

## The First Child **BLUES**

*Julie Cox shares a parent's point of view*

The weeks prior to the birth of my twin boys were filled with a typical frenzy of shopping and arranging: gathering diapers, clothes and all essential items to make the babies' early days an easier transition into the world. For nearly nine months, I was filled with rotating waves of elation and worry over the addition of two more tiny people to our family of three. Attempting to calm my anxieties, I conversed with many other parents regarding the possible reactions of my toddler girl to her new siblings, and consequently received a collage of positive and negative scenarios.

What I did not prepare myself for was the reaction that I, as the mother of a two-year-old princess, would have in sharing motherhood and my attention with two new little boys. The day before my scheduled C-section, my husband walked in early that morning to find me sitting cross-legged on our bed, wrapping a mountain of gifts. Tears poured down and wet my face, hair, and the bedspread. "What in the world?" he asked. Though I could barely talk, I stammered that I just wanted our two-year-old, Lena Rose, to be happy before I buried my head in my hands in a deep sob. I had gone to a toy store and bought her toys and books to unwrap each day after the twins and I got home from the hospital, but now could barely get the gift wrap off the roll for all my sadness.

A tidal wave of despair washed over me throughout that same day. I walked outside with Lena, overgrown twin belly and all, to watch her play. In trying to brighten my mood with ideas of what my new sons may look like, I was reminded of the day Lena was born. I remembered that day how I exclaimed that the world was just not good enough for my perfect tiny girl. I remembered the love that poured from my heart at first sight of her and how I cried over her cradle with joy each weary night of her first month of life, singing carols to her as lullabies well into June after her Christmastime birth date. But now, just two and a half short years later, it seemed all those baby days were going to

be gone for her. She would be expected to share her mother and father's love and attention with two tiny, crying infants. How will I ever make enough time to keep her happy and feeling as important as she is, I thought to myself?

Desperate, I called one of my best friends, the mother of two girls the same age apart as my Lena Rose and the twins. She recalled her day before delivery was pretty rough emotionally too. She said, "Just wait until you've had those babies – Lena's skin will feel different because the babies' are so smooth, and she's going to look really big to you. She won't seem at all like a baby anymore." I cried more. But my friend assured me it would pass and that I would come to understand this new view of my daughter.

Wanting another experienced view, I called my sister, mother of my two handsome nephews. They are now eight and thirteen years old, and I cannot recall any major emotional disturbances with Cameron, the older sibling, when Chase came along. My sister assured me that love does not divide, but multiplies when more children come along. Despite all the kind words, I could not stop my tears and emotions from overwhelming me.

Delivery day morning came. Before being moved back for delivery of my sons, I asked my obstetrician about what I was feeling. He agreed that this situational depression about the first child is not something people typically prepare you for, but that in his experience, it is very common to feel this way. I was joyful at the sight of my boys, but my tears continued whenever Lena came to visit the twins and me in the hospital. Her long, dark lashes, her curly blonde locks, and the way she looked at me now through somehow different eyes – oh, how my heart ached for my baby girl. I missed seeing her at home in our usual routine, for one thing, while I was recovering in the hospital.

Then, as I transitioned back home, the lack of my presence there was confirmed. I laid Lena down to help put on her nightie after her bath, stared into her eyes as I usually do during the



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rare moment of stillness in my toddler's day, and said, "I love you Lena—and you'll always be my baby." She retorted loudly, "You're THOMAS' mama," referring to the bigger of the twins, who had been able to come home with me from the hospital. Later that same night, she told me to "go 'way" when I tried to hug her again. I cried on the spot. She was more afraid about Mommy crying than she was remorseful, of course. I realized my mistake and told her I knew I was not acting like Mommy usually does.

A month has passed and I am still mourning the loss of my little girl's babyhood. The ability to just pick her up, take her to the park or on any type of spontaneous outing is but a memory. However, I have been blessed with a new set of love for my tiny boys, and I know that eventually, we will all be adjusted and able to handle this new challenge.

In the meantime, I hug my little girl at every possible moment, and rejoice in the memories we are sure to make. And I will be sure to call my friends – and bring tissues – on the day before their second child's birth, to help them through the phenomenon that I describe as the "first child blues."

– Julie Cox

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