

## **JOYS AND SORROWS**

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I am honored to share with your organization my experiences and observations in the parenting of infants and children who are lone survivors of multiple birth conceptions. My experience ranges from early utero cessation of fetal development of one of the twins to children entering puberty.

**EARLY BONDING:** To begin, parents need to understand and accept the fact that their multiple birth survivor child bonded with her or his twin, or higher order, during utero phase of development and due to this very profound impact they will always feel, even know, against all persuasion, that they began life from conception with a partner(s). There are countless stories of multiples from utero, stillborn, and early infant deaths who were never told yet they always harbored a feeling of something greatly missing in their life. When these twinship survivors are finally told, or they proof positive discover their multiple status, then all the frustrating pieces of the puzzle fall together and their lives find whole new meaning through completeness, how-be-it, yet twinless.

**SYMPTOMS:** One cannot hide multiple birth conception status from a survivor twin. Symptoms frequently are: searching about in their crib endlessly for another warm body to lie snuggled against. Mothers of twins tell of many times laying their twins in opposite ends of a crib only to return a few minutes later finding the twins snuggled against each other, sound asleep. Another symptom frequently reported is that of overhearing their survivor twin talking with another unseen twin. There are many accounts of twinless playing seemingly by themselves yet very content in chatting away with an unseen playmate. When asked, they respond either "I am talking to my sister (brother)" or they will say, "It's my twin" out of the blue when they seem too young to comprehend about twins.

**EARLY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** I am a strong advocate for acknowledging early to the survivor multiple birth child that they are a twin, etc. Name the deceased twin so the survivor is honored to know that you respected the deceased enough (even in-utero death) to give them a name. How many times I have added new twinless who discovered, years later, about their twinship but the parents did not name the deceased. When I tell the new member they may name their "womb-mate" you sense a sigh of relief that now finally, they can think of their twin in a whole new light. Their twin is now a real person; they once existed.

**COMPARISON:** Twinless children are frequently seen as being different in comparison to single birth children who lose a sibling. This is a very unfair comparison. The twinless suffers from loss of a utero-bonded twin whereas the single birth from the loss of a brother or sister. Stop the comparisons. Just as twins should not be separated in schools, so survivor twins should not be separated from an awareness of their twinship. Twinless should be allowed to verbalize their feelings

and memories of their twin and attempts at "individualizing" them should be eased. There seems such an effort by educators to make two very unique and different persons from a set of twins. Single birth persons calling the shots on multiple birth children. Some of the fanaticism carries over to the parents who carry the misguided concept to cruel heights - To where the twins began to appear to hate each other. Those twins do not "hate" each other, rather they hate the cruelty of the separation and isolation.

**SPECIAL OCCASIONS:** Birthdays and holidays are always difficult days for survivor twin children. At these times the child should be asked if they would like to celebrate their twin's birthday also—2 cakes or one cake and 2 sets of candles; 2 gifts, donating one to a pediatric ward or library. For holidays allow the twinless to express their feelings about their twin by purchasing a gift which can be given to a disadvantage child. By this means the survivor child feels good in sharing with another child what he or she can not share with their twin. Due to the utero bonding that impacts upon twinless of sharing with another, twinless are often very outgoing and constantly seeking ways to share with another.

**H-H TWINS:** At The Twinless Twin Conferences we teach the H-H Twins—you Heal by Helping others to heal. It has proven to be very successful when twinless withdraw from within themselves they begin to heal through sharing of themselves with another twinless. The purpose of their data in our roster is for twinless to find another twinless member with whom they would most like to share and reach out to help.

**SUMMARY:** This could go on with endless citing of examples from experiences and interviews. All of them would cement farther the counsel to: let twinless be twins. If conceived as multiples the survivors need to live out their lives as multiples.

**LAST EXAMPLE:** Perhaps one account pulled forth from hundreds best exemplifies utero and early infant bonding. A young military couple buried a stillborn twin child in a cemetery near their base. Years later they returned with the survivor twin to seek to find the grave. With the aid of a caretaker, map in hand searching for the grave location, they approached over a knoll in the cemetery only to discover that their twin child was already kneeling at the gravesite of her twin.

They thought she was wandering about the cemetery while they in their frustration of not being able to recall the burial site had momentarily lost sight of her. How the survivor twin knew the exact location is beyond ordinary human understanding. She simply knew where her twin was buried. This is not an isolated account. There are many comparable examples defying what single birth persons have come to catalog as incomprehensible.

However, for us survivor twins such accounts are well within the parameters of our understanding. The cliché comes when single birth persons expect multiple birth persons to fit single birth semantics.

I trust this insight into the multiple birth world will add some dimension of understanding to your search for the realism of rearing a twinless child.