

Parenting Multiples

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Being a parent can be one of the most stressful roles we take on in our lives. Parents of multiples (defined as two or more infants born at the same time) experience different challenges than parents of singletons, or parents of multiple children born at different times. Parents of multiples can experience higher levels of stress, higher financial burdens, and even a higher risk of divorce. Learning to identify what types of stressors there are and how to deal with them can help parents of multiples be successful, not only in parenting, but in both their marriage and own individual self-care.

Here are a few challenges that parents of multiples experience:

Financial stress: Parents of multiples have to buy certain items such as cribs, high chairs, even education, simultaneously. Also, it costs more to deliver multiples than it does for a single's birth. Oftentimes, one partner may need to give up an income to stay home and take care of the babies. This extra financial stress can cause parents of multiples to be more stressed, anxious, and/or depressed.

Emotional Stress: It is difficult for parents of multiples to distribute their time evenly among the children and provide that important one-on-one attention to each child. Multiples generally do everything at the same time making it difficult to have one-on-one time, especially when only one parent is present. Also, maintaining equality is another big challenge. It is often a struggle for parents of multiples to ensure each child receives their fair share, whether that is attention or material goods. This can often set parents up to feel guilty and frustrated which can lead to feeling anxious and/or depressed.

Treating multiples as individuals: Parents often worry about making sure their multiples develop as individuals. As stated earlier, from an early age multiples often do everything together, so it is difficult for parents of multiples to avoid comparisons, especially if one develops and/or reaches milestones before the other(s). Parents have to constantly remind themselves that their children are individuals, meaning not only do they develop at different rates, they may also have different personalities. Parents may need to make adjustments for each child to meet that child's needs. Again, this can cause a variety of mixed feelings for parents of multiples.

Here are some ideas on how to handle these stressors:

- Join a twins group to learn ways other parents manage their stressors.
- If possible, ask family members and trusted friends to help out during the most difficult times of the day or week.
- Take time for yourself and time alone with your partner so that you can feel grounded and connected.
- Find ways to treat each child as an individual by giving them their own toys, not dressing them alike, encouraging them to pursue different interests and helping them develop their own unique abilities.
- Seek out counseling to address concerns with parenting and any depression and/or anxiety that may develop as a result of parenting multiples,