

MARRIAGE



MULTIPLES

by **fran pitre**
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Marriage and Multiples

written and brought to you by Fran Pitre at FranPitre.com.

Surviving Three Sets of Twins



Having a baby is hard enough, but having two at the same time? We're not so sure how we'd handle it. Perhaps that's why we were captivated by this woman's story — she not only became an instant first-time mom of two, but delivered twins three times. Her frank and enlightening take on motherhood, and womanhood, makes for an intriguing read. —Glo

By Fran Circe Pitre for **YourTango**

If someone had told me when I was 25 years old that one day my husband and I would be parents to three sets of twins, I would have laughed out loud. At the time — it was 1988 — my husband Bruce and I had been married about three years. We were very much in love, building our relationship upon mutual trust, love, respect, humor and faith in God. We also had a very active, healthy and happy sex life, but we hadn't yet decided it was time to start our family.

Some years later, we thought we were ready, and after several attempts at conceiving, we finally discovered that I was pregnant. What we didn't expect (or plan for) was the news that we would be having twin baby girls.

They say that having a baby changes everything — and they're right. For us, the changes were multiplied by two (at least). Having never had one baby, we were suddenly the parents of two screaming, needy, demanding, exhausting little human beings, who didn't have any concern or regard for the fact that neither of their parents had slept or showered in days — or had even remembered to brush their teeth.

 **YourTango**
Smart Talk About Love



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The first year following our daughters' births was chaos. At times, I'd look in the mirror and hardly recognize myself. I'd gone from a 34B bra size to a 38DD — sounds nice, except that I was twenty pounds overweight and didn't feel like myself at all. I'd evolved from a slender, sharp-dressed career woman to a mommy who wore "comfortable" clothes and no longer bothered with contact lenses.

By the time our girls were six months old, I knew the time had come to focus on weight loss, even though my husband, Bruce, insisted that motherhood agreed with me and that I was very sexy. I suspected he wasn't telling the whole truth.

In 1999, I became pregnant again ... with triplets. This was not the plan, but do things ever play out as planned? Bruce and I did our best to wrap our brains around the reality of what we were facing, but I still fell apart many times in the early days of my pregnancy. Bruce would sometimes find me sobbing on the couch, and he would assure me we'd get through it. My daughters, then four, would also bring me back to reality, reminding me that I didn't have the time to cry and pity myself. I had to go on and care for my family.

Ultimately, we lost one of the babies at the end of my first trimester, but I went on to deliver the other two healthily. And with two sets of twins, life was, to say the least, busy. Some days were so chaotic and tiring that one of us would sometimes find the other asleep in our daughters' room, following an attempt to settle them down; or we'd take turns sleeping in our guest room, while the other was up all night with a screaming baby.

I thanked God every day that Bruce had such an even temperament, and that he was the hands-on dad that he still is today. Emotionally, I was all over the chart (especially during the early months following the babies' births), but I knew that I could lean on Bruce because of his constant support, laughter and commitment to our family.

On occasion, I found myself thinking back to the days when it was just the two of us. We had less stress and pressure, had a

whole lot more sleep, and a whole lot more sex! But then I'd realize that we were still happy, and that I wouldn't want to change a thing about our lives. As for finding time for lovemaking... honestly, stealing away when the children are engrossed in a Disney movie gives way to the suspense of potentially being "caught," which only makes our spontaneous encounters all the more exciting—and sometimes funny.

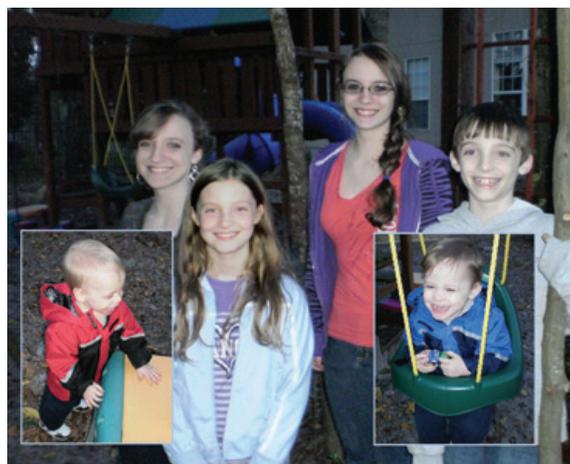
Once, one of our daughters walked in on us when Bruce had just gotten home from work. We had run off to our bedroom while the children were playing across the house in one of their bedrooms. Suddenly, the hall light streamed into our room, and we realized we were not alone! Bruce quickly told our daughter, "Honey, while Daddy was taking off his work clothes to put on his play clothes, he tripped and fell on Mommy who was sitting on the edge of the bed." Our little girl, then 5, simply asked when dinner was. I told her "soon," and she just turned around and left our doorway. Bruce and I burst into uncontrollable laughter.

Fast forward again to the spring of 2007, when we learned that I was pregnant again. We were completely surprised that I'd actually become pregnant again, but even more stunned to discover that we were, in fact, having our third set of twins. So, after another difficult pregnancy, our two youngest sons were born. We now had a girl/girl, a boy/girl, and a boy/boy—every conceivable twin combination.

This time around, however, I felt more than exhausted, more than emotional, more than overwhelmed; I was experiencing symptoms of postpartum depression. Several weeks went by as I tried to come out of it by myself. I woke in the night between breast feedings only to sob over the many challenges we were all facing. Bruce realized it was time to be leaned on yet again, and he stepped up. He supported me in all ways, including my decision to pursue help. And with time, patience and our matured mutual trust, love, respect, humor and faith in God, we got through another difficult challenge.

Today, our kids are 15, 10 and 2. We're dealing with potty-ed and driver's ed at the same time, and everyone is always going in

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different directions. Bruce and I are closer now than ever, having made it through so much together, and we cherish our quiet time alone.

As we have awesome, built-in baby sitters, we often go out for a bite to eat and a walk on the beach (with our cell phones close at hand) so that we can talk, plan and enjoy each other's company, as we always have. We also take time in the midst of the chaos to steal a quick embrace in the kitchen during dinner prep, at which point we often hear the kids say, "Ooooooh, Mommy and Daddy loooove each other!" I think this is a healthy example for our children to see. (Of course, they also know that we don't always agree, because no two people always agree.)

I truly believe that if a person keeps himself or herself grounded in reality, keeps priorities in order, exudes a positive attitude, holds tightly to faith in God and finds the humor in everyday events, true happiness and contentment will naturally follow.

Bruce and I struggle day-to-day with finances, children getting sick, plans that fall through and with dreams that have not been fully realized, but we are committed to our marriage. Although we argue, disagree and have bad days (or weeks), we persevere and remember that we're in this together—for better or for worse.

Does having three sets of twins make our marriage worse? Ask me some days, and I'll say YES! But this is our life, and we know that we are all blessed with each other to laugh with, wrestle with, eat dinner with, share with and say good night to at the end of each day... and to be greeted by at the start of the next. ❖

The links to the online article are:

<http://www.yourtango.com/201068478/marriage-and-multiples-surviving-3-sets-twins#>

and <http://glo.msn.com/relationships/married-with-multiples-1533391.story>



Date Night: A Must!

*An article post from Fran Pitre's personal blog:
Twinning Attitude!*

I was recently asked during an interview if my husband Bruce and I ever have the chance to get out by ourselves, to reconnect as a couple amid the busy-ness of our every day lives. How much importance do Bruce and I place on having alone time together? Good questions ... which led me to wonder: How much emphasis do we as couples with kids place on ourselves as couples?

When you have a big family such as we do with six kids, dinner time can be a loud and chaotic part of each day. Amid the chatter of competing conversations across the table while the salad bowl and salad dressings pass from big hands to little hands, and a cup of milk inevitably spills as it does most every night, my husband winks and smiles as he briefly makes eye contact with me. At that moment, I may not experience the wave of butterflies in my stomach that I'd once felt many years before after a look like that, but I still smile and wink back, knowing that once leftover foods packed in storage containers are placed in the refrigerator, the dishes are washed, the baths are done, the prayers are said, and the bedroom lights are out, my husband and I will finally have some quiet time to ourselves ... before we both collapse with exhaustion.

The focused reconnection between married couples, especially those who are parents, has become a vital link in the survival of those marriages that are successful these days. In addition to one or both parents holding down full or part-time jobs are the countless tasks that must be fulfilled daily that didn't exist before they brought home that first tiny bundle. Between the various schools that children of different ages attend, various carpool

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schedules, dance classes, ball games, karate and Driver's Ed, it's a surprise that families have the chance to actually sit down together at dinner once or twice a week. Being so busy and going in different directions day in and day out is precisely why it's so important for couples to take a break from the kids, and focus on each other.

My husband and I make it a very high priority to have one night per week where we sit down after the children are settled in bed and talk about our budget and finances. Sometimes a couple of weeks go by, but we make every effort to both know what's going on with our household management. During this time we sit and tear up junk mail that's accumulated while we chat, gripe or laugh about our day.

When a night that we've planned out is approaching, we both become full of anticipation for the chance to "get out alone"!

A "date night" is also a great way to reconnect as a couple. When a night that we've planned out is approaching, we both become full of anticipation for the chance to "get out alone"! The tasks and chores that need to be complete as the time leads up our departure is oftentimes crazy, but once we close the car doors and sit, pause and smile just before the key goes into the ignition, we know we made it. Once we begin to drive away, our hands clasp as we laugh together with the knowledge that all is fine with the sitter (in our case, our two built-in teenage sitters), and we're off for a few blissful hours with our cell phones close at hand.

On some of our dates, the excitement of being "just the two of us" allows for the reconnecting of a once young couple. We let ourselves get goofy, silly and talk about things we couldn't talk about in front of the kids! While at dinner, we anticipate either the comedy movie we've wanted to see for weeks, or the breezy after-dinner walk on the beach that would feel so good. We're able to talk, plan, ponder or just simply walk quietly together, content and warm with each other's presence. For just a while, a wife and mom feels like the woman she is, and a husband and daddy becomes just her man.

After returning home to sleeping kids and sleepy sitters, we lock the doors and engage the alarm system. All is safe, quiet and good. What better time to continue our date in the warm, welcoming, comfortable privacy of our bedroom.



Yes, having time alone with your spouse and allowing for reconnection and communication away from the demands, noise, and confusion of jobs and a busy family, is key to improving a marriage and vital to sustaining a healthy, happy one. Children observe and learn how important it is for their parents to be a couple, to express their loving affection, and find time to be alone together and nurture their relationship. This can only be a healthy example for them to take into their future relationships.

And when the most recent couple's date is but a memory, the after-effects last through the next few days, while the anticipation of the next get-away sits happily on the horizon. ❖

Surviving Family Expenses!

We can't talk about parenting multiples without discussing the expenses that are involved. Sometimes it's easier to just not think about it, and just carry on as we are day to day, but sooner or later, the reality of just how much it will cost to raise even ONE CHILD, let alone several, will hit us square in the bank account!

In a late 2009 article for ABC News, research writers *Alice Maggin* and *Sadie Bass* reported the following eye-opening statistics.

The Department of Agriculture released a report that says middle-income families with a child born in 2008 will spend \$221,190 to raise that child through high school.

That's \$291,570 when the cost is adjusted for inflation. And we all know that costs for everything have gone up in the last two years.

The report, "Expenditures in Children by Families," said parents can expect to spend \$11,610 to \$13,480 each year, depending on the age of the child.

So, what's so expensive? The largest cost is housing, which averages \$69,660 -- that's 32 percent of the total cost over the child's lifetime.

Next up is food and child care/education, which average 16 percent each. Add in the price of transportation, health care and clothing and you've got one expensive child. This percentage does not factor in private/parochial school tuition or college tuition.

There are some variables that can affect how much a family spends. Not surprisingly, parents with a higher annual income end up spending more on child costs, the report said.

Specifically, a family earning less than \$56,870 annually will spend \$159,870 over their child's lifetime, according to the report. Families earning between \$56,870 and \$98,470 will spend \$221,190 and families that earn more than \$98,470 can expect to spend \$366,660, the report said.

The number of kids in a family also influences a family's spending habits. Only children get more of their parents' money than kids with siblings. Parents with one child spend 26 percent of their



income, but that amount increases to 39 percent if there are two children, and 48 percent if there are three, the USDA report said.

Region is another factor — costs are highest in the urban Northeast, followed by cities in the West and Midwest. “Families living in the urban South and rural areas have the lowest child-rearing expenses,” the study said.

And finally, the older the child, the higher the cost. As kids get older, their needs become more expensive.

Today’s Numbers Compared to 1960:

The USDA first released its report on child costs in 1960, when it estimated that a child would cost his or her parents \$25,230 (that’s \$183,509 in 2008 dollars).

Since then, the largest change has been the cost of child care. With more families with two working parents, child care has become a “significant” expense for many families. *

Obviously, reasonably intelligent, responsible parents are aware of the costs that go along with raising a family. They are also aware that surviving on one income is nearly impossible today. Child/day care costs go hand-in-hand with two-parent working families, and those costs alone can all but cancel out one of the two income amounts in some cases.

Many families who are aware that their household income must increase are today deciding to find a source of income that one of the parents can achieve by working from home. This concept used to be only dreamed about, but today is becoming more and more the trend. In work-from-home scenarios, parents are able to avoid placing their children in day care, and they also have the freedom and flexibility to work around their children’s naps and busy school/extra-curricular schedules. More and more mothers (and/or fathers) are providing the income needed to help support their growing families, while keeping their sanity by not continuing to worry about growing costs. They have found happiness in their rewarding, fulfilling careers because they provide flexibility and freedom.

I am one of those happy parents, and if you are interested in a work-from-home career, I would love to have you work along with me. Just e-mail me at: contact@franpitre.com for more Information. ❖❖❖

