

TWINNING IS WINNING

What is life like for those parents who welcome not one, but two bundles of joy – at the same time?

Kate Farr learns more about the life-changing magic of multiples

Sarah Ward, mum to two-and-a-half-year-old Alice and Ben, first discovered that the family would be welcoming twins at just seven weeks pregnant. “To see those two little hearts beating for the first time was indescribable,” she says. “I burst into tears!”

For Amanda Cheung, mum of six-month-old sons Mason and Grayson, the journey to becoming a mother of two was quite a rollercoaster ride. After experiencing some bleeding at nine weeks pregnant, she was rushed to the emergency room. Six hours later, after numerous tests and a 40-minute ultrasound, her husband was brought in. “The sonographer proceeded to show us

heartbeats on both the left and right sides,” Amanda says. “We’d gone from thinking we had one baby, to potentially none, and finally to two!”

A two-for-one special

When it came to preparing for their new arrivals, both Sarah and Amanda chose to be pragmatic about their nesting, with neither mum opting to buy two of everything. “I did buy some gender-specific clothes, but otherwise the twins shared bottles, blankets and so on,” says Sarah.

“Two cribs and a double stroller are essential purchases,” says Amanda. “But my best buy was a book – *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Twins* by Dr Mark Weissbluth.”

The women’s experiences varied greatly when it came to ensuring that they had sufficient support. While Amanda’s recently retired dad was able to move in for a couple of months to help out, Sarah, whose family lives in the UK, relied solely on her husband and helper. ▶

"I've met a few other mums of twins, which helps a lot when you need a sympathetic ear or some advice," Sarah says. "I'd definitely recommend joining a few of the mum-orientated DB Facebook pages, as well as the Hong Kong Mothers of Multiples Facebook page."

Both Sarah and Amanda admit that it can be challenging for busy twin parents to stay mindful of their relationship with each other. Aude Mahoudeau-Campoyer, practitioner of psychotherapy, sophrologist and hypnotherapist at DB-based Brief Therapy HK, backs this up, saying: "A couple go from being two individuals taking care of each other to the same individuals taking care of two young babies. They have no time for each other, never mind time for themselves."

Aude encourages twin parents to accept that they can't be fully present for each other, knowing that this is only a phase. "It is important, however, to find some time to share your feelings, fears and concerns," she says. "This is one of the most exciting adventures of your life, so team up and accept the challenge."

Aude offers sophrology sessions to help new mums find their balance after delivery. "It is a time for women to reconnect with their bodies, sensations and feelings, and to reconstruct their self-image," she says.

Double the happiness

When it comes to the challenges that twins can bring, both mums agree that the logistics of two can sometimes be hard to figure out. Amanda explains: "With twins, everything is double. Double the happiness but also double the trouble and the mess! Even packing

TOP TIPS FOR TWIN PARENTS

1. **Ask for and accept help.**
2. **Shop smartly.**
3. **Get your kids into the same routine.**
4. **Bond one-on-one with each baby.**
5. **Practice self-care.**
6. **Be mindful of your relationship.**



a bag to go out for a couple of hours means packing two sets of clothes, bottles, bibs and diapers. It takes us double the time to get ready and out the door."

For Sarah, getting around with twins is the biggest challenge, especially relying on public transport. "Negotiating taxis and busy roads with two toddlers can be tough but it's doable," she says.

Sarah and Amanda agree that finding time to bond one-on-one with each child is another

challenge – something that Aude considers essential. "This is a natural development process, as it helps children separate and individuate," Aude explains. "As a parent, spending time alone with one child allows us to know their personalities and therefore take care of their needs in a better way. We all need to be understood for who we are and we all want to be discovered. Feeling unique is crucial to becoming a healthy and balanced adult."

"The process can take longer for twins as they need to learn to separate and individuate not only from their mothers but also from each other," Aude adds. "This process is ongoing and fluid throughout their lives."

At the end of the day, both mums agree that twin parenthood is worth all the challenges. Sarah enjoys watching her twins' special bond develop: "They'll be fighting over a toy one minute and smothering each other with kisses the next! They are also quite protective of each other – my daughter is usually the one to stand up for her brother in any playground quarrel."

What Amanda finds most rewarding is that her boys have someone to share everything with: "It's like having a best friend for life," she says. "Even now at just six months old, watching them interact with each other really puts a smile on my face. They babble to each other all day and hold hands while sitting next to each other."

It seems that twins really are twice as nice. **B**

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- Brief Therapy HK, brieftherapyhk@gmail.com

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