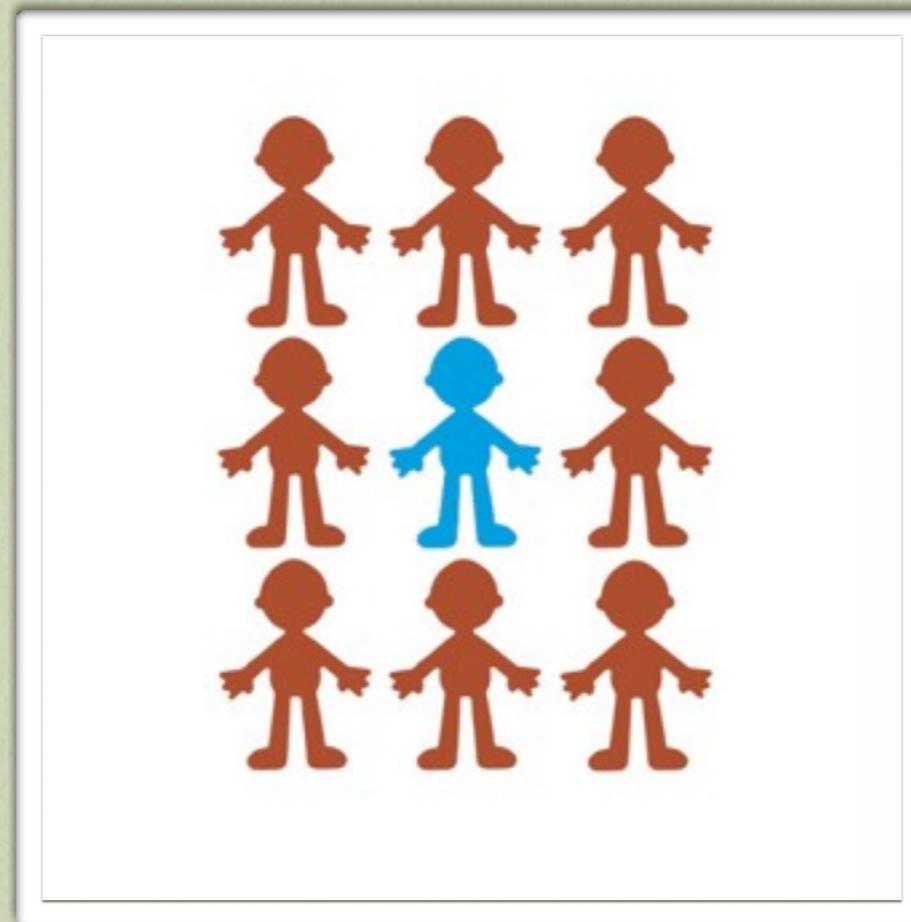


Is your child a
WOMB TWIN
SURVIVOR?



ALTHEA HAYTON

• Copyright page •

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FOR PARENTS

A womb twin survivor is the sole survivor of a twin or multiple pregnancy. That means a pregnancy begins with two babies but ends up with just one. The twin may die at any stage of the pregnancy - even up to the time of birth. As the psychological difficulties that womb twin survivors face are being more widely discussed and all kinds of theories are being aired, some parents are beginning to worry.

Anna wrote: "Simon, my 3-year-old is a surviving twin. When the placenta came out the doctor found a dead identical twin. I was recently told that there have been studies done that show some cases of the living child taking on the dead one's personality. My son is like two people, one way one minute and completely different the next. I want to know if this is something I need to worry about."

We have a lot more to learn, but we already know two important things about young womb twin survivors:

They already have a deep sense of the presence and absence of their twin

Their feelings and behaviour are normal - for a womb twin survivor, that is.

There is a lot that parents can do: research seems to indicate that if an individual knows for sure from the beginning that they once had a twin, that does become part of who they are. Then they understand their feelings better if they do get upset at any time. They can know they are responding perfectly normally to the genuine loss of their "other half".

A loving family and lots of encouragement and love seems to help a great deal, so in many cases a surviving twin will grow up with little more than a tendency to moodiness.

The loss of a twin, like any major event taking place during pregnancy, is worth keeping in mind as a potential effect (either positive and negative) on your child's development as an individual.

The science of pre-birth psychology is now well-established and we can be sure that our time in the womb does much to shape our personality in born life. Womb twin survivors are a particularly interesting case in point.

Is your child a womb twin survivor?

Questions some parents ask

1. Will my child be badly affected by the loss of their twin?
2. Is my child behaving normally?
3. Will I have to treat this child differently from my other children?

My child is very sensitive to atmosphere

My child does not like to sleep alone in the dark

My child is unusually aware of how people are feeling

My child has a rich, creative imagination

My child talks a lot about death and dying

My child loves animals and yearns for a pet

My child is different from other children

My child seems to have “been here before”

My child has an imaginary friend

My child is interested in spirituality

My child often seems lost and alone

My child is hypersensitive

Should the parents worry if their child is a womb twin survivor?

It is now known from several studies that many surviving twins become distressed at some point in life, often in adolescence, but also some surviving twins are not at all distressed. Researchers have yet to understand why this is. It seems that the loss of a fraternal twin is less traumatic than the loss of an identical twin.

The deep bond between twins, forged in the womb, is strongest between identical twins. Identical (monozygotic) womb twin survivors do seem to be the most likely to be distressed by their pre-birth experience.

Womb Twin kids
aged 1-5 - some
noticeable
physical effects

1. Born premature
2. Small for dates
3. Dermoid cyst
4. Teratoma
5. Fetus in fetu
6. Additional fingers
and/or toes

Characteristic behaviour often seen among very young womb twin survivors:

- * Crying/miserable for long periods and not easily soothed
- * Wanting to be held close to someone's body
- * Not wanting to be left alone, especially at night
- * Often fearful and anxious
- * Enhanced capacity to survive medical or surgical interventions (a "survivor")

How parents can support and help their child

- * Understand that the loss of a twin before or around birth has a real physical and emotional effect. That means there is a meaning to the signs, symptoms and behavior that your child may display.
- * Be clear in your own head that the lost twin is a real little "person who might have been" and is probably going to be an important person in the life of your little womb twin survivor.
- * Notice anything that seems to indicate that your child has a sense of their twin still "with them" in some way. That includes chatting in "baby talk" to someone who isn't there; staring at some area of the room as if "seeing" someone there.
- * Provide a surrogate twin in the form of a cuddly toy. A teddy bear is good - one the size of a newborn baby is excellent. If the child becomes fixated on the toy and will not be separated from it, that is proof that a close attachment is needed, so do allow the child to take the toy everywhere and make sure it is never lost!

Aged 5-9

Some character traits to look out for at this stage:

1. An imaginary friend
2. A fear of being abandoned
3. A preoccupation with mirrors

When is the best age to tell my child about their twin?

It is important for your child to know. You must decide exactly when and how but try to be natural and relaxed about it. Do not leave it to another person to tell your child on your behalf, or your child will assume that you never wish to discuss it and it will become an uncomfortable family secret.

What parents can do to help and support their child:

Understand that the loss of a twin before or around birth has a real physical and emotional effect. That means there is a meaning to the behavior that your child may display and it is not just that he or she is being "difficult."

Be clear that the lost twin is an important person in the life of your womb twin survivor. You could find ways to make the lost twin into a respected member of the family, by means of some symbol on display in the home, such as a sculpture or a plant.

Notice anything that seems to indicate that your child has a sense that their twin is still "with them" in some way. That includes an imaginary friend, or an undue attachment to a toy or another child.

Allow your child to have a surrogate twin. This is not a sign of neurosis or instability, but a necessary crutch, to be used until your child is old enough to walk the healing path for womb twin survivors.

Should I tell the school that my child is a womb twin survivor?

It is important for all teachers and school workers to realise that womb twin survivors are a distinct and recognisable group of children within the school. If you discuss it with the teacher you can come to an arrangement about how the information should be used for the benefit of your child.

Aged 9-13

Common problems at this age:

1. Unexplained bouts of crying or sadness
2. Preoccupation with death and dying
7. Yearning for a pet
8. Fear of being alone in the dark
9. Gender confusion - (eg. A girl wanting to be a boy, or vice versa)
10. Self isolation (ie. spending a long time alone by choice)
11. Feeling different

At this age, children are ready for some more in-depth information. They also want reassurance that how they are feeling is normal. A major problem for all children at this age is peer pressure - wanting to "fit in" and be acceptable to other children. Womb twin survivors feel

different from other children, simply because they have had a rather unusual prenatal experience, not shared by their peers. They often fear rejection. We now know that these children are responding to their prenatal experience in a completely normal way. It is important for both adults and children to recognise this.

How parents can help a womb twin survivor of this age

- * Understand that the loss of a twin before or around birth has a real physical and emotional effect.
- * The lost twin is an important person in the life of your little womb twin survivor.
- * It is normal if your child has a sense of their twin still "with them" in some way.
- * Your child will need a surrogate twin. If he or she shows an undue attachment to one particular individual, this person may have become the "surrogate twin." If the person concerned makes a complaint, this tendency can be explained and the relationship negotiated by all the parties involved.

Womb twin teenagers

Common problems at this age are:

1. A preoccupation with death
2. Exaggerated response to broken friendships and relationships
3. A problem with changes, goodbyes or endings
4. Confused feelings about their identity
- "I don't know who I am!" they cry.

Teenagers who have not been told about their twin may already have guessed. If they do know, they will be searching for more information. They may want to know how to identify themselves as womb twin survivors.

They may have a problem with the fact they seem to be different, weird or odd when compared with their peers, who have not shared the same prenatal experience.

How parents can help and support a womb twin teenager:

Recognise that the loss of a twin before or around birth has had a real physical and emotional effect on your child. If your child has reached teen-age and still does not know about their twin, tell them as soon as possible so that they can begin to make sense of their strange feelings and seemingly "irrational" beliefs.

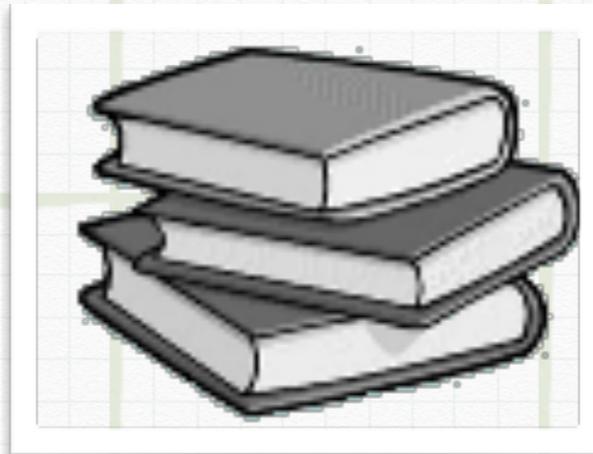
* If your teenaged child seems to be obsessed with the issue of being a twin, it will be because they want to understand. Be prepared to talk about it and discuss it openly. If that is too difficult, find some books, web sites or other materials that can provide detailed information.

* If your teenager is in therapy and no one has mentioned the twin yet, or the issue has been dismissed as "irrelevant" if it is known, then you have a problem. There is a great deal of ignorance about this topic. Womb Twin can provide ways for you to connect with other parents and learn more about the physical and psychological characteristics of womb twin survivors. If you can, find a therapist who does understand about womb twin survivors.

• CHAPTER 2 •

STORIES

These stories were sent to the Womb Twin web site, using an email contact form. They were sent anonymously, but in each case the sender gave permission for their story to be used in a publication.



They describe the various ways in which the feelings of young womb twin survivors and their parents may be expressed.

The parents' view

1. The death of one baby twin, while the other is still alive, is difficult for parents.
2. In their desire to focus on and care for the living baby, they may forget to grieve.
3. In their need to grieve for the dead child, they may neglect the needs of the survivor.
4. As the surviving twin grows up, the issue arises about whether or not to tell the child about the twin.
5. It can help to know that the child is already aware of something missing...



The parents' stories

RYAN AND COREY

It's been almost 27 years since our sons Ryan and Corey were born; one screaming and healthy, and the other small and stillborn. They were identical

twins, but affected by Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome. In my 7th month, I was sent to a special university clinic in Texas, where the condition was diagnosed - but no treatments had been developed in 1985 as far as we knew. I

carried the babies until 38 wks, when the doctor admitted me to the hospital to induce labor; he had called to say he was 'concerned' at that day's checkup, and wanted me in the hospital that night. I was surprised, since I'd been feeling better and expected all to be well. But the next day, during an ultrasound, we were told that Corey had passed away at some earlier point; Ryan was fine but Corey was his 'donor twin' and very small, and his heart had stopped. We were crushed but made it thru the delivery, with one strong boy birthed, screaming his lungs out--then waiting for our second, silent son to come. We decided not to tell Ryan until he was old enough to understand, but didn't know when that would be. We had a daughter, age 4 at the time, who was very confused as to why we'd said we would bring two babies home but only brought one. We had a little funeral for Corey with a tiny coffin, very much supported by our church and our faith in God, though we were quite devastated. We also asked our daughter to let us tell Ryan about losing their brother, when the time was right.

Ryan was about three when, as siblings will do, she told him anyway. Nothing was said, by us or by Ryan, until

bedtime. He and I were cuddling after a story, as usual, with the lights out. This is the eerie conversation we had that night.

Me: Ryan, I know your sister told you today about a brother that you had who died. Well, he was in Mom's tummy with you, but he was sick -- and he died before he could be born. His name was Corey William and we were very sad when he died. But we were very glad to have you alive and all right, too.

Ryan: Yeah. I knew him.

Me: (startled): What do you mean you KNEW him?

Ryan: Yeah, he told me he had to go, he was going to heaven.

Me: Told you...? That he was going to be with Jesus in heaven?

Ryan: Yeah.

Me: He talked to you somehow, Ryan? Corey talked to you?

Ryan: Yeah. (goes quiet for awhile) I miss my brother.

Me: So do I. We'll see him again someday, buddy...

Ryan has had, and still has, many problems -- emotionally and socially. He's very bright but has severe ADHD, which we sought various treatments for in his childhood, none very successful. He's always sucked his thumb and I nursed him 'til he was almost two yrs old - he seemed to need it and I didn't mind. School was hard for him; he didn't qualify for Spec Ed but we fought to have a 504Plan in place for him. He ended up dropping out in HS, but finished at a Job Corps program and did very well. Sometimes, as a child, he would grow angry and say 'I need my brother! I miss my brother!' when he was having a hard time. We tried to empathise with him but it didn't help much.

As an adult now, Ryan is still what I call a Lost Soul. He's unhappy, still searching for what he's to do with his life, and living at home...again. He doesn't want to, but he can't seem to make good decisions for himself or move on in a good career. Now the diagnosis is Bipolar disease, but he will not seek help or medication for his problems, the violent mood swings and irrational behaviour he often suffers through, and we with him.

Not long ago, when thinking about Corey, I asked - does he ever think of his twin? He looked at me oddly, then frowned and said firmly 'No.' Said I was weird to ask him that. But I do wonder.

We've never had a 'remembrance day' or anything for Corey, it's just a private thing that I seem to go through alone on Ryan's birthday every year. Sometimes I still grieve, like tonight while writing this story; other times I barely think of the loss and keep 'moving on' in life...like I have for the past 26 yrs.

Once, on July 4th when Ryan was about 15, I saw identical twin boys about that age walk past our car on the way from a fireworks show. They were talking, laughing. Seeing them brought a crushing emotion to me, sitting in the back seat of the car, and the grief hit me anew. I was shocked that the sight of twins, near to the age that our own would have been, could have such an impact on me. Ryan did not see these boys, only me. But I cried all the way home. And this is just me, as the mother of the dear little boy we lost -- and the mother of his twin, who has never been a normal person. But I'll never give up praying and believing that one day, he can

be whole and okay. Thanks for letting me share part of our story. Maybe it will help others.

MY DAUGHTER WAS AN IVF BABY

My daughter is the surviving twin from an identical twin pregnancy. The twin was lost at five weeks of the first trimester of pregnancy, a vanishing twin. We know she was her identical twin because the pregnancy was via IVF and only one embryo was transferred. My daughter is going to be seven in September 2013. She hasn't mentioned her twin in quite a while but she used to quite frequently - and I just knew she knew and spoke about what happened honestly, but briefly. I think she actually feels her presence more than the loss - does that make sense? She hates being left alone but is happy to go to anyone or place quite willingly, if of her own volition. She is a happy child, very social. I am so happy to hear about this project. I am glad to have found your encouragement to discuss it all with her.

I WONDER.....

I lost one of my babies at 12 weeks and the other was born alright but has interesting things happen to her, like

hyper-pigmentation of her hair, conjoined teeth. She just yells like she's unhappy all the time and for "no reason". I've really been wondering why she just yells like that about everything...

MY SON HAS MANY ANXIETIES

My son is a surviving twin. At eight weeks gestation, I had a miscarriage and found out at that time that I had been expecting twins. He is now eight years old and has a brother who is 20 months younger. He rarely lets his brother out of his sight and, until a year ago had to sleep in the same bed with him. He has many anxieties, mostly with time, food and darkness. He rarely sleeps more than a few hours a night. We aren't sure what to do at this point for him, but are considering counselling, as his schooling is being affected by his anxieties.

MY PREEMIE TWINS

I gave birth to boy-girl preemie twins in June 2012. They were delivered by emergency c-section because the boy developed hydrops and had a cystic hygroma. He died two hours after their arrival into this world. The

girl is currently in the NICU learning how to survive in the outside world.

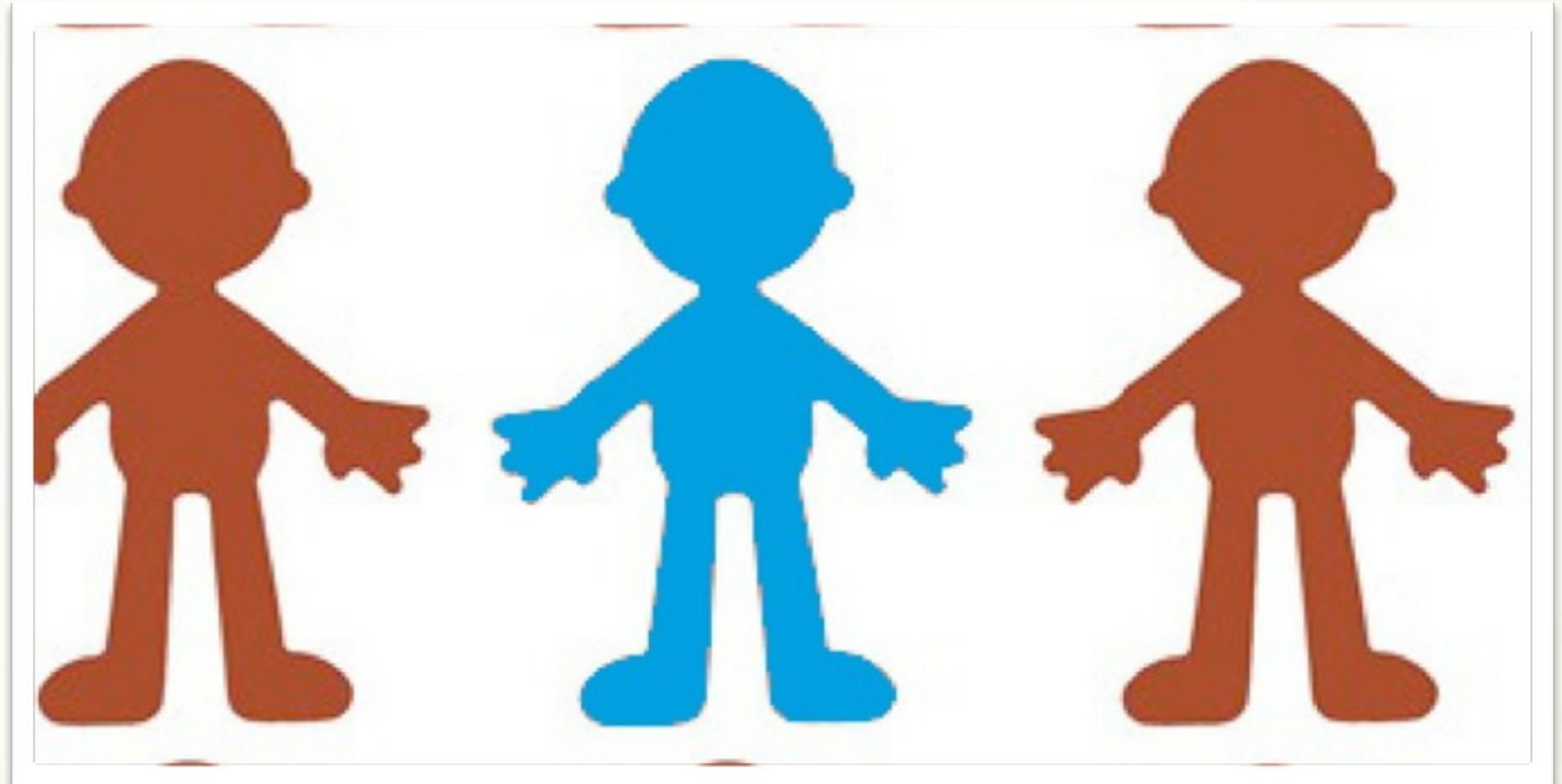
MY SON HAS AN IMAGINARY FRIEND

My son is eight years old. I'm trying to find out if he may be a womb twin survivor. He has an imaginary friend, who he says is exactly his age, has known him since they were in my tummy and he states that his "imaginary friend" floated off into the air when they were cut out of my tummy. (He doesn't know I had a Caesarian birth.) He talks about them playing in my tummy and that they still play together every day.

I have a daughter who is 5 and he loves her but fights with her constantly. She is his size exactly, people make comments "are they twins" and he gets very upset and is always the first one to say, "No we are not twins! I am 8 and she is 5." He is a very normal child but being his mother I know he is suffering from something, when I try talking to him about his imaginary friend he gets very emotional and doesn't want to talk about it. His dad is an identical twin and I have four kids - two are right handed and two left handed.

The stories

1. At different ages, womb twin survivors see the world in very different ways
2. An adult can look back on their life and see how the loss of their twin influenced how they were as a child
3. Many of these stories were written by teenagers or individuals just about their teenaged years



The children's stories

I ALWAYS ASKED FOR A BROTHER

I am an only child. When I was little, I always asked for a brother for my birthday. My mum always told me that that wasn't possible and I felt very sad and angry because of it. I envied other children who did have brothers or sisters and at the same time it fascinated me, and I'd observe

them, how they interacted with each other. Playing with other children was very nice, but I'd also need to spend time on my own, (I liked to read books, or I'd play with stuffed animals and 'talk' to imaginary friends) but never in my own room as I felt very afraid of being all alone, in an empty room, or in the dark at night. Many times my mother had to come up to comfort me

because I was so scared to be alone in my bed. Also I often felt like I wasn't alone at all, as if there was someone or something watching me. That didn't comfort me, it scared me because sometimes I'd see vague images or shadows of people. But as it was never very clear, and my mother always said there was nobody there, it just scared me so much. I sometimes lay in bed, frozen with fear. It was necessary for me to hear my parents downstairs, or the TV or radio. A sign of life so to speak. That way I knew I wasn't alone.

When I was 3 years old, my father suffered from a stroke and from then on he was paralysed, which was the reason I never got a brother or sister - my mother told me. Nevertheless, each year around my birthday I'd ask for a brother. I did have many friends, and did well in school. Although there was always something missing, I was sad because my dad couldn't be the father he wanted to be, I felt guilty about that too and tried to be a good little girl. Sometimes I'd be so angry and sad that I'd stamp my feet and scream. From what I remember, those tantrums had a lot to do with not being able to express my feelings. Simply not having access to the right words. But usually I was a quiet, shy, helpful little girl.

When I was a teenager I felt very different from other kids. We didn't share the same interests. But there was mutual respect, and friendship as well. I was never bullied or anything. I just felt very lonely and different. At the same time (and this never changed) people often come to me when they need someone to talk to. It was not a problem, I always felt happy to help someone or just listen to them. It made me feel 'connected'.

When I was about 18 I started smoking (and still haven't been able to quit!) By that time I had already moved out and was living on my own. It was a very destructive time. There were abusive relationships, I became very suspicious of men in general, as I never really felt respected or loved at all. There was a lot of drinking, smoking, and 'friends' started to use drugs. As I was an observer and saw where this would end, I somehow managed to escape. It was an odd, sudden thought that made me leave that 'scene'. All I remember is having a drink in a bar, and suddenly thinking, "What am I doing?? this is insane!" as if someone said it to me, in my head. So I left and I felt liberated. Free. Hopeful. I was going to make a new, fresh start. Never again did I see those 'friends'. Not that it was easy, I had many different jobs and homes.

A few years later my mother had a heart-attack and I went back home to take care of my father. I stayed home for over a year, both my parents were now not well, and I felt very guilty because of it although everyone told me it was not my fault, the guilt has always been part of me. Feeling guilty is normal for me. Also people always told me that I was too sensitive, as a child, as a teenager, and still, as an adult, they say I am too sensitive. I care too much, I want to make things right, etc. Recently I have found out that I am indeed sensitive, often I know exactly how other people feel. This can be physical or emotional. My therapist calls it "an empathic gift". It amazed me that something like that actually exists, I never even knew anything about it. Now I am learning to shield myself off of things and learn more about how I feel myself. It is difficult to tell whether I feel my own emotions or someone else's. Anyway, it is

something that is part of me and I am learning to cope with it and find a way to deal with it.

In my work, I have always tried to 'take care' of people. I have worked with disabled people, elderly people, mentally handicapped children, etc. etc. Usually I only want to make things better for others, and tend to forget about myself. When I was 28, in 1997, I became ill. In a way I was certain there was something really wrong with me, I was certain of it. I really thought I was going insane, because I felt scared all the time, up to a point where I was afraid to leave my house. And I had panic-attacks, hyper-ventilation, etc. I was diagnosed "overworked" and my doctor told me to take some rest and find a therapist. Later in 1997, I discovered a lump in my belly and suddenly it all went very fast. I had two tumours, both my ovaries had to be removed, I got chemo and that was it. In a way I felt relieved, it seemed I wasn't crazy after all, there WAS something wrong with me. On the other hand, I now knew I'd never have children of my own.

My mother and I talked about this, and this is also when she told me about her pregnancy and about the time when her uterus had to be removed, in the early 80's when she was 38. As it seemed, she couldn't have had children, her uterus was too small and it had a strange shape. She proudly told the doctors she did indeed have one daughter and that although I had been very small at birth and was in an incubator for a while because of my size and weight, everything was quite fine. The doctors, who were amazed, found her old medical file, and found out she had been given medicines when she was pregnant, because she already lost one baby during

the first three months. My mother was devastated, nobody ever told her this before! She did remember the medication, but nobody ever told her the reason she had to take those pills. They simply said she needed them. And that was it. She decided I was too young to know about this (I was 11 at the time).

So in 1997, when we were talking about the fact that I'd never have children myself, she told me I was actually one of twins. This...I don't know how to put it right...it was a piece of a puzzle that finally fell into place. I cried. I felt relieved. We both cried. We talked about when I was little, how I always asked for a brother, how strange this actually was. The fact I always asked for a brother, made us strongly believe it WAS a boy. Also, there are a few twins on my mother's side of the family, most are boy/girl, only one set of twins are two girls (none identical).

In the end, we have accepted the fact that I was supposed to HAVE a brother. We grieved over him. Finally, this was an answer to many questions, for both of us. It did make me feel rather guilty too, since I was the one who survived, not he. I felt as if I kicked him out of the womb, there wasn't enough room for the two of us. Things like that.

In the years after I have accepted that I did lose a dear person. He is still with me though, I believe he's been with me all my life. Perhaps I felt his presence when I was little, perhaps I talked to him, not knowing it was him. Maybe he was my imaginary friend. I don't know. But yes, I do believe he's with me, and I am not scared anymore. Yes, I even talk to him sometimes and yes, he really does

answer. I'll tell him about how much I like roses, and in the next few days I'll find a fresh rose on the pavement. That sort of thing. Maybe he's my guardian angel, I mean, why not?? I like the idea.

THEY WERE EXPECTING TWINS BUT THERE WAS ONLY ME

My mom was extremely big during pregnancy, and the doctors expected a twin or even a triplet, but there was just me. A piece of the placenta didn't leave my Mom's body until 2 weeks after my birth. The piece of the placenta that was released then showed an unusual amount of veins, and didn't lack anything a normal placenta should have, in fact it, was bigger than a normal placenta.

Ever since I was a young kid, I used to feel alone and different from other kids. I felt as if I was there, but somehow wasn't there at the same time. I have problems with maintaining contact with others. I can easily establish contact...though I find it pretty scary, since I'm always afraid people will dislike me. As a toddler, my parents noticed that I was talking to myself a lot, and loved to play all by myself. When I got older, I started to live in fantasy more than in reality, and was unable to deal with reality itself. I was always alone in elementary school, and talked to myself a lot, even in public. In 2nd grade I had twins in my class for about half a year, and I felt drawn to them, but at the same time it was painful for me to be around them. I was jealous of them, as if they had something that I was supposed to have.

I'm never satisfied with work I finish, it's never done, I feel like I can always do better. When I scored an A on a test in high school, I was disappointed I didn't get an A+. I never really had friends. I had people I got along with, but never really friends. And when someone got too close, I either pushed that person away, or I scared that person away by wanting to get too close. Even today I still do that, which is really annoying, not only for other people, but also for myself. When I hang out with other people I enjoy it, but I feel like I always miss a certain connection, like I might as well be there alone. Others don't ignore me, not at all, but I feel alone and left alone anyway. I've had girlfriends, but it took a long time to trust someone, and when they got too close (emotionally, not physically) I tried to end the relationship.

I've tried to commit suicide twice in my life, once at the age of 13, when I took a very unhealthy dose of sleeping pills in combination with alcohol. I got nervous or something, so I threw up, which got most of it out of my system and saved my life. The second time I stabbed myself with a tiny screwdriver, trying to bleed to death. This didn't work because my parents discovered me in time. I was 17 when I tried this.

I can officially say I hate myself and my life. I feel worthless, and sometimes I wish I could do it all over again. Basically I think that everyday. I love to write stories about how my life could be, and I must have up to 300 of those by now. I feel ashamed every time I write one of those, but I just can't seem to stop. Everyday when I go to sleep, all I can think is: "great, another day wasted." I feel like no matter what I manage to achieve, it's never enough. Sometimes

I think I'm the world's biggest freak, and I don't want to feel like that. I want to feel normal, like every other person in this world.

I've always felt grief I couldn't understand and I can't give it a place. I can't express it. I actually do have a problem expressing emotions in general. I feel like I'm lost inside myself, and can't find my way back.

A friend of my mom is a psychic, or so she claims anyway, and she told me that there was a boy standing behind me almost all the time, like she was seeing double. I have to say it freaked me out, but it's the reason why I actually started to investigate it.

I WAS ALWAYS SEARCHING

My twin Bruce died at birth and I was always searching for something as a small child. I didn't know until I got older that I probably was looking for him. I think my life would have been more joyful, and I believe I would have been a different person, had he been in it. I've always missed him, especially on our birthday. Losing a twin is like losing a part of myself, and I've always thought, the best part of me.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE BORN!

I have always been different. My mother told me that near the end of her pregnancy, I was carried very low and I was two weeks late. I didn't want to come out; I was delivered by forceps. As a toddler, I didn't like people. I would stay alone in my room. My father would

carry me out into a room full of guests so that they could see the baby. I would sit on his lap and keep my eyes closed because I didn't want to look at the people. When my father put me down, I would go back to my room and play alone. I used to have terrible temper tantrums when I was very young. My father was the only one who could soothe me.

I hated the kids at school. I have always been an excellent student so I didn't have problems with teachers and authority figures. I was quiet and I silently hated all of the rude, shallow, ignorant kids. I remember being happy as a young child. We lived in a quiet neighbourhood in a nice single family home. I loved that house; we called it the green house. I played all day with my sister who is sixteen months older than me. I became lonely when she went off to kindergarten and very unhappy when we moved to a different neighbourhood. I had started kindergarten by then and loved my school and my one best friend. We moved house, so I lost my home, my school and my best friend. I was now someplace where I didn't belong or fit in and I have felt this way ever since. I was surrounded by cruel, unloving people.

I am left-handed. My sister taught me how to write so I have good penmanship. Her penmanship is beautiful. The nuns that taught me never forced me to turn my paper in the direction that is comfortable for right-handed people. So I don't write upside down. But my sister always helped me. I usually could figure things out without help. I've always been very independent. I don't want to rely on people for important things because they usually let you down. I have felt this way, even as a young child.

I had a dermoid cyst removed when I was 36 years old. I was told that there was teeth and hair inside. I was mortified. I cried for months. My doctor told me that it wasn't my fault and that I was born with it. The cyst took over my left ovary and was the size of a grapefruit.

I HAVE ALWAYS MISSED SOMETHING

I was told early on that I was a twin. My sister died six days after birth. I was the smaller, sicker twin and not supposed to make it but she passed instead. I have always felt like I was missing something from my life and never felt a "part of" growing up or as an adult. As a result I have experienced depression, suicidal tendencies and addiction. I'm proud to say that I'm seeking therapy and I am in recovery, which is where I found out about being a womb twin survivor. It's been very therapeutic and healing.

MY DAD DENIED IT

I found out when I was a teenager that I was a womb twin survivor, but my father denied it all. He had talked my mother into getting an abortion while she was pregnant with me. She didn't know that she was carrying twins until she found out she was still pregnant with me a few months later. I never knew why I always felt alone. I always felt that there should be someone with me. It never made sense until I found out.

I ALWAYS KNEW

I always kind of knew that I was a twin. I wasn't quite sure and I told people I had an unborn brother, although I was sure I had made it up. But today I found out I hadn't. He was real. And although my mom said he was "lost" after 9 weeks of pregnancy so it's not worth being upset over. I know a lot about anatomy, enough to know that's the time a baby can first smile. It's good to know he never felt pain, and I keep dreaming about him. I suppose it's good because now he's just watching over me. I just have to live more than most people to make up for him.

I BEGGED MY MOTHER FOR A SISTER

I have always been fascinated by twins and always thought I was one but up and till now I truly did not believe it. I have always wanted a sister and when I was younger I begged my Mom to have me a sister. For years I had many symptoms of being a womb twin survivor and I have always felt like something is missing. I have also searched for years, trying to find someone who looks like me. Up until now I had no idea that I could be a twin whose twin died before birth. Finally, my life makes sense. I was born three weeks early too. Even though my parents have never said I was a twin they may have not known about or just do not want me to know. They mostly likely have no idea because they never got an ultrasound of me. I really wish my twin could have been born but they might not have survived, anyway.

NO ONE BELIEVES MY MOTHER

I've always had relationship issues, with my siblings, my family, things like that. I don't really remember how I found out about my womb twin, but I know it was at a young age. We don't really talk about it because no one believes my mom and they all think she's lying... The look on her face in the rare moments that we do talk about it is proof enough to me. And the fact that I really have always felt like I was missing something. I think about it a lot but it's really hard to talk about. Sometimes when I can't sleep, I stop and think, what would she be like? Look like? My twin is a part of me and it's crazy to believe that something so incredible couldn't be here with me. I have a twin, a sister, her name would have been Allison. I miss you and never really met you. RIP my sister.

MY MOTHER FELT SOMETHING WAS WRONG

I am 18 and I just found out my mother is pregnant with her 3rd child. My mom and I were talking today about how impossible this is. (A doctor told her she could never have kids without hormone shots.) Even the doctors were amazed and said it's a one in a million chance...

In the talk she wondered whether or not she should tell me some secret and then decided not to, but I kept pushing until she did. She said that I was a twin, but the twin had died a week before I was born. She also said she went to the doctors when she felt something was wrong and they couldn't find anything. It wasn't until I was born that everyone found out. At first I started laughing (its my

reaction to sad news somehow.) I then got very upset, knowing that when I was a kid I had a lot of trouble (still do) making new friends. I was always treated badly as a kid by other kids. They always made fun of me, maybe because I wear a turban.

But I knew that from the first day I could remember I had this imaginary friend. I still have this voice inside my head which sounds just like me but feels strange. My mom also told me that when I was a kid I always use to beg for a twin and or a brother (my twin was a brother and I was 2 seconds older)... I don't really know how to explain this but I feel empty at times, alone in this world, and that there's something missing in my life, I have a little sister (12 years difference) but I don't really have anyone I could go to for anything....

I know I sound crazy but.... I really wish I could do something to change this feeling inside. My mom also said that they could have taken the babies (us) out earlier and maybe saved all three of us. She said that they got lucky that even my mom and I made it through the operation.

MUM - I NEVER LEFT YOU!

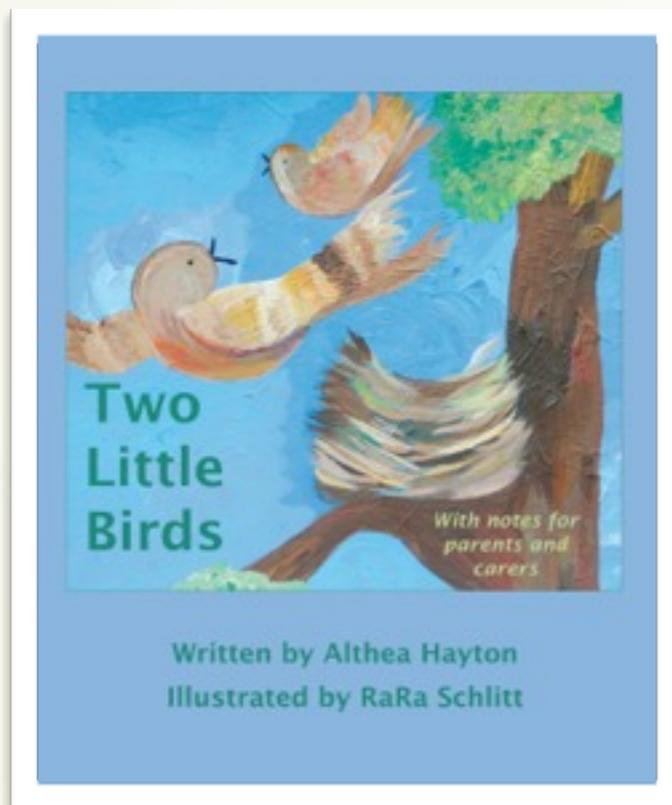
I'm 16 and my mum lost my twin at 8 and a half weeks gestation. Apparently when I was two years old, I said to my mum, "Do you remember when you thought I left you and you cried and cried...but I didn't leave you Mummy, I stayed!"

The Womb Twin Kids project

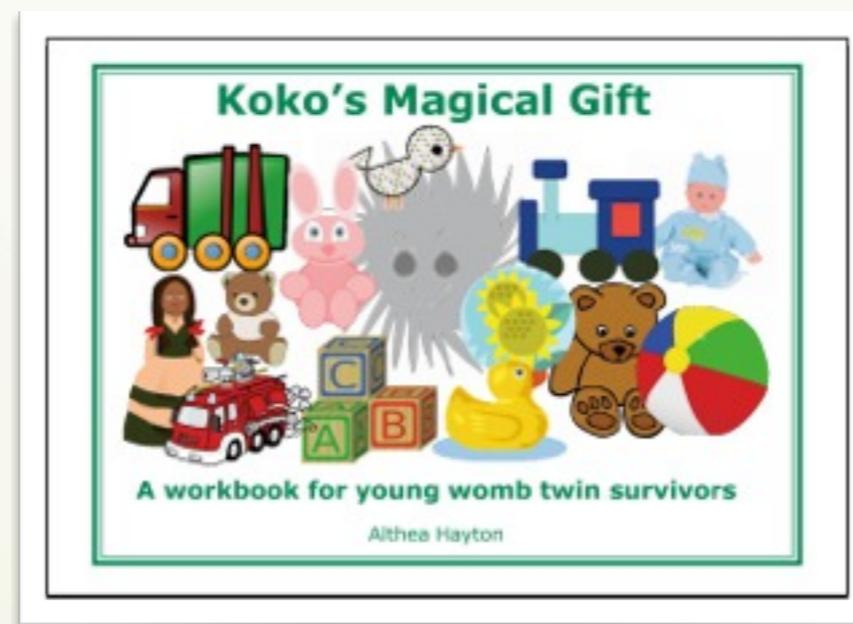


Founded in St Albans in 2011 and supported by Womb Twin, the Womb Twin Kids project seeks to bring good quality information and support to the parents of womb twin survivors, and age-appropriate materials to young womb twin survivors, who may need help in understanding what it means to be a womb twin survivor. Here are some of the books that are now available:

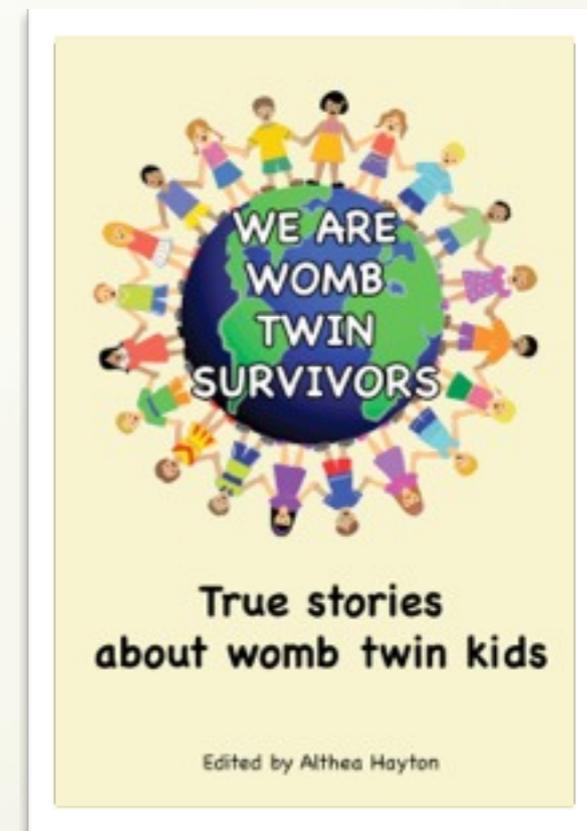
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Aged 0-7
(Illustrated paperback book)



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