symptoms but didn't bring on the flu.

It might have proved worthwhile if my parents had had a discussion with me about my fear of rejection. I could have worked on both my self-confidence and anxiety issues which were tied in together.

Although Ernie was hurt that the girl he had a crush on didn't ride in his mother's car with him on that school trip, he recovered, and we remained friends until he moved away at the end of fifth grade.

How Did My Twin Brother React to Sharing a Classroom with Me?

My brother had a difficult year, too. He couldn't deal with the discomfort of twin ship, a term I've coined which refers to the twin relationship. His defense was to ignore me and pretend I didn't exist. That hurt!

It proved to be detrimental to put us in the same classroom.

Helpful Parents

Here's where my parents could have intervened to help my brother:

To try to change that defense to a healthier one before it's incorporated into the defense system and becomes a pattern that generalizes to all relationships; that is, if you feel uncomfortable with conflicting feelings towards someone, withdraw and ignore.

Every twin is different, and how other twins react can be the opposite of how we reacted.

A Discussion with Your Twins about Sharing a Classroom

A discussion with each twin separately and then together might provide the answer about sharing a classroom. For instance, you can ask your daughter, "I'd like to know how you would feel being in the same classroom as your brother?"

Your question encourages your daughter to discuss her feelings and gives her options. She's learning to feel and express emotions in a healthy way.

Ask your son the same question, and then encourage the twins to discuss their feelings on this topic with each other.

Twins share enough time and space. They don't need to be in the same classroom. If they're not together, they can't compete.

Summary

There's intense competition between twins.

Minimize competition by not making comparisons.

Don't allow school administrators to dictate school policies that may be detrimental to your twins.

Teach your twins to be aware of their feelings.

Stop unhealthy thought processes and actions before they become a permanent part of your twin's behavior.

Let your twins' opinions count.

Be flexible; that is, be open to changing your decisions about parenting choices.

Twins May Need Help with Their Separation Issues

Separating from Your Twin

A Twin's Separation Issues

When twins start school, they must separate from their parents and, also from each other.

If twins are in the same classroom, they will still have to separate from each other because their relationship is evolving towards separation, but the separation process won't be as abrupt.

Separation was difficult for me, and I've struggled with separation issues until my thirties. I wanted to live near my family, so they could soften the blows that occur in adulthood and lessen my anxiety of being out in the world. But they couldn't do that. I had to learn how to be independent.

Being a twin has significantly contributed to my dependence and separation issues. However, I feel the more self-confident a twin is, the easier it is to separate. Independence and self-confidence go hand in hand.

A Twin's Preschool Environment

A twin's preschool environment is what she has become accustomed to. Her personality is formed during the preschool years. If she's constantly with her twin, she'll most likely be anxious when she's separated from him.

The first few years of life are important in preparing a child for independence during childhood and in adulthood. As a preschooler, I was always with my twin. *And that's what most twins experience.*

When I went to college, I felt lonely. I was born a twin. I was with him for eighteen years before going to college. I shared my birthday, a bedroom until age 10, school, homework, playtime, parents, another sib-

ling, friends, and an identity, almost everything. We even had our tonsils taken out at the same time. That's all I knew.

When One Twin Separates

My brother began to break away early, and the separation process accelerated in fourth grade. He no longer wanted or needed that close connection with me. He was ready for autonomy.

That year I developed an inferiority complex because my twin, with whom I had one of the most significant relationships, if not the most significant relationship, was rejecting me.

Helpful Parents

If my parents had explained to me that my brother wasn't merely rejecting me, that he was also going through the normal process of separating, it would have made my adjustment to the change in our relationship easier.

It would be helpful if parents teach their twins the fundamentals of *the dynamics of a relationship*, which are:

- Being aware that relationships are constantly changing

- Understanding when the other person in the relationship wants to be close and when that person needs space

- Acceptance of the other person

- Discussing and expressing feelings

- Compromise

- Conflict resolution

It was years later that I realized why my brother was so mean, ignored me, picked on me, and punched me on my arms until they were black and blue. One reason for his bullying behavior was that the twin relationship had become burdensome to him. He didn't want any part of it.

Constant sibling rivalry exacerbated by too much togetherness was partially to blame. In addition, my brother had the desire to be a singleton.

Here's where my parents could have intervened:

To try to determine the reasons for my brother's bullying behavior which might have led to a solution to the problem. If my parents had lessened the time we spent together, sibling rivalry would have been minimized, and our relationship would have improved.

At the same time, my parents could have made it known to my brother that there are certain behaviors such as name-calling, hitting, and other forms of bullying that will not be tolerated. Parents need to be firm, and the twin must be told that there are consequences for such behavior.

And I should have been taught to fight and stand up for my rights, in addition to understanding and implementing the dynamics of a relationship, one of which is realizing when my brother needed space.

I had a unilateral dependence on my brother and wanted to be close. My brother had a unilateral independence and wanted to distance himself from me. Because what we wanted from each other was conflicting, our relationship suffered.

Also, the parents must get to the other possible causes for the bullying. What else could be bothering the twin who's doing the bullying besides the twin issues?

When a child's angry at a parent, if it's too threatening to confront the parent, he will turn to a less threatening person to vent his anger on (displaced anger), and I was that person.

If a parent's approachable, and the child feels comfortable saying, "Dad, I'm angry at you," instead of displacing his anger for his dad on to someone else (who is the innocent bystander), what a wonderful gift you would be giving your child!

Communicate with Your Twins

To the twin who's ready to separate, you could say, "I think you're ready to break away from your sister. Is that true?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "When you're an adult, you'll be on your own and, you'll probably have your own family. You should separate gradually while you're still living at home. I'm proud of you that you're separating now,

but your sister loves you and feels hurt by this new relationship. Can you understand that?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

To the twin who feels rejected, you could say, "I know you're hurt by how your brother's treating you. It isn't that he doesn't love you. He's separating from you, and that's normal. I want you to realize that relationships are constantly changing. Are you angry at him?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "Both you and your brother have to separate from each other. I want you to be more independent and to enjoy being on your own. In the meantime, how can this period of adjustment be made easier for you?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Hopefully, your twins will resolve this issue with your guidance.

Summary

Twins may need help from their parents with their separation issues.

One twin may separate sooner than the other twin (unilateral independence).

One twin may want to remain close (unilateral dependence).

Discussions with the twin who's breaking away can help him understand both his and his twin's feelings.

Discussion with the twin who feels rejected can alleviate feelings of rejection.

Validate your twins' feelings.

Teach your twins the fundamentals of the dynamics of a relationship.

A child should be able to tell his parents when he's angry at them.

Encourage your twins to work at resolving their mutual issues together with your guidance

***There Are Many Questions to Be Answered
when Parenting Twins***

Frequently Asked Questions

The Terms *Twins* and *Set of Twins*

What do the terms *twins* and *set of twins* imply?

They imply that you're incomplete. You're not whole without the other twin. You're a pair. You go together like bread and butter; like coffee and cream. The two of you are a *single unit*.

Caring friends and relatives would ask my parents, "How are the twins?" When my brother and I were out with my mom, strangers would come up to her and ask, "Are they twins? How cute!" How can a child develop an identity if he's constantly referred to as '*the twin*'?

Parents should tell friends and relatives to refer to their twins by their respective names.

Fraternal Twins

Are fraternal twins identical?

No, they aren't. Fraternal twins share similarities like other siblings do, but they're not identical. Fraternal twins are *dizygotic twins* which means they come from two separate eggs.

Sometimes fraternal twins can be the result of an egg that divides before fertilization and is then fertilized by two sperm.

Fraternal twins can be opposite-sex fraternal twins or same-sex fraternal twins. Seventy-five percent of all twins are dizygotic twins.

Identical Twins

Are identical twins identical?

No, they aren't. Identical twins are *monozygotic twins* which means they come from the same egg. Twenty-five percent of all twins are monozygotic twins.

Twenty-five percent of identical twins are *mirror image twins*. These twins have similar but opposite physical characteristics. One may be left-handed and the other right-handed, and they may part their hair on opposite sides.

Identical twins can have small differences such as the shape of their faces, their height and weight, and hair color. They also have different personalities, likes, and dislikes. They also get different diseases.

I would encourage whatever maximizes their uniqueness, physiologically and psychologically.

The First Born

Knowing I was the second born affected me negatively. When I was in elementary school, I had to be the first to get to my classroom. It was a race to be first at everything: first to arrive at school, first to arrive at my dance lessons, first to get accepted to college, first to get engaged, first to get married, ad infinitum.

At first, I didn't have a clue why this behavior had such a powerful hold on me. What devious, subconscious devices I used. And this behavior, caused by an erroneous assumption that the first born is automatically the favorite, put me through agony. I felt I must do anything to become the favorite and that meant being *first* at everything. I attempted to catch up to my brother, but of course, I couldn't.

If my parents had understood the reason for this behavior early on, we could have discussed it and resolved the problem or at least understood it and minimized it.

Is it necessary to tell twins who's born first? No, it isn't. If I were the parent, when asked I would answer, "I don't know. The doctor didn't tell me. And it doesn't matter anyway."

Celebrating Birthdays

How should twins celebrate their birthdays?

It's a child's special day. Make sure each twin has his own birthday cake.

If one twin wants to have her party earlier or later that day or the day before or the day after her actual birthday, let her. It may be more work for you, but it's worth it if you're validating your twins' feelings.

I resent sharing my birthday with my twin. It's my special day.

Bath Time

Should twins take baths together when they're young?

Until age six, my brother and I took baths together. We had our special game which we called "Back-to-Back." We would sit in the tub with our backs touching and move back and forth several times to gain momentum and then swish to the side and take the other one's place.

It was great fun playing that game, but we would splash water on the floor and my mother would get annoyed.

I feel it's okay for twins to take baths together until 3 or 4 years of age, but it should be supervised. If one twin objects discontinue it.

After 3 or 4 years of age, twins of the opposite sex shouldn't take baths together. Children that age probably notice the difference in their bodies and may be uncomfortable and/or overly curious. Why look for trouble?

Dressing alike

Should twins be dressed alike?

My mother dressed us alike until we were 3 years old. I have no memory of that, but photos show my brother and me dressed in adorable velvet suits with lace collars and other cute outfits. It's cute when twins are young, and it saves time for the mom.

Why are twins dressed alike? They're dressed alike because they're *a set of twins*. Let them show the world what distinct individuals they are and choose their own clothes after a certain age. One's style of dress reflects one's personality. It's an expression of who you are. Also, choosing your style of dress helps develop your own identity.

Sharing a Bedroom

Should twins share a bedroom?

Sometimes it's necessary due to lack of space. A small room divider can offer privacy.

I shared a bedroom with my brother until we were 10 years old. Most of the time it was fun. We listened to the radio and shared our day's experiences.

A twin needs privacy and her own space. Having her own room helps her tolerate being alone. And if she can tolerate being alone, she can separate from her twin more readily.

Identification and De-identification

Does a twin identify or de-identify with her twin?

A twin can identify or de-identify with her twin. If she identifies with him, she'll choose to emulate him. If she de-identifies with him, she'll choose the opposite of how her twin is.

An Example of Identification:

If her twin is outgoing, she'll choose to be outgoing.

An Example of De-identification:

If her twin is outgoing, she'll choose to be reserved.

Chores and Freedom

Do you assign chores according to the sex of your child?

For many years, I wanted to be a boy because I felt my brother had it easier. My brother had more freedom than I did. When we were teenagers, he could stay out late with his friends and my parents never worried or yelled at him if he stayed out past his curfew.

When I was on a date, I always worried about getting home by curfew time. My parents waited up for me to come home and always wanted me home early.

My brother also had chores that I would have liked to have had. I didn't want to dry the dishes, a chore my parents insisted that I do even though I would run to my room immediately after dinner to avoid doing it.

I told my parents that I wanted to mow the lawn, a chore assigned to my brother. That was unacceptable.

Give your twin a choice of chores. Giving her options will make her less reluctant to do them, and avoid anger for feeling she was treated unfairly.

Applying to Colleges

Can the stress of applying to colleges increase competition? Yes, it can.

When applying to colleges the competition can escalate, especially if one twin has more acceptances than the other.

It's a normal reaction to a stressful time as an adolescent deals with possible rejection, breaking away, and leaving home.

Separation Anxiety

Do twins have separation anxiety when they're adults?

Yes, they do. But everyone experiences separation anxiety. However, adult twins may feel separation anxiety more intensely and more frequently than other adults.

At times, I have separation anxiety. That's when I feel anxious and incomplete or feel that something's missing, and I have the desire to attach to another person. I want to feel that closeness I had years ago with my twin (and my parents) before we separated.

Or perhaps it's simply an occasional longing to go back to that magical time of childhood when there were few responsibilities; when you and your twin were close, and when you knew you were loved. I think that's perfectly normal.

Of course, adults realize there was never a magical time. Parents make mistakes. Children must deal with most things that adults do. However, they feel protected by their parents and they're still dependent on them financially and emotionally.

Parents Have a Huge Input in How Their Twins Turn Out

For Parents to Think About

- **Do you love your twins for who they are or for their accomplishments?**

Children want to be loved for who they are.

- **Do you want your twins to excel more than anything else?**

Excelling is important but so are a child's social skills.

- **Do you baby your twins?**

Babying causes regression and interferes with a child's maturation.

Peers refer to a child who's been babied as *a cry baby* and if a boy, as *a mama's boy* and say that he's tied to his mother's apron strings.

- **Do you listen without demanding that your twins do what you say?**

If you demand that your twins do what you say, they'll avoid you and won't listen.

- **Are you consistent with your discipline?**

Be consistent. Mixed messages are confusing.

- **Do you treat each twin the same?**

Each child is an individual, and what works for one child may not work for another.

- **Do you give each twin individual attention?**

Twins need individual attention. Give each twin a one-on-one interaction as often as possible even if it's for ten or fifteen minutes.

- **Do you encourage your twins to separate and to be independent?**

Separating friends and activities will help twins work on identity and independence issues.

- **Do you allow your twins to make mistakes?**

Children learn by making mistakes.

- **Do you call your twins names when you're angry or frustrated with them?**

No matter how terrific a mom or dad you are, name calling will interfere with your relationship with your twins and will result in them resenting you.

And those names may continue to affect your twins in adulthood, and they may waste valuable time and energy trying to prove you wrong.

When you're angry and you feel ready to explode, take time out and cool off.

- **Do you give your twins more positive comments than negative ones?**

Positive comments build self-confidence. Negative comments lower self-confidence.

- **Do you help your twins with their homework, or do you do it for them?**

Most children need help with their homework, but it's detrimental if you do their homework for them or if you write all their compositions.

This can lower self-confidence by encouraging dependence. And it will make their freshman year in college more difficult because they will have to learn how to write then when they should have begun learning in elementary school.

- **Do you celebrate your twins' differences?**

They're individuals. They're not a single unit. Encourage them to develop their own personalities.

- **Do you empathize with your twins?**

If you appreciate your twins' feelings, they will view you as being open-minded and will be more cooperative.

- **Do you understand your twins?**

Children want their parents to understand them. If parents understand their children, they can more readily help them resolve their issues.

A Twin Learns Significant Life Lessons from His Twin

Twins Learn from Each Other

When parents discuss and clarify issues, and when they validate each twin's feelings, twins will learn the following from each other more readily:

1. How to love and hate
2. How and when to be assertive
3. How to deal with a bully and a tormenter
4. How and when to compromise
5. How and when to collaborate
6. How and when to compete
7. When to admit defeat
8. How to feel successful
9. How and when to negotiate and resolve conflict
10. How to share
11. Social skills
12. How to deal with frustration
13. That they can't get their way all the time
14. How to survive without all their parents' love

The following is an example of twins learning conflict resolution skills with the parent's help.

Suppose your twin son says to you, "I hate my brother." What would your response be? Would it be:

- a. Don't ever say that again.
- b. Go to your room and think about what you said.
- c. That's a mean thing to say.
- d. *Why do you hate your brother?*

Responses a, b and c most likely will increase the child's anger and resentment towards his twin. He will interpret those answers as you favoring your brother.

Response *d* should elicit a discussion. The child might answer, “Because he took my skateboard.”

You could reply, “You’re angry at your brother for taking your skateboard. I understand. He should have asked you if he could use it. Tell him how you feel and ask him to give the skateboard back to you. Tell him if he wants to borrow it in the future, he should ask you if he can use it.”

You have made your child aware of his feelings and have taught him how to interact with his brother in a positive, assertive way.

Summary

Twins learn significant lessons from each other.

Parents can help their twins learn more from each other when they discuss, clarify and validate their feelings.

Teaching conflict resolution skills will help twins develop a better relationship with each other.

Poor Parenting Skills Adversely Affect the Twin Relationship

The Controlling Dad and the Overprotective Mom

My father was, controlling, critical, and demanding. His expectations of me were unrealistic. I could never please him no matter how hard I tried.

Understanding My Father

My goal is not to criticize my father. I'm simply trying to show how I reacted to the parenting I had. My father meant well. He loved me and wanted me to be successful.

For me to have understood my father, I would have had to have known how his parents raised him. When I was a teenager, I realized that my father's parents had used the patriarchal, authoritarian approach to parenting. His father ruled, and neither parent ever discussed or validated my father's feelings. It was, "Do as I say."

And my father never had a role model for the type of parenting I feel would be beneficial to children; one that encourages growth and independence, and surprisingly, he believed in the efficacy of the patriarchal, authoritarian approach to parenting. I found that paradoxical because it had been detrimental to him by eroding his self-esteem, which resulted in his controlling and critical behavior.

If my father could control his children, he felt more powerful, and feeling more powerful made him temporarily feel better about himself (but didn't raise his self-esteem) so he persisted in his controlling behavior to feel better about himself for the moment, thus setting up a vicious cycle.

The Overprotective Mom

My mother knew how harmful my father's parenting was, but she couldn't change him. She attempted to *overcompensate* for his behavior by being a buffer. She overprotected us and fought our battles with our father.

At the same time, she advised us not to take our father so seriously and to ignore much of what he said. This mixed message confused us.

The Effect of My Father's Behavior on My Twin Brother and Me

What effect did my father's behavior have on my twin brother and me? *It set us apart from each other.*

My brother and I were overwhelmed by my father's behavior. We either tried to avoid him or to appease him. Trying to deal with our father interfered with our relationship. It was too anxiety producing to deal with both relationships, so ours suffered.

Also, my brother and I weren't taught how to resolve the problems we mutually shared. We needed a *role model* for conflict resolution.

How Did My Brother and I Relate to Each Other?

My brother and I reacted in opposite ways. My brother withdrew from me in much the same way that he withdrew from our father while I attempted to get closer to him to make up for the lack of closeness with my father.

My brother could have been my ally, and we could have fought our battles with our father together. But he chose to displace his anger towards our father on to me and to distance himself from me.

My parents' behavior affected how my twin brother and I felt about ourselves, how we felt about each other, how we related to each other, and helped to develop the strained relationship that we currently have.

How Did My Father's Behavior Affect My Relationship with My Mother?

The daughter's relationship with her mother is her first love experience. Because the relationship is such a close and complicated one, it's extremely confrontational.

In any mother-daughter relationship, separation is difficult for the daughter because there's so much dependence and nurturing initially; the mother being all powerful and the infant being completely helpless.

And later in the relationship, the mother and daughter have power struggles but stay connected because of the initial nurturing and because of the commonality of being female. But the mother reluctantly relinquishes most of her power as the daughter moves towards independence.

Although the daughter eventually separates from the mother, the mother is always a part of her and influences almost every aspect of her life.

Because I didn't feel comfortable going to my father for emotional support, I went to my mother. I felt I could discuss all my problems with her. This made me overly dependent on her.

And my mother, albeit well-meaning, encouraged this dependence by attempting to solve my problems for me which resulted in my becoming overly-attached to her. The line of demarcation between dependence and independence weren't made clear to me.

Summary

A controlling, critical father lowers a child's self-confidence as does an overprotective mother.

My father's behavior resulted in my being overly-dependent on my mother.

My mother encouraged dependence by trying to solve my problems for me.

A child should be taught to fight her own battles in the home. If she can fight her battles in the home, she'll be able to fight them when she's out in the world.

The parents' child-rearing methods (the skills, qualities, and responsibilities involved in being parents and in teaching and caring for a child) affect how twins feel about themselves, how they feel about each other, and how they relate to one another.

Afterthought

For the children's sake, parents should take a step back, look at their behavior, and see what effect it's having on their children. If it's detrimental to them, change it because love *isn't* enough.

Twins Should Be Taught How to Deal with Their Anger

Anger: The Angry Twin

I was an angry child. I was an angry daughter. I was an angry twin. Why was I angry? I was angry because of the family dynamics.

The Family Dynamics

Anger was considered a negative emotion.

I was discouraged from expressing my feelings, especially anger.

My twin brother was uncommunicative and rejecting because he was struggling with a multitude of problems ranging from identity issues to dealing with a demanding father.

I was discouraged from being assertive.

I wasn't taught how to deal with my brother effectively.

I wasn't taught how to increase my frustration tolerance.

I leaned on family members to reduce my anxiety and wasn't taught how to deal with my anxiety on my own.

I depended on family members to give me a sense of worth and wasn't taught to develop a sense of worth.

These issues carried over into my adulthood and affected the decisions I made.

Teaching Life Lessons to Your Twins

It would be constructive if parents dealt more with the realities of life when teaching life lessons to their children.

My mother would say, "I want you to be happy." More than that, she expected me to be happy. That's an unrealistic expectation because there's no such reality as happiness. There are times when your mood is up and when you feel good about yourself and your accomplishments. I thought there was something wrong with me because much of the time I wasn't happy.

A realistic expectation is to expect your daughter to experience the full spectrum of emotions and to teach her how to elevate her mood when it's low.

Perhaps we confuse happiness with self-esteem. Having self-esteem means you're self-assured, and you like who you are. And if you like who you are, your mood is up. You don't depend on external stimuli, such as receiving compliments, to make you feel good about yourself. Happiness is a fleeting feeling of bliss, glee, or joy resulting from something pleasant or welcomed and has little to do with self-esteem.

A Supportive Mom

If your twin daughter says, "I'm not happy," a response that can help her is:

"That's okay. No one's supposed to be happy all the time. There are many things to cope with every day that can change your mood. I don't think your low mood will last long, but what can you do to get out of the doldrums?"

She might say, "I'll hit the ball against the wall."

You could respond, "That's an excellent idea."

You have taught your daughter that it's normal to have fluctuating moods, and that there are ways she can elevate her mood when it's low.

You have also taught your daughter a *coping skill*. She took an active role rather than a passive role to change how she feels. She didn't wait for some external event to elevate her mood. She did something to elevate it. And since she chose the activity in which to elevate her mood, she has learned to be more independent.

Hopefully, when your daughter's an adult she'll know how to get out of a bad mood, and depression can be averted.

Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion

Anger is a powerful emotion. Feeling anger can be overwhelming. When I feel angry the feeling consumes me. All other feelings and thoughts dissipate.

When I repress anger (when I'm unaware that I'm angry), I feel anxious. I'm also anxious before I feel anger and before I express anger; when anger is just below the surface, and when I'm holding it down. Once I feel and express the anger, the anxiety disappears.

Anger must be expressed. And if it isn't expressed in a healthy way, it will be expressed in an unhealthy way: either through passive-aggressive behavior, displaced anger or a generalized rage that's either inner-directed or outer-directed.

Anger can mask other emotions. When a child feels hurt, rejected, sad, or not listened to, he may not feel those emotions because they're too painful to feel. But he will feel anger. That's why anger is referred to as the *misunderstood* emotion.

Anger is the *fight* or *flight* emotion. It gets the adrenaline pumping which gives you the strength to fight your enemy or flee from him.

It's imperative that parents allow their twins to feel anger and to express it appropriately. But many parents don't know how to deal with anger, so how can they teach their twins to deal with it? The first step to good parenting is to be aware of your issues and to work at resolving them.

Help Your Twin Express Anger

Help you twin express anger by:

Finding out why your twin's angry

Telling your twin that it's okay to feel angry

Making your twin aware that anger should be used to solve a problem

Showing your twin how to solve the problem

Teach Your Twin How to Deal with Anger

When your twin's angry she should:

Be direct.

Tell the person she's angry at that she feels hurt by his behavior. Ask if she did anything to upset him, and ask if they can work at resolving

the problem because he's important to her. I call this *clarification* of the problem.

Take up a sport

Physical or recreational activities such as walking and jogging or getting involved in a sport can elevate one's mood, deflect from anger, and get rid of pent-up aggression.

Discuss her problem with a third party

A third party who's impartial will give an unbiased opinion of the situation.

Minimize passive-aggressive behavior

Passive-aggressive behavior is manipulative behavior that expresses dissent and anger indirectly and avoids outright conflict.

Examples of passive aggressive behavior are: slamming the door, ignoring the person you're angry at such as not returning that person's phone calls.

We resort to passive aggressive behavior when being direct with the person who has caused you to become angry would be too upsetting to that person, and nothing would get resolved. As a child, I resorted to passive aggressive behavior because I couldn't confront my father directly.

Summary

The family dynamics determine how twins deal with anger.

It's unhealthy if a child depends on family members to reduce her anxiety.

Parents should teach their twins that happiness is not a permanent state of being. It's a mood that comes and goes.

An important aspect of child-rearing is that parents allow their twins to feel anger and to express it appropriately.

A child can be taught to elevate her mood. One way is by engaging in a physical activity.

Twins Should Be Encouraged to Get Reassurance from Themselves

Anxiety: The Anxious Twin

Helping Your Twins Deal with Anxiety

Anxiety is a part of life. No one likes to feel anxious, but everyone has anxiety. You can deflect from it as you would from other feelings. This will lessen its intensity, but you can't avoid it.

One way to teach twins to deal with anxiety is to encourage them to get reassurance from themselves. This is an ongoing process during childhood.

I depended on family members, mostly my mother, to reduce my anxiety. One way I did that was to constantly ask her for reassurance. I would repeatedly ask her numerous questions, one of which was if I would get married someday.

Because I didn't feel accepted by my father and my brother, the two significant male figures in my life, I felt no man would accept me.

And because I was afraid of being on my own, I needed someone to replace my family once I was an adult. I didn't realize that you should be independent before you get married.

I wanted to twin-up (a term I've coined which refers to an unhealthy, symbiotic relationship between twins) in a relationship, and I thought being married was one way to do that. This was on a subconscious level. I was unaware of my need to twin-up until I became an adult and began to work on my issues. You can't twin-up with your spouse, and you shouldn't want to.

If your twin daughter constantly asks for reassurance, it may be due to a self-esteem or a dependence issue.

A Twin Daughter's Questions

What if your fourteen year old twin daughter asks you the following questions repeatedly?

“Am I pretty?”

“Will I be popular?”

“Will I continue to get good grades?”

“Will I get married someday?”

It's obvious that your daughter has doubts as to her attractiveness, her popularity, how well she'll do in school, and if someday a man will love her and marry her. She's anxious about these matters.

A Mother's Response

What would your answer be to the question, “Will I get married someday?”

You could answer, “Yes.” But how will that answer help your daughter? She might feel good for the moment. But will it raise her self-esteem? Will it teach her to trust her own judgment? I don't think so.

Instead, you could answer, “I don't know if you'll get married. If you want to you will. Why would you ask me that?”

The message you're giving your daughter is that you're not omniscient. You don't know the answer. And you're hoping a discussion with your daughter will give you some insight into the reason behind that question.

In addition, asking you for reassurance hasn't worked. Your daughter will have to answer her own question. *Not* always answering your daughter's questions encourages independence. She must learn to trust her judgment and value her opinions.

How to Deal with Anxiety

Face the anxiety. Once you do what you're anxious about doing, the anxiety is reduced or gone.

For example, if a child is going to take a math test, the night before the test the child will be anxious and probably will be more anxious the morning of the test. When she's taking the test, the anxiety may be less. Once the test is over, the anxiety's gone.

A Mother Helps Her Twin Son

Suppose your twin son is going away to camp for the first time. He'll probably be anxious. You can discuss the subject of camp a few weeks before he leaves for camp. You could say, "How do you feel about going to camp?"

If he says, "I'm anxious," you can help him by saying,

"It's a new experience, and anyone would feel anxious. But I know you can deal with feeling anxious. Once you get to camp and meet your bunk mates you'll feel better. And you can always call home if you want to." (If your son doesn't admit that he's anxious, you can still have this conversation with him).

You've reassured your son somewhat, but mostly you've encouraged him to deal with his anxiety on his own. And once he does that, he'll be more self-confident and independent.

Your response has also helped your son realize that he's no different from anyone else. Everyone feels anxious when in a new situation. And, hopefully, your son will learn how to lessen his anxiety, if need be.

One way to lessen anxiety is to walk or run for a minimum of twenty minutes. Aerobics elevates one's mood, thereby lessening anxiety.

Summary

Anxiety is a part of life.

No one likes to feel anxious.

Teach your twins to get reassurance from themselves and deal with their anxiety on their own.

Make your twins aware that anxiety doesn't stay at the same intensity for long.

Aerobics is one way to lessen anxiety.

Deflecting from anxiety by keeping busy, is another way to lessen anxiety.

When appropriate, let your twins answer their own questions.

Feelings are Constantly Changing

Conflicting Feelings

Examples of Conflicting Feelings

Twins (all siblings) have conflicting feelings towards each other. Conflicting feelings include:

Dependence versus Independence

They want to be dependent on their twin, and they want to be independent.

Closeness versus Distance

They want to be close to their twin, and they want to distance themselves from their twin

Separation versus Connection

They want to separate from their twin, and they want to stay connected to their twin.

Love versus Hate

They love their twin, and they hate their twin.

Competition versus Cooperation

They want to compete, but they also want to cooperate.

Competition can motivate twins to do better, but too much competition is unhealthy.

Twins cooperate with each other in many ways. They may take care of a younger sibling together, play games together, help their parents with chores and be protective when their twin is confronted by a bully.

Positive Intimacy versus Conflict

Positive intimacy occurs when twins spend time together in a positive way.

Conflict occurs when they spend time together and fight.

These contradictory feelings can depend on sibling rivalry and their mood at that time.

When Do These Conflicting Feelings Occur?

These conflicting feelings can occur simultaneously, or they can occur at different times. For instance, a twin may want to separate from her twin and at the same time, may want to stay connected. Or she may want to separate one day and the next day stay connected.

Conflicting feelings can occur all day or at sometime during the day or not at all on a specific day. They can be fleeting or persistent.

Why Do We Have Conflicting Feelings?

Everyone has conflicting feelings. It's a part of being human. We're complicated beings with many moods, and we're constantly changing and maturing.

Other Examples of Conflicting Feelings

When you love a dress you just bought and the next day you hate it.

When a fickle teenaged girl loves her boyfriend on Saturday, hates him on Monday, and loves him again on Tuesday

Helpful Parents

Twins (all children) may feel confused and guilty by these conflicting feelings. They may think they're the only ones who experience them.

It would be helpful if parents discuss the subject of conflicting feelings with their twins when it's appropriate; that is, when the subject comes up or when they notice their twins constantly changing their minds.

My Conflicting Feelings

It's frustrating when I feel many conflicting emotions simultaneously. It seems my feelings are constantly fluctuating, so I never know how I feel about anything. But that's the way everyone is to a greater or lesser degree.

A Twin Daughter's Conflicting Feeling and a Parent's Response

What if your twin daughter made the comment "I wish I didn't have a twin?" Would you respond to her remark, or would you ignore it? If you did respond, would you say:

a. You don't really mean that.

- b. You'll feel differently tomorrow.
- c. I used to feel that way about my sister when I was your age, but sometimes I was glad she was my sister.
- d. It seems you're conflicted about this. Are you? Everyone has conflicting feelings.

Let's analyze these answers.

Answer a: You don't really mean that

This answer may make your daughter angry because you're telling her how she feels. Only she knows how she feels. And this response isn't encouraging a discussion that will help you understand why she made that comment.

Answer b: You'll feel differently tomorrow

This answer is helpful because you're reducing your daughter's guilt by telling her that she'll probably change her mind about how she feels, but you're telling your daughter how she'll feel in the future. You don't know how she'll feel in the future.

You're hoping she'll feel differently about her twin brother because you want her to love him. Also, this answer isn't encouraging a discussion as to why your daughter made that comment.

Answer c: I used to feel that way about my sister when I was your age, but sometimes I was glad that she was my sister

This answer is supportive. You're letting your daughter know that you had the same feelings towards your sister as she has towards her brother, and that it was a conflicting feeling.

And you've allowed your daughter to have that feeling minus the guilt because the parent, who the daughter looks up to, has had similar feelings towards her sister.

Answer d: It seems you're conflicted about this. Are you? Everyone has conflicting feelings

This answer is also supportive. You're showing your daughter that it's normal to have conflicting feelings. Everyone has those feelings.

And you're asking her if it's a conflicting feeling because if it is, she'll feel differently later. And you're encouraging a dialogue with her. Hopefully, she'll explain her feelings and you can help clarify them.

Summary

Twins have conflicting feelings towards each other.

It's normal to have conflicting feelings.

Twins may be confused by these feelings.

Encourage your twins to discuss their conflicting feelings.

Discussing your conflicting feelings with your twins will help them realize how normal these feelings are.

Twins May Need Help Developing Healthy Identities

Twin Identities

An Interdependent Identity

Twins and other multiples initially have an *interdependent identity*. They feel more comfortable when they're together and depend on each other more than singletons do.

The extent of interdependence depends on the type of twins, the relationship they have, and the parenting skills of both parents.

I think that opposite-sex fraternal twins are less likely to continue to have an interdependent identity than other types of twins. I may feel anxious when I don't make a connection with someone I like, but I don't look for a connection with my twin brother. I've generalized the early relationship I had with him onto other relationships.

Three Types of Twin Identities

Three types of twin identities are:

Twins with a Strong Bond

Twins can have a strong bond but appreciate each other's differences. These twins view themselves as twins but desire distinct identities. They want to compete, but they don't want or need to be similar.

This is a healthy identity.

Twins with Less of a Bond

Twins can view themselves more as individuals than as twins. The twin is treated like any other sibling.

This is a healthy identity.

Twins with a Single Unit Identity

Twins can view themselves as a pair. They feel lost without each other.

These twins experience separations from each other to be so disturbing that after living on their own or being married, they go back to either living together or near each other.

Their inseparable relationship is symbiotic except it's not mutually advantageous. It's mutually disadvantageous because it excludes the need for other relationships, and it's based on an unhealthy need to twin-up because these twins feel incomplete and anxious without their twin.

This identity is unhealthy. A twin should be able to function as a separate, independent entity.

Help from the Parents

How can parents help make the twin relationship healthy?

If your twin needs help, attend to it. Don't wait until she's established an emotional state or a pattern of behavior that will deter her from becoming a healthy, independent person.

If you have identical twin girls who are beginning to develop or have developed a single unit identity, do whatever you can to make sure each twin begins to develop a separate identity. For instance:

1. If your twins are school age, you can explain to them what they need to work on. Have frequent discussions with them about their identity and independence issues.
2. Have your twins put in separate classrooms.
3. Separate activities and hobbies.
4. Encourage your twins to have separate friends.
5. Give each twin frequent one-on-one interactions with you.
6. Seek counseling if necessary.

The Different Types of Twins

Opposite-Sex Fraternal Twins

Of all types of twins, I feel opposite-sex fraternal twins are the least close and therefore, the least likely to develop a single unit identity.

They may have an interdependent identity initially, but as they grow up and experience physical separations and differences due to being of the opposite sex, they lose that interdependence.

Same-Sex Fraternal Twins and Identical Twins

Same-sex fraternal twins and identical twins can be inseparable, especially female twins.

Of all the types of twins, I think that female fraternal twins and female identical twins are the most likely to develop a single unit identity.

Male twins, both fraternal and identical, can be close too, but males tend to communicate less and that will lessen how close they are.

Relationships Change

We all have conflicting feelings and because feelings constantly change a twin can change how she feels about her twin, what she expects from him, and how she relates to him.

I hope all twins can work on their mutual issues throughout their lives so they can have the healthiest relationship possible.

How parents *intervene* and *help* their twins can determine how their twins develop, how healthy they are emotionally, how they relate to one another, what relationship issues they have with each other, and how they resolve those issues.

Summary

The twin relationship is extremely complicated.

There are different types of twin relationships and identities.

Twin identities can be healthy or unhealthy.

Parents play a crucial role in determining how their twins develop when they identify problems and mutually work at resolving them.

How Twins Play Together Reflects Their Roles

Twin Roles

Playtime with Duchess the Doll

For my sixth birthday, my uncle gave me a fabulous present; the biggest doll I ever saw. She was three feet tall and had magnificent strawberry blond hair, a luscious complexion, and full lips that parted slightly revealing small, pearly white teeth. She was so regal I named her Duchess.

I found a comfortable place for her on my bed. Each morning I propped her up on my pillow where she sat in all her splendor until I was ready for bed, at which time, I reserved a place for her at the foot of my bed.

One day my twin brother had an idea. He said, "Let's play doctor and nurse and operate on Duchess." I agreed. I always agreed with him when he was in his cooperative mode because I was starving for his attention.

Not only was he the doctor, he was also the dentist. He pulled all the doll's teeth and performed an appendectomy. Then he yanked the doll's hair off her head in preparation for brain surgery. When he was finished with Duchess, she was unrecognizable.

Ranking of Characters in the Skit

I'd like to analyze the ranking of the three characters in this skit. My brother played two separate roles. He cast himself as the powerful doctor and dentist. I was cast as the nurse, subordinate to the other two characters, and Duchess played the helpless victim role.

The subservient role was one I took with my brother throughout my childhood, and it began long before the Duchess episode.

Was I Angry at My Brother for Damaging Duchess?

Yes, but I repressed the feeling. I was glad he condescended to play with me, so I allowed him to be the aggressor. Also, he cast me in a

woman's role; subservient to him. Role models begin at a very young age and perhaps my parents should have discussed this with me.

How Did My Parents Respond to the Duchess Incident?

When my father found out that my brother had operated on Duchess, his reaction was one of pride. "My son's going to be a doctor," he joyously exclaimed to my mother. He didn't seem to show concern that my doll had been destroyed.

My parents never reprimanded either of us for our behavior, nor did they try to understand the reason for my brother's behavior, or the reason for my lack of assertiveness.

My parents were neither malicious nor neglectful. They simply felt that our relationship would work out on its own. That's like having a magic wand. Abracadabra, everything's wonderful! Unfortunately, no one has a magic wand. Every relationship needs to be worked on.

Why Did My Brother Damage Duchess?

It wasn't just innocent play. There was a motive behind the play, whether subconscious or conscious. My brother was jealous that my uncle gave me such a nice gift. He didn't want me to have the doll, and he wanted to push my buttons.

He purposely destroyed Duchess. In addition, he made me a part of the destruction of something I loved and valued. I didn't destroy the doll, but I was a passive participant. And I agreed to play a subordinate role.

Help from the Parent

What could a parent have said to help both twins understand the reasons behind their behavior and to change that behavior? A parent could have said:

To the twin son: "I don't like that you damaged your sister's doll. Were you jealous of your sister because your uncle gave her such a nice gift? Let's discuss this now. After our discussion, I would like you to apologize to your sister for destroying her doll."

Wait for a response and have a discussion. The discussion should focus on the twin son's feelings towards his sister, especially jealousy.

To the twin daughter: “Why did you allow your brother to ruin your doll? If you didn't want Duchess destroyed, you should have stopped your brother. I would like you to be more assertive. You're going to work on learning to be assertive, okay? Are you angry at your brother for damaging your doll? Are you angry at yourself for allowing your brother to damage your doll?”

Wait for a response and have a discussion. The discussion should focus on the twin daughter's feelings towards her brother, especially anger.

Continue, “Let's begin to work on assertiveness training now. I want you to tell your brother how you feel.”

The parent should plan to work with the twins to improve their relationship on a daily basis.

Other Games

Another game my brother and I played was also created by my brother. Until age 12, a typical afternoon after school consisted of my brother chasing me around the entire first floor of our house, mostly around the dining room table. If he caught me, he would punch me on the arm.

It may sound weird, but I enjoyed that game; probably because I was getting attention from him. When my brother punched me, I jabbed him on his arm at least five times. It was in quick succession: jab, jab, jab, jab, jab.

My father would say to my brother, “Your sister gives five jabs to your one!” My father was pleased with me. My self-confidence increased. My chest swelled with pride, but I wondered why my arms were black and blue and my brother's arms weren't.

My Twin Relationship

My brother and I viewed each other as equals, but of more significance, we viewed each other as competitors. Our bond was seldom a positive one. Much of the time, my brother's goal was to make me feel bad so he could feel better or to get back at me for being his twin and all that goes along with being a twin. He was the persecutor, and I was the victim. He was aggressive, and I was passive.

I would tattle on my brother when I felt victimized. But tattling on him didn't change a thing because nothing was done to resolve our mutual problems; animosity resulting from constant and intense competition which was controlling our behavior. Instead of tattling on my brother, I should have retaliated.

It would have been helpful if my parents had made us aware of how and why we were behaving the way we were. Also, I should have been made aware that tattling on my brother was not the way to solve the problem, and I should have been shown how I could change both my behavior and my perception of myself as a victim.

Summary

How twins play together reflects the type of relationship they have.

Making both twins aware of their behavior and the reasons behind their behavior can modify how each twin responds to the other, thus changing the dynamics of their relationship.

The Extended Family Offers a Close Connection and Enhances Childhood

The Extended Family

Who Is Included in the Extended Family?

The extended family consists of grandparents, uncle, aunts and cousins. A close friend of either parent can be considered extended family and is referred to as aunt or uncle.

Uncles, Aunts and Cousins

The Uncle

My mother's brother was a very special person. Not only was he a wonderful brother, he was also a caring uncle. He was significantly involved in my life and showed a genuine interest in every member of my family.

Every Sunday afternoon my family was invited to my uncle's house. I would sit in his huge, magnificent Tudor style house and enjoy the conversation which covered a variety of topics, both sophisticated and mundane.

My father and uncle would go to the best deli in the area and bring back the most delicious sandwiches. And my uncle always treated us because he knew my father was struggling financially.

My uncle was erudite and successful and raised a family despite health issues resulting from a childhood illness. His bravery and the way he approached life were inspiring. He was an exceptional role model for me.

My aunt and uncle would often stop at our house on the way home from their day's activities. They didn't have to call first. They were always welcomed. And we were together on all the holidays.

The Aunt

My aunt had a difficult childhood. She had been orphaned when she was a young child, and her extended family took her in and raised her. I

knew her extended family and felt a close connection with them. They became an extended family to me once removed.

Like my uncle, my aunt approached life with strength and courage. She was a beautiful, stylish woman with a great sense of humor. I loved it when she and my uncle teased each other or argued because my aunt always had a witty retort.

My aunt and my mother were extremely close. They called each other every day during the week. I loved listening to their conversation, which usually lasted an hour. They would discuss the family; mostly the kids and find time to poke fun at their spouses.

The Cousins

My cousins and I weren't close, but we were accepting acquaintances with a similar background, and I always enjoyed their company because they had the same wonderful sense of humor as my aunt. I was fortunate to have had a connection with them.

I recently saw one of my cousins at a family gathering. He had moved out of the area, and I hadn't seen him in thirty years, but, amazingly, the connection was still there.

The Great Aunt

My mother had an aunt by marriage. She was my great aunt, and I called her *Tanta*.

Tanta was already widowed when I was born. I remember her as a crotchety, old lady who wore her gray hair in a bun, and who was constantly knitting.

When my brother and I were toddlers, my Tanta knitted the most magnificent outfits for us. That was her way of showing how much she cared about us.

Before my mother would pick Tanta up to bring her to our house for a visit, she would announce, "I'm going to pick Tanta up. I'll be back soon."

And I would reply, "She's coming again? She was just here." I didn't enjoy Tanta's visits. She would sit in the kitchen knitting and never smiled or talked to us kids.

One day after one of Tanta's visits, my mother and I were in the mood to reminisce and look at old photos. I saw a picture of my grandmother sitting next to an attractive young woman. I asked, "Who's that?"

"That's Tanta," my mother answered.

"That's Tanta? What happened to her?," I asked.

My mother answered, "She got old. I guess she didn't age well!"

It must have been the way my mother answered me that made us burst out laughing. We were so hysterical that we couldn't stop laughing. When we finally calmed down, we realized that we had found humor in sadness.

That day I learned about life. I felt sorry for my great aunt and for her present circumstances. For the first time in my life, I felt empathy for someone, but I vowed never to be like my Tanta.

The Grandparents

My maternal grandparents emigrated from Europe. My grandfather made a comfortable living until the depression, when he lost everything. But he managed to rebuild his life and still have a modicum of success.

I never heard one complaint from either grandparent about how hard they had it. They knew life was difficult, and they accepted it.

My grandparents brought European tradition to our family. In the old days, Europeans had a special way of drinking coffee. A person raised in a European country would put a cube of sugar in his mouth while sipping coffee.

I loved to watch my grandfather drink coffee and would keep asking him, "Did the sugar melt yet?"

I didn't know my grandmother long before she became ill, so it was up to my grandfather to be there for his grandchildren.

I adored my grandfather. I called him *Poppy* and so did my friends, who also adored him. My relationship with him was unique because I felt so much love for him.

I looked forward to every one of his visits. In fact, I couldn't wait to see him. On the day he would visit, I would wait in front of our house for his car to come chugging down the hill. When I caught sight of it, I would run into the house shouting excitedly, "Mom, Poppy's coming!"

My grandfather had been a chef and had owned several restaurants. He and my mother would bake the most delicious apple pie, which was his recipe. Then we would all sit around the table savoring every morsel while affirming, "This is the best pie you ever baked!"

My grandfather had a great sense of humor, and he kidded around with me. We had a game we played with each other. I would sit next to him on the couch and put my finger on the top of his forehead, and he would try to bite it. He would say, "I'm going to get you this time." But he usually missed.

I could play that game for hours, but after a while, my father would say, "That's enough. Leave Poppy alone."

My grandfather gave me unconditional love. He never disciplined me or said one mean word to me. He made me feel special and was my favorite person in the entire world.

Friends as Extended Family

My parents had a group of friends that they had known from elementary school, and I knew them my entire life. I felt a close connection with them and considered them relatives.

Once a month they would meet at one of their homes. When they met at our house, my twin brother and I would sit on the top of the stairs and listen to their conversation. We thought no one knew we were spying on them, but they all knew.

Help for the Parents

The extended family is a source of emotional support for a new mom and dad. Grandparents often take care of their grandchildren and are an invaluable source of knowledge on child-rearing.

The extended family offers a haven for parents away from their nucleus family (spouse and children) when they need a break.

It's reassuring for both parents to know they have a support system of caring relatives.

What Did My Extended Family Offer?

My extended family:

Offered another close connection

Gave me role models

Lessened my dependence on my twin brother

Taught me about tradition

Reinforced my family's values and belief system

Was a positive influence in my life

Offered support

Offered wisdom

Increased my self-esteem

Was a source of unconditional love

Gave me accepting friends (my cousins)

Gave me fond memories which are brought to consciousness during both tranquil and distressing times.

Summary

The extended family adds another dimension to a child's life.

It's an important connection during the childhood years.

A close friend or friends can be a member of the extended family.

The grandparent plays a major role in a twin's childhood.

The extended family helps shape who you are.

Friends Make Childhood More Memorable

Friends

Neighborhood Friends Neighborhood Friends Neighborhood Friends

Until my twin brother and I reached school age, we had the same friends. We would play together in a group. When my parents bought our house, we were beginning kindergarten, and we began to establish our own set of friends.

Our neighborhood had tons of kids, and all them lived within a mile radius, so I always had someone to play with.

All the neighborhood kids, both boys and girls, would get together on the quietest street and either play one, two, three red light, take a giant step, hop scotch, hide-and-seek, and stick ball; or the girls would jump rope, play pick-up sticks, and trade cards while the boys played baseball, basketball, and football.

Jody

One of my best friends, Jody, lived around the corner. She was a year ahead of me in school but was only four months older, but she acted like a big shot because she was a grade ahead of me

Jody was an only child and was lonely beyond belief. Her parents both worked, and Flora, an insensitive and uncaring nanny, was hired to look after Jody. (Jody's parents must have been desperate to have hired her).

Jody was jealous of me because I had a brother. *She should only know!*

What did I learn from Jody? Jody was jealous of me because I had a brother. *She should only know!* **What did I learn from Jody?**

I learned that getting all the love and attention from one's parents doesn't necessarily make a child happy.

Sarah

I had another friend, Sarah, who lived a mile away. I would often ride my bike to her house to play with her. I felt sorry for her because she had three older brothers who were great at ignoring her. She, like Jody, was lonely but for a different reason; because she couldn't identify with her brothers.

What did I learn from Sarah?

I learned that having siblings doesn't always make a child less lonely.

Harriet and Reba

Harriet lived down the street from me. Occasionally, we would play with Reba, who later became a member of the infamous clique. Reba was manipulative, a troublemaker, and just plain mean.

When Harriet and I played together, we got along fine. When Reba was included, she would be the instigator of discord coercing Harriet and me to gang up on each other. Either both Harriet and Reba ganged up on me, or Reba and I ganged up on Harriet. But Harriet and I never ganged up on Reba. We were afraid of the consequences.

I don't know what makes one child a leader and another child a follower. But I knew that Reba was a leader who intimidated us into submission. To this day, I don't know what methods she employed, but whatever they were, they worked.

Although I knew Reba wasn't a nice kid, I wished I could have had the same power over my friends as she had over me. I longed to be as despicable as her.

What did I learn from Reba?

I realized that Reba's mother spoiled her and never reprimanded her for her manipulative behavior. Because she got away with manipulative behavior at home, she was manipulative with her friends.

Rona and Lynn

Rona and Lynn lived next door. I knew them, but we weren't friends. Rona and Lynn were sullen teenagers, but Rona, by age 14, was flirtatious and seductive.

Groups of boys would congregate in front of their house after school and hang out for hours. Nothing much was going on. They just wanted to catch a glimpse of Rona and, hopefully, get a chance to flirt with her. She reminded me of a Prima Donna.

Because Rona's parents worried about their daughter's safety, they tried to coerce her into being less provocative, but to no avail. I heard many loud arguments coming from their house until Rona found a boyfriend and got engaged.

My parents didn't have to worry about me being seductive because I didn't know how. Rona and I were as different as night and day.

Rona's popularity surprised me. I couldn't understand why the boys made such a big fuss over her. Suffice it to say, I had little knowledge of the adolescent boy!

I admit I was jealous of all the attention Rona was receiving, but I was still mesmerized by the activity in front of her house. I would sit on my bed by the window and watch the goings-on. It was more entertaining than watching TV.

I thought Lynn was much prettier than her sister. She had chiseled features and big brown, hypnotizing eyes. But Rona's popularity had more to do with her voluptuousness and her coquettish ways than with her looks.

Poor Lynn, it must have been hard for her to have such a popular sister. I wonder what deceitful thoughts towards her sister were going on in her subconscious.

What did I learn from Rona and Lynn?

I learned that siblings don't have to be twins to be competitive and jealous of each other.

Jody and My Brother

My brother and I had different friends except for Jody, the only child. She was my friend, but she liked my brother and wanted to be his friend, too, and she tried to get to know him better.

I didn't always know who Jody was coming to see, my brother or me; I guess both of us. That annoyed me. But my brother never paid any attention to her. *If I had been assertive and skilled at conflict resolution, perhaps I would have confronted her on this.*

Jody and I at Camp

I'll never forget the time Jody and I went to camp. Jody had gone the summer before and told me what a fabulous experience she had at camp.

She was going back the following summer and wanted me to go, too. I asked my mother if I could go to camp with Jody, and she said I could.

The camp was in New York's Adirondack region. The mornings were freezing, and the campers were forced to go swimming early in the morning. I remember standing in line shivering as I waited for the younger girls to finish their swim.

Besides swimming, the only other activities consisted of arts and crafts and hiking, and Jody and I spent most of our time climbing the island's rocky slopes.

Jody was miserable at camp. She was terribly homesick and cried herself to sleep every night. I didn't like camp either, but I fared a little better than Jody.

When our parents came to visit halfway through our stay, we begged to go home. But they left us there. They felt we should finish what we started, which was two weeks of camp.

There's disagreement among researchers whether children should quit or finish programs they've begun. I think you should consider each individual case. In this case, it would have been better to call it quits.

Jody proved to be a braggart. I never believed her again when she told me what a wonderful time she had at anything, but I still liked her and stayed a close friend of hers until she got married and moved away.

Teenaged Friends

Now that my brother and I were driving and expanding our world, we had groups of friends from several towns. And being teenagers, we

were attracted to the opposite sex. It became almost impossible to determine who our respective friends came to visit.

We were both confused and at times, upset by this situation, but our relationship was so dysfunctional that we never told one another how we felt.

When we got our driver's licenses, it was a constant fight for the car. My parents had one car, and four people were driving it. I felt sorry for my parents because they had to share their car with two squabbling teenaged twins. I don't know how we managed, but we did. I remember driving to visit friends a couple of times a week.

The Benefits of Friends

I liked most of my friends. They got me out of my house away from a difficult father and a competitive twin brother. I was beginning to learn about the dynamics of a relationship. Pa The friends I had a difficult time with taught me to deal with the relationship or end the friendship. Parents can help their child develop healthy relationships with their friends by teaching them the dyn Being accepted by my friends raised my self-esteem, and I learned important life lessons from them. We had fun together, but more than that, my friends enhanced my life. And I have great memories of them.

That Special Boy: My First Boyfriend

When I began dating, I found a slew of boys among my brother's friends. I dated them briefly until I met that special boy.

During the summers, I worked as a counselor at a swim club, where many of my friends worked. Larry also worked there.

Larry was a personality kid and a shrewd businessman; what I call a *go-getter*. He was the most industrious cabana boy at the club. I never saw such spotless cabanas as his!

Every teenaged girl at the swim club knew Larry and wanted to get to know him better, but I was the one who got to know him better. I dated him that entire summer. He was my first love, and I was obsessed with him.

When I was preparing to leave for my freshman year at college, I was more concerned about leaving Larry than I was looking forward to starting a new chapter in my life.

I did get to visit Larry that year at Yale, the college he was attending. I remember he took me to Yale's radio station where he was a DJ. On air, he announced that he was running for president of the sophomore class and asked the students to vote for him.

I was shocked by his audacity because I couldn't identify with it. My passivity and lack of confidence would never have allowed me to be so bold. In retrospect, I admire Larry for campaigning so assertively and effectively.

The consequences of my mother and father's parenting attitudes and techniques and my early relationship with my twin brother were affecting my current relationship.

Larry and I broke up after my freshman year at Wells. I don't know exactly what precipitated the break up; probably immaturity on both our parts.

Summary

Preschool age opposite-sex fraternal twins will play in groups and have the same friends.

School age opposite-sex fraternal twins will find their own friends but will also play in the same group consisting of both boys and girls.

When opposite-sex fraternal twins become teenagers, each twin's friends may be interested in their twin. Parents can make this time easier for their twins by setting boundaries and by encouraging a discussion on this issue with their twins.

You learn important life lessons from your friends.

Mixed Messages Can Confuse a Child

Mixed Messages

What Is a Mixed Message?

A mixed message is a contradiction. The statements and/or behaviors are contradictory.

Examples of Mixed Messages

1. A father has made it known to his twin daughter that he thinks she's extremely intelligent.

When she's required to choose the language to take in school, she chooses Latin. She tells her father. He tells her not to take Latin because he feels it would be too difficult for her.

To make matters worse, the father tells her twin brother to take Latin. And he had always told the daughter that she was smarter than her brother.

His son was planning on being a doctor, and Latin is a prerequisite for medical school. Because the daughter wasn't aware of this, she was confused by the father's response.

But instead of taking the challenge and choosing to take Latin, the daughter defers to the father's opinion.

How Was the Twin Daughter Affected by This Interaction with the Father?

The father's response most likely lowered the daughter's self-confidence, and also resulted in her being angry at both herself and her father.

2. A teenaged daughter asks her parents if she can go to the mall with her friends.

Her mom says, "Yes."

Her dad says, "No."

Her mom and dad argue but can't agree. The mom wins the argument, and the daughter goes to the mall.

The parents are giving their daughter a mixed message. One parent trusts her; the other doesn't, causing her to doubt her trustworthiness. In

the future, the daughter will go to the mother for permission to be with her friends and avoid the strict father.

3. A father has made it known to his daughter that he trusts her to do her homework and get her assignments in on time, but he constantly checks up on her and offers to do her homework for her.

4. A father has made it known to his teenaged daughter that she has proven she can take care of herself when she's on a date. But he still calls her on her cell phone every hour to check up on her.

5. A father has made it known to his teenaged daughter that he feels she can research subjects with accuracy.

After researching the art department of a university, the daughter has been able to determine that it has the number one art department in the country. Therefore, it has a better art department than the university her father favors. The father disagrees with her.

A Father's Choice of Responses

The father has a choice of responses.

He could say:

- a. Don't be ridiculous. That's not correct.
- b. No, you're wrong. It's the university I mentioned.
- c. Are you sure? I thought it was the university I mentioned.
- d. It sounds like you've done your research. You may be right.
- e. Let's go to the library and do further research on this.

Analysis of the Choices

Here's an analysis of these answers.

a. Don't be ridiculous. That's not correct.

This answer is a putdown and is dictatorial. In addition, it gives the daughter a mixed message. She's intelligent and capable, but she's ridiculous.

The father has provoked the daughter to feel anger and resentment towards him. She'll avoid future interactions with him unless she lets him know how hurtful his response was, encouraging him to apologize and rescind the statement.

b. No, you're wrong. It's the university I mentioned.

This answer is also dictatorial. The father's inflexible by thinking he's right. He doesn't give the daughter the credit due her. He has given her a mixed message.

c. Are you sure? I thought it was the university I mentioned.

This answer is unbiased. The father's questioning the facts.

d. It sounds like you've done your research. You may be right.

This answer is also unbiased. In addition, the father realizes that the daughter may be correct.

e. Let's go the library and do further research.

Like answers *c* and *d*, the father's neutral and is treating the daughter with respect. He also realizes that she may be correct, and there are no mixed messages.

Why Does a Parent Give Mixed Messages?

A parent may give mixed messages because:

1. He's unaware that he's giving mixed messages.
2. He doesn't know how to parent.
3. He frequently changes his mind about how he feels about his child, such as how capable and independent she is.
4. He's domineering and manipulative and tries to control his child in every situation.

How Do Mixed Messages Affect a Child?

An occasional mixed message isn't harmful, but if a parent is constantly sending mixed messages, it can negatively affect a child. Mixed messages can;

1. Confuse a child
2. Erode her self-esteem.
3. Cause friction with her parent.
4. Cause her to avoid discussions with her parent.
5. Cause her to be distrustful of her parent.
6. Cause her to distrust herself.
7. Cause her to become unsure of herself.

8. Make it more difficult for her to work on her identity issues.

Summary

A mixed message is a contradiction.

Mixed messages can be harmful to a child.

There are many reasons why a parent gives mixed messages. Having conflicting feelings towards the child is one reason.

Try to eliminate mixed messages

Twins Have a Huge Impact on Each Other's Life

Your Twin Affects Your Entire Life

Your twin affects your life from the moment you're born and perhaps even before birth and helps shape who you are.

It's controversial among researchers as to who's more influential in your life; your parents or your twin (or a sibling). But that doesn't matter as much as how and to what extent your twin affects you.

Your twin affects:

1. Your personality
2. Your self-esteem
3. Your likes and dislikes
4. How much education you have
5. What career you choose
6. How successful you are
7. How you deal with competition
8. Whether you choose to marry or stay single
9. Who you choose as your mate
10. How you relate to others
11. How much contact and intimacy you want from people
12. How you deal with conflict
13. How you deal with jealousy

How My Twin Affected My Life

Personality

I'm outgoing and sociable, the opposite of my twin brother (de-identification with my twin brother).

Self-Esteem

My twin brother lowered my self-esteem. Feeling rejected by him plus unhealthy competition contributed to this.

Likes and Dislikes

I'm creative and pursue the arts, the opposite of my twin brother (de-identification with my twin brother).

Education

Being a twin increased my desire to do well in school and raised my level of education (identification with my twin brother).

Competition

I shy away from competition because I had a childhood filled with it. Sometimes it was healthy competition which motivated me to do better. Sometimes it was unhealthy competition which was detrimental. The competition becomes unhealthy when it's constant and intense, and when it causes frustration, anxiety, and depression.

Choosing a Significant Other

Initially, I chose men who were like my brother, but I've learned to choose men who are the opposite of my brother. They are communicative and make me feel important.

Being Social or Being a Loner

I'm social, but I'm a loner, but I still have the desire to twin-up with a person I feel close to.

Rejection

Being a twin has made me sensitive to rejection. I like to have friends but not be too involved with them. I don't want to give too much and then get rejected.

How I Deal with Conflict

I had a childhood filled with unresolved conflicts. Contrary to the way I was raised, I accept conflict as a normal part of human interaction, and I try to resolve conflict with assertive negotiation (discussion and compromise).

Jealousy

Sometimes I'm jealous of my twin, but this hasn't carried over to other relationships.

A Paradox

It's paradoxical that we sometimes choose people in our present with characteristics of people in our past. And those characteristics are not what we want, but they're what we're used to.

For instance, a woman who was abused by her father may choose an abusive husband because it's familiar to her (we tend to choose what's familiar) though consciously she doesn't want to be abused.

When I was a young adult, I chose men who were either like my father or like my brother. It felt comfortable being with those men because their behavior was familiar to me, although I disliked it.

Summary

Your twin helps shape who you are.

Your twin (or a sibling) may be more influential in your life than your parents.

It's paradoxical when adults choose to be in relationships that feel comfortable and familiar rather than in those that are healthy.

A Twin Can Raise Her Self-Esteem A Twin with an Inferiority Complex

What Is an Inferiority Complex?

Someone with an inferiority complex feels:

Less valuable

Lower in rank

Of less importance, merit, or value than

Subordinate and subservient to

Mediocre

Of lesser quality than

Plebian

Second rate

She may feel intellectually, educationally, psychologically, physically, socially, or financially inferior.

What Caused My Inferiority Complex in the Home?

Bullying Behavior by My Twin

My twin brother contributed to my inferiority complex. There were many reasons for this. One reason was his bullying behavior. Once we were 10 years old, my brother put me down at every opportunity he could. *He tormented me.*

And my parents were ineffectual at finding an appropriate solution to this ongoing problem. They felt everything would be resolved without working on it. That's naïve thinking.

Competition

As I've mentioned previously, I had to compete with an extremely intelligent twin. Often, I didn't win the competition and felt defeated. This frustrated and angered me and caused me to feel inferior.

Solving the Bullying Problem

How can the parents solve the bullying problem?

The parents have a choice of responses. They could say to the son:

a. We don't like how you treat your sister.

b. Never say that to your sister again.

c. This behavior is unacceptable, and it's going to stop today. You're not to bully your sister. We're going to discuss this now, and we're going to solve this problem once and for all.

The first two answers aren't effective because they're not getting at the cause of the problem and, most likely, will not stop the behavior.

"C" is the appropriate response. The parents should open a dialogue with their son, find the reason for the behavior, and have ongoing discussions with him until the problem is understood and resolved.

If the parents and son can't resolve the problem, family or individual counseling may be helpful.

Why Did My Brother Reject Me?

I've often asked myself if I had done anything to contribute to my brother's rejection of me. I know I loved him and wanted to have a close relationship with him. That seems to be one of the reasons he rejected me. He didn't want to have a close relationship with me.

Another reason may be due to the closeness I had with my mother. My brother felt I was her favorite. A parent and a child of the same sex have more in common. But having more in common with a child doesn't automatically make that child the favorite.

What Caused My Inferiority Complex outside of the Home?

Cliques

I wasn't accepted in the most popular clique at school, and I wanted desperately to get into that clique. I was friends with several of the girls in the clique, but I wasn't allowed to become a member.

One day during lunchtime, a friend and I decided to sit in the auditorium, the sacred meeting place of this clique, in the hopes of being accepted. The clique was already there. We walked in and sat in the back row of the auditorium

Within seconds of our arrival, the girls in the clique started chanting, “There are two people in this room that we don't want here.” And they continued until horrified, my friend and I left. I never forgot that incident or told anyone about it. I was too angry and embarrassed.

Help from the Mother

If I had told my mother about that incident, how could she have helped me?

A helpful response might have been, “I'm sorry that those girls were so mean to you. They may like you, but they're looking for girls who are into dating and who are popular with boys. Their values are superficial. Do you really want to be in that group?”

That answer would have made me realize that I didn't have much in common with most of the girls in the clique, and that I didn't respect their values. I just wanted to be a member of the most popular clique in the school. That response by my mother would have allowed my bruised ego to recover.

My mother could have continued, “You didn't think it through before you acted. You were naïve to think those girls were going to accept two outsiders at their meeting. In the future, be more intuitive and only take smart risks.”

My mother would have been right, and I would have learned an invaluable lesson; to only take smart risks.

I now realize that I let those girls have too much power over how I felt about myself. I vowed never again to let them negatively affect me.

Update

Twenty years later I was walking in a mall near my parents' house, and someone yelled out my name. It was Karla, the leader of that clique. She was so glad to see me and talked to me as if I were a close friend from the past. She was different because she had matured.

I finally had my chance to tell Karla about that incident long ago when she and her clique had rejected me in the school auditorium. But

she wouldn't have remembered. I'm sure when it happened, it hadn't made a dent on her brain for more than a second.

Cliques within Cliques

In my school, there were cliques within cliques. The most popular in-group consisted of seventeen girls. There were three girls in the clique who were closer to one another than they were to the others, and they were the clique within the clique.

The clique within the clique included Karla, the leader, and her top two followers, one of whom could take her place if she were ousted or if she moved away.

When Karla and the two potential leaders got together after school, they excluded the others group members.

In one of my groups, there was also a clique within the clique. Jane and Elaine were inseparable. No one could break into that twosome or tear them apart. Some years later, I found out that Jane and Elaine had a disagreement and were no longer friends.

What does that say about cliques and cliques within cliques? It says don't make too much of them.

The Least Popular Girl in the Class

The lunchroom table can make or break a girl's popularity. Who sits with you is the utmost of importance.

I never enjoyed the lunchroom scene. I could see the in-group from any table I sat at because they took two center tables.

I sat with a group of friends on some days and another group of friends on other days. I wasn't that involved with either group, but I was accepted.

I was always nervous wondering who would ask to sit with me. And it never failed to happen, that just as most everyone was seated and opening their bags of goodies, the stragglers would saunter in.

Among the stragglers was Marilyn, the least popular girl in the class. Everyone else was seated when she would saunter in, look from side to

side, taking every table into view until she found a group or a person that she could join.

There was a reason for Marilyn's unpopularity. She was unkempt, unperceptive, lacking in social skills, and always looked like she was in a fog.

I found that strange because she was in the top cycle in the school. Our classes were called cycles, and everyone knew the ranking of the cycles by the students who were in them.

When I would see Marilyn approaching my table, I would look the other way hoping she would pass by, while quickly gulping down my food. By the time she reached my table, I would be on dessert, and, if need be, I could make a hasty departure.

When she reached my table, she would ask in a whining, self-deprecating voice, "Can I sit with you?"

I never turned Marilyn down. I would sit with her for five minutes and then say, "I'm going to the library to study." But while she was with me, I felt like sinking into the floor. If the in-group saw me with her, my reputation would be ruined forever. And Marilyn never had a clue that she was the least popular girl in the class, but everyone else knew!

How to Go from Feeling Inferior to Feeling Superior

In the Home: Dealing with Your Twin

Reverse roles with your twin. Fight back. If your twin is constantly picking on you, play his game and pick on him.

Walk away and ignore your twin when he picks on you.

If your parents are incapable of helping you, talk to your school counselor, a friend, or a member of your extended family.

Don't give your power away to your twin (or to any sibling).

Don't let your twin's attitude towards you define who you are.

In the Home and outside the Home

Find friends that validate you and that value your friendship.

Don't let other people's feelings about you lower your self-esteem.

Find out what you excel at and go for it.

Join a support group.

Be determined to build your self-esteem. One way to do that is to practice feeling self-confident.

Change your perception of yourself.

Summary

A twin who bullies his twin can contribute to her feeling inferior.

Parents should find the reason for the bullying and the appropriate solution to the problem.

Not being accepted in the cliques in school can lower a child's self-esteem.

A child can raise her self-esteem by changing both her behavior and her perception of herself.

Family counseling or individual counseling for one or both twins may be needed to resolve the problem.

Teach Twins Conflict Resolution

A Hypothetical Case

The Problem

Adolescent identical twin sisters are constantly fighting. One way they express their frustration is by pulling each other's hair.

The Twins Lack Conflict Resolution Skills

Inability to resolve their mutual issues by discussing them in an appropriate manner and coming to a satisfactory solution; hence the fighting and hair pulling.

Determine the Reasons for the Fights

The reasons are:

Sibling Rivalry

The competition is unhealthy because it's constant and intense.

Separation and Identity Issues

One twin is separating; the other is clinging to her sister.

Too Much Sharing and Togetherness

The twins share a bedroom, clothes, friends, after-school activities, and are in the same classroom.

How the Parent and Twins Can Solve the Problem Together

Discuss the problem with each twin.

Suggest ways to solve the problem.

Come to an appropriate conclusion on how to solve the problem.

An Example of How to Solve the Problem

Have a discussion with each twin separately and then together. The conversation can go something like this, "I don't want you and your sister screaming at each other and pulling each other's hair when you have a disagreement. That behavior is unacceptable. Why have you been fighting today?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

If the twins are fighting due to too much sharing, you could say, "It seems like you and your sister are spending too much time together and

are literally in each other's hair. Do you agree? Let's see how we can eliminate some of the tension that's going on between the two of you." Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "You and your sister share a big bedroom. I can make your bedroom into two smaller bedrooms. Do you like that idea?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "How would you feel about trying to make your own friends and having separate after-school activities?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "Fighting and pulling each other's hair is childish and doesn't solve anything. I think you're ready for a more mature way to deal with your relationship with your sister. Talking through your mutual problems with your sister and coming to a solution that's satisfactory to both of you is the way to go. What's your opinion on that? Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "I want to have a discussion with you and your sister everyday about how to resolve your mutual problems. Are you agreeable to that?" Wait for a response and have a discussion.

Continue, "I'm proud of you that you're willing to help resolve this problem. You're growing up to be a mature young lady."

Summary

You've encouraged your twin daughters to solve their mutual problems with your guidance.

You're showed your twin daughters respect by treating them as equals by asking for their input.

They're learning conflict resolution skills and are on their way to resolving their mutual problems more maturely.

Parents Need to Be Vigilant

Adolescence: The Adolescent Twin

The Adolescent Twin

Twins go through adolescence much like singletons do. The major difference is due to the closeness twins share with each other.

Twins should have been separating from each other gradually during childhood to prepare for adulthood. If they have done most of their separating from each other, adolescence will be less difficult.

If they (or one) have not yet separated, they'll separate now. And it can be an abrupt separation. It will be more difficult to adjust to a more mature twin relationship in adolescence because adolescence is a time of turmoil due to intense physiological and psychological changes.

In most twin relationships, one twin is more dependent on his twin or wants a closer relationship. This can cause frustration and anxiety for both twins.

What Is Adolescence?

The dictionary defines adolescence as *the period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity*.

It's a transitional period and usually begins around age twelve but can begin as early as age eight. It begins earlier for girls than it does for boys.

Adolescents begin to look like adults. The teenaged boy will develop male characteristics. The teenaged girl will develop female characteristics.

Adolescents' Issues and Behavior

They have a conflict between independence and dependence.

They are curious about sex and may be sexually active.

They develop their personalities.

Vanity reaches a peak.

They're self-centered.

They're sensitive to rejection.

Peers replace their parents. They widen their circle of friends, and if twins, the twin will most likely be excluded.

Being a teenager is precarious. The social scene and peer pressure are volatile. One day a teenager can be popular; the next day his clique can exclude him.

They're frightened because soon they must leave home and fend for themselves, either beginning college or careers.

They want to make their own decisions and may not listen to their parents' advice.

Twins may be overjoyed that they're going their separate ways, or they may be sad and anxious about separating. Or it may be a combination of both (conflicting feelings).

There may be feelings of guilt about separating from one's twin, especially if one twin has a unilateral dependence on her twin.

There's a push-pull relationship with their parents, and twins can also have a push-pull relationship with each other.

They're critical of their parents.

They avoid their parents, and their answers to them are monosyllabic.

They choose to deal with stress and take life seriously.

They want to be in control. But when they're troubled, they're pulled back into childhood and cling to their mommy and daddy, and if they're twins, they may also cling to each other.

They're half child, half adult, and they still think they're the center of the universe. They renounce childhood, but the baby within still survives (and I think this is true of all adults but to a lesser degree).

Power is important to adolescents.

Adolescents may have an *identity crisis*. This is a psychological conflict involving confusion about one's personality and social role.

Twins may be more at risk than singletons of having an identity crisis during adolescence because each twin's identity may still be tied to the other twin. And not only are they separating from parents, they're also

separating from each other. They may feel confused and may not know who they are once they separate.

The adolescent twin is in unfamiliar territory. She feels unprotected by the once close, now distant twin relationship, and by her parents who are no longer treating her like a child. Though she knows intellectually that adolescence is a time to separate, she may be psychologically unprepared for it.

How Can Parents Help Their Adolescent Twins?

I offer the same suggestions I have throughout this book. Open a dialogue with your twins:

Listen

Ask for their opinions.

Offer your opinions.

Validate their feelings.

Communicate with your adolescent.

Dealing with the adolescent is challenging for parents. You must make changes in your relationship. You're no longer the authoritative parent who knows everything. In the mind of the adolescent, you're the parent who knows nothing.

Give your adolescent suggestions to do something that's beneficial to her instead of telling her to do it because being authoritative no longer works.

Don't get involved in power struggles with your teenager. When she attempts to draw you into one, walk away.

Have appropriate rules and establish boundaries. A teenager needs rules to feel safe.

Try not to criticize your teenager's friends or romantic involvements.

If you remember that your teenager is terrified of being independent and of giving up the child within, parenting will be easier.

Why Do Teenagers Behave the Way They Do?

Teenagers are going through tremendous changes, both physiologically and psychologically.

A teenaged boy is confronted with his sexuality and may feel uncomfortable being with his mother because he may be physically attracted to her, and he's not used to feeling so sexual.

At the same time, the urge to go back and be a baby is still there. If a teenager's close to her parents, she fears she won't be able to separate. Being distant and withdrawn with parents is a protective mechanism.

A teenaged girl who fights with her mother is holding on to closeness with her. The mother's still in control, and the teenaged girl feels secure knowing this. At the same time, a part of her wants to separate. If she stays mad at her mother, she can distance herself and separate.

The conflict between separation and dependence (being attached to her parents) stays with the teenager through the teen years but gradually lessens, and separation slowly wins out. And it must.

You can look at it this way. A teenager is fighting for her survival. She's preparing to live on her own. She protects herself by fighting with her parents or avoiding them, and by being withdrawn and unkind.

My Experience as an Adolescent

As an adolescent, I always obeyed the rules. I rarely rebelled. I was too afraid of the consequences.

Adolescence was easy for me but it didn't prepare me to leave home and to be on my own because I didn't separate from my parents.

My twin brother and I had a strained relationship, so I had separated from him somewhat, mostly on an intellectual level but not on an emotional level.

In late adolescence, when I went to college, I felt lost. I missed my family and felt unreal. Feeling unreal was merely an expression of anxiety. It was hard for me to accept how alone I felt. And because I'm a twin, I felt anxious without a close connection.

I was out of my element at college, but even I, the twin who had a unilateral dependence on my family, did fine.

My Parents' Experience with Their Adolescent Twins

My parents were fortunate because my twin brother and I were well-behaved during adolescence. There was no drinking, drugs, or rebellion.

But were my brother and I fortunate? I don't think so. Adolescence is a time to rebel and to separate from parents and siblings. If you don't rebel, you don't separate. And if that's the case, you'll have to separate later when you're already out in the world and lacking the necessary maturity to survive.

Summary

Adolescence is a transitional period of intense change.

Adolescents have a conflict between independence and dependence.

Twins should separate from each other before adolescence otherwise adolescence may be more difficult.

Parents need to guide their twins through adolescence.

A Twin Learns to Be Assertive

A Small Girl's College

Applying to Colleges

My junior and senior years of high school were demanding. Keeping grades up, taking SAT's, and applying to colleges was never racking.

My father chose the colleges for me to apply to. I listened to him and did what he asked. At this point in my life, I didn't know what I wanted. All I knew was that I was scared at the prospect of leaving home and being on my own.

I got rejected at most of the schools I applied to, or should I say most of the schools my father applied to, because he had me apply to all top rate schools? I didn't care much that I got rejected at those schools because they weren't my choices, but I did care that I got rejected.

My parents made an excellent team in encouraging my dependence on them. One told me where to apply to college, the other wrote the essays on the application.

I did get accepted at one college, but my father found that college unacceptable. It was already May of my senior year in high school, and I didn't know where I would be spending the next four years, and my anxiety was escalating.

Meanwhile, my brother had already been accepted at the college of his choice.

I felt that *inferiority complex* creep through my bones as *sibling rivalry* reared its ugly head.

In May, I visited a boy I was dating who went to Cornell. I had been so busy and anxious I don't know how I had the time or the inclination to travel to Cornell, but I managed to go and have a good time.

He had heard about a small girl's college situated north of Ithaca (the home of Cornell), also on Lake Cayuga, and he told me about it.

When I returned home, I mentioned the college to my father hoping that would be the answer to my current problem, and after researching the college he decided that's where I was to go. He based his decision on the library. It had an excellent one. I applied to that school that month and was accepted.

Arriving at college

My parents drove me to college. I had never been there, and I wasn't prepared for what I would see. The school was in the middle of nowhere. It was in a one street town called Aurora, which consisted of an inn and the college. Coming from the New York metropolitan area, I was shocked by its isolation.

The two closest cities were Ithaca, approximately thirty miles south, and Syracuse, approximately forty miles north, and a few small towns scattered here and there with wide open space between.

I found the dorm, met my roommate, and decided it was time to go home. But I stayed.

My Experience at college

There were three hundred and twenty-five students in the entire school. The few freshmen who were accepted from the metropolitan area weren't happy there. One left that week. The other packed up and left the following week. But I survived. It was one tough year though.

It snowed and snowed and snowed. There was snow on the ground from October through May. I thought that Lake Cayuga, which was directly across the street from the college, was one of the Great Lakes because it was so huge.

The wind from the lake blew onto the campus tossing the snow around and making visibility almost zero. It made walking to classes treacherous.

It reminded me of an exclusive boarding school for debutantes. "What was I doing there?", I asked myself. I felt I didn't belong. I wanted to have fun, meet boys, and dance the night away. But students weren't allowed to have cars though there was no bus or train service to, from, or

in Aurora; not that you would want to go anywhere in Aurora. So how was I to have fun and meet boys?

I was stuck there surrounded by snow and debutantes, studying, and spending most of my time in that library that my father loved so much.

Academically the school was topnotch. But I wanted more from a college than academics. I wanted a social life and things of interest outside the school curriculum. If the town had been a typical college town with cafes and shops, it would have offered a needed diversion from my studies.

I finished my homework early each evening and spent the rest of the night walking from room to room hoping my dorm mates would find time to talk. *I was so lonely.*

I was so bored that I colored my hair three different colors that year. My mother never knew what to expect when I came home for each holiday.

A Decision

When I was home for Christmas vacation, I informed my father that I wouldn't be returning to school the following year. He was upset and tried to dissuade me, but I ignored his wishes.

I had told my mother first about my plans, and her immediate response was, "Don't tell daddy." She didn't want to upset him.

I asked myself, "What kind of a father is that? I'm unhappy, and he's more concerned that I stay at the college of his choice, not my choice."

One of my friends from home went to a university in a big city and I had visited her that year. (I did get around that year). I was very impressed with the school. My friend was a member of clubs and was going to fraternity parties. She had a busy, well-rounded life. "That's for me," I thought.

I told my father I was applying there. He was against it at first and put up a good fight but eventually accepted my decision and was all for it. I finished my year, got good grades, and couldn't wait to go to a new school.

Because I hadn't been mature, self-reliant, and assertive, I had allowed myself to be coerced to applying to colleges I had no interest in, causing me unnecessary suffering.

Summary

A parent *shouldn't* choose the colleges for his child to apply to. He can make suggestions, offer his opinion, and guide her to a decision. It doesn't matter if the parent loves a college and wants his daughter to go there. He's not the one going there.

College Tests One's Maturity

The University

Arriving at the university

Because dorm space was limited there, I couldn't get into the dorms. I was assigned a room in a sorority house. It had the worst reputation on campus. The boys called it *Phi Piggy Piggy*.

That didn't get me off to a very good start. I should have ignored what those boys thought and said, but I was easily influenced. I had just arrived at there and already I doubted my decision to transfer there.

I was the first one to arrive at the sorority house and was nervous. I wanted this to be a good experience for me.

My Best Friend

Twenty girls, not members of the sorority, rented rooms in the house. I made many friends and one special friend; the best friend I've ever had.

Her name was Eileen, and she was also an opposite-sex fraternal twin.

Is that a coincidence or what? For the first time in my life, I found a friend that made me feel special. Eileen made my sophomore year at the university extraordinary.

She and her twin brother had a close and caring relationship. I was envious of what they shared, but I learned that not all twin relationships were like mine. I felt jealous and sad that I didn't have what Eileen and her brother had.

Eileen didn't stay at the university for long. Her twin brother fixed her up with his best friend. She got engaged that spring, got married that summer, and transferred to the University of Pittsburgh.

I was thankful that Eileen had been in my life for a year, but it was hard to accept that she was moving on. I felt as if my mother were aban-

doning me. I had not yet learned that life's constantly changing, and that most people are in your life for a brief time.

I still had separation issues and wanted to twin-up in close relationships. Once I attached myself to someone, it was hard to detach. I had a lot of work to do before I resolved my twin issues.

The Ups and Downs at school

I enjoyed the courses and liked having boys in my classes. It made them more stimulating.

I found an adorable boyfriend, or he found me. I'm not sure who found who. His name was Jerry, and he was from Brooklyn. The relationship lasted five months at which time he told me he wanted a more intense physical relationship, to put it euphemistically. I was so naïve that I was shocked by his demand and ended the relationship.

I saw Jerry in several of my classes and at fraternity parties with a variety of girls; a different girl for each party. It was obvious he didn't want a serious relationship.

A part of me was glad I broke up with him, but a part of me was sorry. I kept thinking perhaps I could have convinced him to keep the relationship at the status quo if I had stayed with him.

The sororities were just as cliquy as the high school cliques except for the sorority that I rented a room from. I stayed far away from the other sororities.

One of the girls who was in 'that clique,' the most popular click in school, was transferring there. Her mother called my mother and asked if I would show her daughter around the campus. "No, I would not. The nerve of her," I said under my breath.

My Husband

I met my husband when I was a senior. Fred was a freshman at the law school. He was cute and had an off-the-wall intelligence like that of an absent-minded professor.

I was attracted to him because he was cute and intelligent, and because he ran after me. My ego, rather my pseudo-ego, became huge from

all the attention he gave me. And my mood was up. But I didn't realize that he wasn't ready for a relationship, and neither was I.

Yes, Fred was cute and intelligent, but I neglected to look for the attributes, kind, considerate, responsible, well-adjusted, and mature; all of which he lacked. Like my parents,

I naively thought relationships would be automatically successful if the people in the relationship cared about each other. Because of my upbringing, I didn't realize that you have to work hard at making them work. And even then, they may not work out.

Fred had a lot of potential, but first he had to work on his issues, most of which stemmed from the love-hate, mostly hate, relationship he had with his mother which he generalized to all women.

After one year of dating we were married, and after three years of marriage we were separated and on the way to a divorce. We both lacked the maturity needed to survive in a marriage.

My failure at marriage defeated me. I felt drained of all strength. My previously low ego was bruised beyond repair. I surrendered to depression.

Why Did I Get Married?

I got married for the following reasons:

Because my boyfriend was cute

Because I admired his intelligence

To get away from my father

To get married before my brother did

I was still competing with my brother.

To be taken care of

To feel more secure

To facilitate the separation process from my parents

So I wouldn't be alone

Those were not the right reasons to get married. In my defense, I also wanted to get married for the right reason. I thought I was in love, and I wanted to share my life with someone.

Where Did I End Up?

I ended up at my parents' house. I was back where the immature part of me wanted to be and where the mature part of me didn't want to be. It was exasperating being so conflicted and not being able to resolve my issues.

Where am I Now?

It took years of hard work and struggle, and I'm finally almost the person I want to be. That's close enough because no one becomes the person they want to be. That would make you a perfect person, and there's no such thing. I'm still working on my issues because I feel I should be constantly evolving, not remain static.

I know I'm not a victim, a role I took on in childhood. I don't expect my family to take care of me or to change my life, if need be. That's up to me.

I feel relieved that I'm finally independent, and that I understand my parents and why they reacted as they did.

Summary

College tests a teenager's knowledge, ability, and experience.

The inability to understand what goes into making a relationship work will most likely result in a failed marriage.

Your goal as parents is to raise healthy, independent twins. If you don't, your adult twins will have a long struggle until they mature, if they ever mature.

Begin early on teaching your twins to be independent. It will be well worth it for all concerned.

Marriage Affects the Twin Relationship

Adult Twins

The Bond Is Still There

When you're an adult, you may have minimal or no contact with your twin, but the bond is still there.

As an older adult, hopefully you've minimized the anger and sibling rivalries of childhood. But even if you haven't been able to do that, you'll still have a bond with your twin.

Your parents may be gone. You may be divorced or widowed, but you still have your twin. Now is the time to embrace him.

A Flashback

Usually twins are still close this time in their lives. But my twin brother always had difficulty with the twin relationship, and one way of his dealing with this was to distance himself from me by ignoring me.

I remember him walking down the halls in school and never acknowledging me, and excluding me from his group of friends in school by denying my very existence.

In addition, he was secretive and never revealed his innermost thoughts to me or ever shared even one infinitesimal feeling he had with me.

But we still had a connection; whatever that was I can't define, but it was a connection that stemmed from our shared history and the closeness we had during the preschool years.

College

When twins go to college, their relationship changes. There's a more permanent separation, both physically and emotionally. You will only see your twin occasionally.

After College

When twins complete college, their paths will most likely diverge more. One may move out of town, possibly far away. Distance will separate them and change their relationship, but the bond will still be there. One or both twins may still want the connection they had during childhood, but that's gone forever.

Both my brother and I returned to the area where we grew up, but we saw each other infrequently.

Marriage and Children

When a twin gets married, it can have a profound effect on the twin relationship. How close that relationship stays may depend on the spouse.

When my brother married, we already had an emotionally distant relationship. I was the one who wanted to be close (unilateral dependence).

Since my brother's wife also preferred not to be close, they both kept their distance.

I was puzzled. "How could this be when we were twins?", I asked myself. The answer is: *there are all kinds of twin relationships.*

The unmarried twin will take a back seat in the married twin's life because there's a hierarchical order of importance of relationships. The married twin's most important relationships are the ones with his spouse and his children, then parents, and lastly siblings (that's how it was in my family).

I had just gone through a divorce, and my ego was low, but my brother and his wife were involved in their own lives and didn't offer support and kept me on the periphery of their lives. Knowing my brother, I wasn't surprised by this.

Looking back, I now realize that if I had not defined success as being married, I could have raised my self-esteem while going on to the next part of my life. And if I had realized that my brother was incapable of having a meaningful relationship with me, I wouldn't have felt so hurt by his behavior.

I always had expectations that my family would be there for me during tough times. Thinking that was a mistake because I set myself up for disappointment.

A Life Lesson

You can't depend on your twin, other siblings, or parents to be there for you when you go through tough times once you're an adult unless your family has an exceptional degree of compassion and feels encouragement and support is the utmost of importance.

However, no one can solve your problems, either internal or external ones. It's up to you to solve them. And once you know you can solve or at least manage your problems until you can solve them, your self-confidence will increase, and you'll become a stronger person.

My brother had his family and became financially successful while I struggled alone. I was glad that my brother had found his niche, but I

was angry because our relationship had become extremely minimal and unimportant to him. And this fact, the exclusion of me from his life, only increased my jealousy towards him.

My Dependence Issues

To make matters worse, I was still asking my mother for reassurance. Only this time my question was, "Am I missing anything?"

I was comparing my life to my brother's life, and I felt I was missing out. I knew the answer, but I wanted my mother to negate it. And she did by answering, "No."

It would have been helpful to me if she had answered, "I don't know. Only you know the answer. What do you think you're missing out on?"

We could have discussed my feelings, and perhaps I would have had an *epiphany* that could have led to maturity.

However, I was the adult, and it was up to me to determine if I were missing anything and to accept it if I were or to change my situation, but it wasn't up to my mother to tell me how I felt.

I now realize that I viewed my mother as a child would view a mother. I expected her to know the answers for me. I didn't realize that I had the answers within me, and that I could answer my questions about myself more accurately than anyone else could. *I gave my mother too much power, and in so doing I gave my power away.*

Everyone's struggling with their issues. Most likely, you're as strong as or stronger than the next person. And if you're not, you should be perceptive enough to know it.

Once you're an adult, you know what's right for you. No one else does. And if you're struggling with your issues and you're not able to resolve them, you should get counseling.

I hope parents will teach their children to answer their questions early on and not depend on others for the answers.

Help for the Unmarried Twin

Join a support group where you can discuss your issues.

Realize what your twin's willing and capable of giving.

Re-evaluate what you want from your twin.

Make the twin relationship less important to you, if need be. You don't need your twin to survive. Don't make him the center of your universe.

Different Twin Relationships

There are all types of twin relationships, but a twin can only be as close as her twin allows. And this is true for any sibling relationship.

Some twins are the best of friends. They call each other every day and visit each other every weekend. If married, they include each other in their family life, and they have frequent one-on-one interactions with each other. And there are variations of that; meaning that there are varying degrees of the amount of intimacy in twin relationships.

Summary

Most twins have a close connection with each other before going to college.

When twins go to college, the physical and emotional separation from each other becomes more permanent.

Once a twin is married, the unmarried twin will take a back seat in the married twin's life.

A twin's spouse can positively or negatively affect the twin relationship.

You may be jealous of your adult twin. The healthier you are emotionally and the more content you are with your life, the less the jealousy.

Once you're an adult, you're on your own. Learn to depend on yourself.

A twin will always have a bond with her twin, whether it's a positive or a negative one, or somewhere in-between.

Going for Independence

My Adult Struggles

My Issues

The year my marriage ended was the most difficult year of my life. I was devastated by my divorce. I thought my husband and I were going to be together forever.

The issues that I had in childhood weren't resolved and were interfering with my life. Those issues were:

1. I was overly-attached to my mother.
2. I wanted my family to lessen my anxiety.

That's an unrealistic expectation. No one can lessen your anxiety. And I should have realized that.

3. I wanted to twin-up with everyone that I felt close to.

I didn't realize that I was on my own, and that I couldn't twin-up with anyone because no one accepted such a close, dependent relationship.

What Was Wrong with Me?

I kept asking myself, "What's wrong with me? Why can't I move on?" I couldn't move on because I wasn't ready to get to know myself and to work on my issues. I couldn't even identify most of my issues. And I was frightened of adulthood because I equated it with loneliness, rejection, and feeling incomplete.

I Was Equally Conflicted

After one year, I moved out of my parents' house and rented an apartment.

I never stayed with one boyfriend for long because I was choosing men on my emotional level. They were immature, and were afraid of commitment. The immature part of me knew they were afraid of commitment, felt relieved, and liked it. The mature part of me knew they were afraid of commitment, felt frustrated, and disliked it.

I was equally conflicted. A part of me wanted to be dependent, and a part of me wanted to be independent. When you're equally conflicted, you don't move on.

I'm Still the Same

I lived alone for ten years, and then I moved in with a boyfriend after we dated for a year.

He was eleven years older than me, had just recently divorced, and had four children ranging from age 16 to 25. Luckily, the younger two lived with their mother, and the older two were on their own.

But I hadn't changed much since my marriage ended. I still wanted to be taken care of to avoid anxiety.

And I was in over my head. My boyfriend's children were distressed over their parents' divorce, and one was always staying with us. The others were constantly calling to get help with their problems.

I tried to help them, but they didn't want help from me. They wanted me out of the picture and their parents back together. I understood that and empathized with them, but I felt like the outsider. And I was.

During the six years we were together, my boyfriend was involved in a lawsuit over his ex-wife's lucrative family business. Most of his attention was focused on winning the lawsuit and helping his children; in that order. And I can't blame him for his priorities, but I can blame him for how he treated me, which was with indifference.

With each year I stayed in that relationship, my anxiety intensified (due to repressed anger) until I felt I was going to explode. My boyfriend was self-centered and controlling, and I was supposed to go along with everything he wanted, and that was difficult for me to do. I knew we didn't belong together, but I couldn't do anything about it.

When the lawsuit was settled, my boyfriend was offered a plant in another city and broke up with me. I must have been the transitional girlfriend.

My husband had been withdrawn and ignored me. He was like my brother. My boyfriend had been controlling and domineering. He was

like my father (only my boyfriend was also mean, unlike my father who was basically kind). It was obvious that my past was *negatively* affecting my present.

After the break up, I ended up back with my parents. The second experience living in my childhood home was no better than the first one. My parents were busy and didn't suffer from the empty nest syndrome. They didn't want their adult child living at home, especially one with problems.

I moved out of my parents' house, and three years later I was back. This happened one more time. Fortunately, I never stayed much more than a year each time I moved back. I lived in my parent's home for a total of five years during my adult life, but it seemed a lot longer.

Independence at Last

Finally, I moved away. I had grown up. I was independent. I no longer needed to depend on my family.

I realized on an emotional level, not merely on an intellectual level, that you must make your own life. You can't lean on anyone; not family, spouse, or friends. You're on your own.

What I was so afraid of feeling my entire life —being on my own—I finally conquered. But look what I had to go through to mature and separate!

Surely, adult twins will have issues they will have to work through, but if they're emotionally healthy, they should resolve those issues more easily than I did.

Summary

Teach your twins to trust their own judgment.

Teach your twins to make their own decisions.

Let your twins struggle with their issues and learn how to resolve them with your guidance so when they're adults they'll be able to solve their problems without depending on anyone for help.

Each Twin Is Unique

My Yearbook

In my yearbook the editor wrote:

"... and never being mistaken for her twin."

That's true I could never be mistaken for my twin.

I'm not like him. I'm me!

Raising Twins is for the Fearless

Conclusion

Raising twins can be intimidating. It's for the fearless, not the cowardly. Arm yourself with information and make smart parenting choices.

When raising twins, it's important to remember to:

Treat each twin as an individual.

Eliminate comparisons.

Encourage separation and independence.

Work on your twins' identity issues with them

Teach your twins to be aware of their feelings

Discuss all issues, big and small

Listen to your twins

Teach your twins the fundamentals of the dynamics of a relationship

Give each twin one-on-one interactions as often as needed.

Be open to improving your parenting skills as well as your parenting approach and change what isn't working

And don't forget to have fun with your twins and to enjoy their childhood years.

After reading this book, I hope you understand what it takes to raise healthy, independent twins and realize how complex the twin relationship is and how much of an input parents have in shaping that relationship.

I hope twins can enjoy being twins. It can be a most gratifying relationship during both childhood and adulthood and should last a lifetime.

Glossary

Adolescence: Period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity.

assertiveness: Way of interacting with others that makes sure your own needs and desires are met without harming anyone.

authoritarian approach: Parenting style where the parent has full control.

autonomy: Ability to make independent choices and take independent action.

bonding: Formation of an attachment or relationship with another person.

Clique: Small, exclusive group of friends.

commitment: Obligation that restricts freedom of action.

compensation: Something given to counterbalance or make up for.

Competition: Rivalry driven to win.

Conflict: State of opposition or struggle.

conflict resolution: Discussion of issues in a relationship resulting in a satisfactory conclusion.

criticism: Faultfinding and judgmental analysis.

De-Identification: Dissociation of oneself with the feelings or personality of a person.

displaced anger: Anger aimed at someone or something that was not the original cause of the anger.

dizygotic twins: *Twins that come from two separate eggs; same-sex or opposite-sex fraternal twins.*

empathy: Capacity to understand another person's viewpoint or feelings.

empty nest syndrome: Refers to feelings of depression or sadness experienced by parents (mostly by mothers) after children leave their childhood home.

epiphany: *Moment of profound insight*

Extended Family: Grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and close friends.

external stimuli: Agents that come from outside oneself that directly influence one's activity or energy.

Family Dynamics: Energy which operates with effect in a family.

Identification: Association of oneself with the feelings or personality of another person.

Identity: Distinguishing character of an individual.

Identity crisis: *Psychological conflict especially in adolescence involving confusion about one's personality and one's social role.*

in-group: Group of people who show loyalty and preferential treatment to one another because they share common interests, beliefs, and attitudes.

interdependent Identity: *Relationship in which two or more people depend on each other.*

mama's boy: Boy that's overly attached to his mother.

mirror image twins: *Identical twins that have similar but opposite physical characteristics.*

Mixed Message: Contradictory statement or behavior.

monozygotic twins: *Twins that come from the same egg; identical twins.*

multiples: Individuals born at one birth: twins, triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, sextuplets and septuplets.

one-on-one interaction: Interaction of a parent and a child (individual attention).

overcompensation: The act of trying too hard to make up for a disadvantage.

Paradox: Illogical or contradictory statement or behavior.

passive-aggressive behavior: Style of interpersonal behavior that is manipulative and that expresses dissent and anger indirectly avoiding outright conflict.

patriarchal family: System of family ruled by a male.

peer: Person in the same age range or generation.

positive reinforcement: Reward for good behavior.

reciprocal relationship: Relationship that's common or mutual to two or more persons.

repression: Act of excluding from conscious awareness.

role model: *Person whose behavior is imitated by others.*

self-esteem: Self-confidence.

Separation Anxiety: Display of anxious behavior when a child or adult is separated from someone with whom she has formed an attachment.

sibling: Brother or sister

sibling rivalry: Process of interaction between siblings manifested by arguing and criticizing; one cause of sibling rivalry being competition for their parents' love, attention, and approval.

single unit identity: *Identity in which twins feel incomplete without each other.*

singleton: Single child born at one birth.

subservient role: Role of inferior importance.

symbiosis: Close coexistence and interaction of two people to their mutual advantage.

transitional period: Developmental period of change.

twinsip: *A term I've coined which refers to the twin relationship.*

twin-up: A term I've coined which refers to the unhealthy, symbiotic relationship between twins.

unilateral dependence: Dependence performed by and affecting only one person in a relationship.

unilateral independence: Independence performed by and affecting only one person in a relationship.

validation: Emotional support of another person.

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Back Cover

Being a Twin

The author an opposite-sex fraternal twin, shares her experience being a twin, describes the unique problems of twins, and suggests ways to solve or at least minimize those problems.

It is made clear throughout this book that parents play a crucial role in determining how their twins develop, behave, and relate to each another.

BEING A TWIN includes:

- Competition
- Separation and Independence Issues
- Anger
- Anxiety
- The Different Approaches to Parenting
- Conflicting Feelings
- Inferiority Complex
- Twin Identities
- Twin Roles
- The Dynamics of a Relationship
- The Adolescent Twin
- The Adult Twin

The author tackles the issues of twins and provides easy to understand information on the complex twin relationship and the parenting necessary to raise healthy, independent twins.

BEING A TWIN is a must read for both parents of twins and adult twins.

Qualifications

This is an account of my childhood and early adulthood. I don't profess to be an expert on all twins' issues. I only know how I felt being a twin with the twin I had and with the parents I had. And I know what would have been helpful to me. I feel there's a universal truth to the information in this book based on limited evidence (my twin experience).

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