

Memory Triggers

These are the emotional and physical reminders of our loss and can, to a lesser degree, start the whole grieving process again. They are a normal part of life and if acknowledged and recognised, can be more easily dealt with.

Major events in any child's life, such as beginning kindergarten, or starting primary or high school should be associated with feelings of happiness and joy. However, for families with surviving twins, these events can cruelly remind them of that 'missing' part of the twin picture, i.e. the twin who has died.

Discovering intact sets of multiples within your survivor's class at school can be quite a shock, and it is easier if teachers are aware and therefore sensitive to, the feelings of the surviving twin and his or her family.

Society can be extremely hurtful in how it views surviving twins because of the extra attention given to intact sets of multiples. Intact sets of multiples are often viewed as a 'novelty item', especially when their parents dress them the same. There are stories published in newspapers, women's magazines, and flashed on the television.

Families who suffer multiple birth loss are robbed of the children that they so desperately wanted, and they lose their status as 'multiple birth families' within society.

Common Survivor Behaviour

In researching the book "The Survivor", a study was done on the behaviours of multiple birth survivors. It is up to the individual person as to how much is assumed about the following list, but many families hold firm to the fact that the broken bond between multiple birth survivor and their deceased sibling or siblings may effect their behaviour.

Here is a brief list of the behaviours mentioned by parents and it should be noted that some of these behaviours are not confined solely to multiple birth children. However, it is acknowledged that these behaviours may be displayed in a more extreme form than their singleton counterparts:

- Imaginary friends;
- Unexpected emotional outbursts, crying for their deceased sibling/s;
- Selected friendships, making friends with a child of the same age and same sex as the deceased sibling;
- Fascination with images particularly mirrors;
- Withdrawing into the survivor's own world momentarily without realising it.

Information published in this brochure has been used with permission from the author
Lynne Schulz, from her book,
"The Survivor", 2003 (1st Edn.) & 2015 (2nd Edn.).

Dedication

**Sometimes half a picture is all I see
But I love you just the same;
For sometimes that picture which I see
Is the thing that keeps me sane.
(Lynne Schulz, 2003 & 2015.)**

NTLS

National Twin Loss Support

Established Oct. 1992



Surviving Twins

www.nationaltwinloss.org.au

Disclaimer: This brochure is a simple, basic, informative guide about some of the issues that effect surviving twins and other higher order multiple birth children, from parental observation. It is not designed to replace professional medical advice.

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Did I Say The Wrong Thing?

During some stage of our lives, we have probably said something that we have later regretted.

The problem regarding bereavement care, and especially twin loss, is that people who make the hurtful comments, genuinely don't realise that they have said anything 'wrong'.

Although there is no particular 'right' word to say when anyone dies, there are some definite phrases of which we could steer well clear. This especially holds true in the case of multiple pregnancy loss, where it is generally taken for granted by societal ignorance, that because there is still a living baby, (or babies in some cases), everything is alright.

These are a collection of some of the most awful cliché phrases that people tend to mention in times of grief. It is hoped that after reading this brochure, medical professionals, carers, counsellors and anyone of us, will try to avoid:

- At least you have the other twin;
- You can always have another baby;
- It was God's will;
- If you had to lose him, at least it happened now instead of after you had really gotten attached to him;
- The one you have keeps you up all night and demands all of your attention, how would you have managed having two"
(Warland, J., Jul.2000)

Remember the power of words: they can build people up and make them feel wonderful, and understood. They can also tear them apart and drag them down to absolute desperation and despair. Let's make sure we do the former, not the latter!

A Mental Perspective

Family relationships on the whole can be extremely complex and intertwined. This can make the family unit a difficult subject to study and fully comprehend at the best of times, let alone during a crisis such as a death. Throw in the issues faced in the difficulties of twin loss and you find yourself almost walking amongst an invisible minefield.

The fact that twins may find it more difficult than singletons to establish a strong sense of their own unique identities, is probably due to the concept of being a 'pair'. Together they form a whole unit, therefore when one twin dies, the bond is broken and the unit becomes incomplete.

The twin unit itself possesses all the characteristics that are usually possessed by a singleton child and when one twin is left alone due to death, for example, the whole picture seems to appear slightly out of balance. That is why you sometimes hear the term, 'seeing half a picture' when speaking of surviving twins. It is not a critical term, just a simple observation.

Finding a support group run by parents who have endured these types of life changes, provides an avenue through which to form new friendships, and in which to share personal experiences in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Should I Tell The Truth?

Definitely! Tell your surviving multiple birth children why they mean so much to you, and start from an early age.

Generally, people might make the incorrect assumption that young children don't understand many of life's complexities and that they are better simply not knowing. They feel that it would cause too much upset, and that because the dead twin isn't around anymore, that the child is best forgotten.

However, children are more resilient and intelligent than many of us might like to think. If we are prepared to present the story on their level, i.e. in terms that they would understand at their particular age, most families would find that younger children are more curious about their twinship, than upset by it.

Besides making them feel special, it may assist in helping some to also understand why they sometimes feel distant and aloof from the rest of the world.

So, let's allow our wonderful surviving twins the chance to celebrate their unique position in this world, instead of treating it with shame.