

It's a Myth That Younger Siblings Get Neglected

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At this very moment, there are approximately a million and a half articles floating around on the Internet all about having your first kid versus your second or your third or your fourth or your fifteenth.

OK, maybe not as many on having your fifteenth, but you get the drift. They're all along the similar lines of, "First kid: eats only organic, pureed vegetables while Bach plays softly in the background. Third kid: eats dirt with a side of dust bunnies."

And while I can certainly chuckle along with the rest of the moms-of-more-than-one-child at the sentiment that things are definitely not as they always were with the first kid, I am also here to bust down the myth that younger siblings get neglected.

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I just delivered my fourth baby in six years about two months ago and I will be completely honest with you — a lot of things have changed. My first daughter really only did eat organic vegetables, and although I'm not going to sweat it as much if I gave my last daughter fruit first, it's not like I'm pureeing up French fries either.

We joke about the later siblings getting neglected, but honestly, I'm not always laughing about

it. I'm very sensitive to the fact that middle children especially can feel "left out" and feel like they are outsiders within their own families, and I think it's largely due to the fact that we have this acceptance for younger kids to get the shaft a bit in the parenting department.

As a mom, I've worried that my younger kids will somehow be scarred for life with less attention from me or if I will be stretched too thin trying to care for them. We have this stereotype that younger kids will somehow get lost in the shuffle and that's OK, because, hey! It happens.

But I've been surprised to discover that contrary to popular belief, younger siblings actually get *more* attention in the household.

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Of course, so much about my parenting has changed and I simply have less time during my day with four children, but in no way do I think that younger siblings come out with the short end of the stick. Instead, they get tons of extra attention from their big siblings. I mean, think about it — when my first daughter was a baby, all she had was my ugly mug to stare at during the day. How incredibly boring. But my fourth baby? She has endless possibilities during the day: her big sisters, her big brother, the 15,000 toys they will fling about, the kids at school pick-up. Her day is so much more interesting than the first baby's ever was.

I know now that I shouldn't have worried. I am just as excited to fill out my fourth baby's book as I was my first, and in many ways, I treasure the moments of her babyhood even more because experience has taught me how fleeting those moments really are. She is loved so much more, simply because there are more of us here to love her.

So to any of the moms out there who are worried that bringing another baby into the family means that he or she won't get the attention and the love that your first baby got, or that somehow you will be forced to fail as a parent simply because you won't have the time — fear not. You will change and grow as a parent. You will make mistakes along the way and you will most definitely not treat every child the same way. But even if you don't do things as "perfectly" with the children who follow your first, you will still be exactly the kind of parent they need.

Your next baby may not eat all organic vegetables, but they will eat their vegetables, because you are now a savvy parent who knows how to get the job done.

Your next baby may not have you all to herself, but she will have more arms to hold her — and more hearts to love her.

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Your next baby may wear a few hand-me-downs, but he will not wear you down as a parent.

And if your next baby happens to fall prey to the "dirt eating" stereotype of second, third and fourth children everywhere after all, well...

A little dirt never hurt anyone, right?

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