

What I Wish I'd Known About Having a Second Baby

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I've had four kids, but no transition was as completely terrifying to me as adding a second child to our family.

There's just something about adding a second baby that felt like an upheaval of everything I knew. Would I love a second baby as much? Will it ruin my relationship with my current one and only child? Was I equipped to handle the needs of two kids? Two is twice the number of one, after all.

And while things obviously turned out just fine, especially considering that I went on to have a few more children after that, there are a few things I wish I knew back when I was a scared, pregnant (and extremely large) mother-to-be of two.

1. That giving birth could be so much easier

Giving birth the first time around was not so easy. In fact, it was quite difficult.

I was so scared to do it all over again that I actually cried during my second labor. Full-on sobs when the nurse told me I was almost fully dilated — that's how absolutely scared I was to push.

So you can imagine my surprise when I finally realized that giving birth again was not going to be as hard as it was the first time around. Instead of four hours of pushing, it took four minutes and my daughter practically flew out before the nurses even had time to assemble the delivery

equipment.

I was incredibly relieved that labor and delivery really could get easier. I definitely wish I had realized that fact earlier because it would have saved me a lot of worry and more than a few tears.

2. That having help would be a lifesaver

I was young when I had my first two children and I didn't really plan out what would happen after the baby came.

Despite having pretty severe postpartum depression with my first baby, I didn't connect the dots that it would be helpful to take steps to make sure I was as mentally and physically healthy as I could be with my second. I wish that I had arranged more help, even ahead of the birth.

In fact, my husband had just started a new job when we were expecting our second baby and he couldn't even take time off from work. He took a whopping day and a half off to take us home from the hospital. After that, we were on our own.

I couldn't have anticipated how hard it would be to juggle two kids on my own and I also couldn't have anticipated what a difference it would make to have some help.

Through some miracle, my younger sister took it upon herself, from the goodness of her heart, to come over every single day and help me by simply spending time with me and entertaining my 2-year-old. I honestly feel, to this day, that her help and presence saved my life. I never felt lonely and my older daughter was tired out to the point that all three of us were able to take a long, luxurious nap every single day for months.

I know that those naps and her being there saved me from getting postpartum depression and I never even once got a hint of a complication, such as mastitis. Help equals health when it comes to having babies.

3. That my "baby" could still be my baby

This is hard to admit, but after my second child was born, it was like my first baby grew up instantly.

I distinctly remember her fetching me diapers and wipes, with me being amazed at how helpful a 2-year-old could be. It was like in that moment, she became the "big sister" in my mind forever. If I'm being completely honest, I regret how easily I let her slip into that role without even so much as a backward glance.

Although she loved being the big sister and I think it's a wonderful relationship, I also wish that I realized that it would have been completely OK to let her be the "big sister" but have her still be my "baby," too.

4. That it wouldn't take anything away from my first child

I was 100 percent terrified during my second pregnancy that I would be ruining something special with my first child. We had done everything together and she was like my little sidekick, my special buddy.

We were attached at the hip and I honestly considered her my best friend. Some of my favorite memories were just at naptime, reading her a story and cuddling with her until she fell asleep.

I knew that I would never again have so much undivided attention to give, and I soaked up every minute with her.

The takeaway

In my worry that I would be taking away something special from my first child by having a second baby, I forgot to realize one very important thing: that I would also be giving her something very special.

The moment I saw my daughter lean in and kiss her sister on the head, like the most tender and gentle of mothers in the world, I realized that I hadn't taken away any love in her life. I had simply added more love, in the form of a sibling.



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