

Will there be enough love to go around?



Adding another child to the family is a time of transition for both siblings and parents. Being a big brother or sister means finding a new place in the family. Parents often worry: Will there be enough love to go around? Will I be able to address the needs of another child?

And yet, the relationships within the family provide a rich learning ground for many life skills. In relationships with siblings, kids learn to compromise. They learn about kindness. They learn to take turns. They learn to share. They learn to ask for and do favors. They learn the painful lesson that the world does not revolve around them.

Sibling rivalry is the competitive relationship between brothers and sisters. It can NOT be stopped or prevented. The only cure is to have only one child. Every human being enjoys the captured attention of another human being. One-on-one attention makes us feel special. The birth of a second child creates the environment in which time and attention from parents is now divided. It is easy to understand the negative feelings that siblings have for one another. Insisting that siblings always have positive feelings for each other will not make the bad feelings go away. The negative feelings are normal and natural.

"The birth of a baby brother or sister is a profound shock to a toddler. This does not mean that it is psychologically damaging. On the contrary, it can bring about many important learning experiences and the opportunity for a lifelong emotional connection with the sibling."

~ Alicia Lieberman, *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*, 1993

The benefits of a sibling to your child are many. Children with siblings learn in the laboratory of the home some of life's most important lessons: how to share, how to wait your turn, how to celebrate the accomplishments of another, and how to be socially intimate. Children with siblings have a real advantage socially.

How to manage new babies and sibling rivalry

Before the Birth:

When the older child is younger than two, it is really very difficult for him to be "prepared." Parents can help to make him as secure as possible by continuing well-established routines and encouraging independence wherever possible.

Tell the older child about the coming baby later in the pregnancy. Nine months is a long time to wait.

Don't make unrealistic promises about the baby. Many older siblings have been disappointed to find that their new babies are not really "someone to play with" yet.

Avoid making other big changes in your child's life around the time of the baby's birth. If your child is still in diapers, this may not be the best time to toilet train him. If he is still sleeping in the crib, don't move him out just when the baby is moving into it.

Let your child help to set up the nursery. Allowing him to help prepare for the baby will assure him of his continued place in the family.

Prepare him for your trip to the hospital. Let him know you will be away. Encourage closeness between the child and whoever is caring for him in your absence.

During the Hospital Stay:

Have regular contact with the older child. Talk on the phone often, and arrange for someone to bring your older child for a visit.

Arrange for a sibling visit. Find out about your hospital's policies about sibling visits, and make arrangements for your children to meet while you are still hospitalized.

Use a calendar to explain Mom's time away. A calendar will help your child understand in a more concrete way when you will come home.

Getting Adjusted at Home:

Involve your older child in the care of the baby. Remember to watch your older child to be sure he doesn't hurt the baby. You may need to teach gentleness.

Plan special times alone with your older child. Point out the specialness of being older and the activities you and he can enjoy, but that the baby is much too young to do.

Give your child a doll of his own to "care" for as Mom cares for the baby. This modeling of your care of the baby becomes a new bond between you and your older child.

Expect some regression. A return to bed wetting, thumb sucking or night waking is common. Play along for a while, allowing your older child to return to baby behaviors as he makes the adjustment. Most children abandon these behaviors in a very short time, falling back to them only occasionally.

Expect an emotional roller coaster. The weeks following a birth are exhausting and emotional for many reasons. Knowing that these out-of-control emotions are expected may make coping easier for you and your child.

Remark on your older child's competence.

"The toddler's abilities to do things better than the baby can be a good antidote for feelings of jealousy. When parents comment admiringly on a toddler's skill at doing something, or point out that the baby cannot yet do that marvelous feat, the toddler gets the comforting sense that she is still special and appreciated."

~ Alicia Lieberman, *The Emotional Life of the Toddler* 1993

Below is a list of books for big brothers and big sisters to help them welcome a new baby.

Ashbe, Jeanne. What's Inside? Kane/Miller, 2000.

Flaps to lift reveal "what's inside" several familiar objects and then Mommy's tummy, until at last, one day, "There it is! Hello my baby!"

Ballard, Robin. I Used to Be the Baby. Greenwillow Books; 1st edition, 2002.

This book presents a day of family activity, with the focus on the relationship between a boy and his baby brother. For each event, there is the downside as well as the gracious solution. "He doesn't like riding in the car. I will sing him a song. He is sad in the stroller. I will hold his hand. - He doesn't like baths. So I blow bubbles for him to watch."

Berenstain, Stan & Jan. The Berenstain Bears and Baby Makes Five. Random House Books for Young Readers, 2000.

What fun! What excitement! What a nuisance. At least that's the way Sister Bear feels. If it isn't being fed, burped, or diapered, it's being dandled, cuddled, or kitchy-kitchy-kooed. Yes, Sister's pretty fed up with the fuss everyone's making over the new baby. Even the dolls make her angry, because they remind her of the baby. Then Sister gets a special homework assignment and, with a little help from wise old Mama, comes to believe that this new baby might just be a nifty addition to the Bear clan.

Brown, Marc. Arthur's Baby. Little Brown, 1987.

Big Brother Arthur and Big Sister D.W. react very differently to the new baby. Is your child a "take charge" D.W. or a "slightly nervous" Arthur? Especially appropriate for the four to eight-year old sibling.

Cole, Joanna. I'm a Big Brother. HarperFestival; Revised edition, 2010.

Cole, Joanna. I'm a Big Sister. Rayo, 2010.

The texts in these two books are identical, with the exception of the gender terms. Cole has successfully captured the youngsters' voices, making it easy for readers to identify with them, whether the books are being read aloud or alone. Familiar situations, as well as positive reinforcement of individuality and importance as part of the family, are good reasons to put this book into the hands of children who will soon be older siblings.

Cutler, Jane. Darcy and Gran Don't Like Babies. Illustrated by Susannah Ryan. Farrar, 2002.

When Gran comes to visit, she confesses to big sister Darcy that she doesn't like babies either. She doesn't much like their looks, their smell, the work they make, and the attention they get.

Gliori, Debi. Where Did That Baby Come From? Harcourt Children's Books; 1st edition, 2005.

Replete with boisterous and colorful illustrations of a loving, though slightly disheveled tiger family, this is a rhyming tale of a confused child's initial aversion to and eventual acceptance of the newcomer. Upon the arrival of a new sibling that seems only to leak and squeak, a young tiger asks reasonably, "Where did that baby come from?/And can we take it back?"

Henderson, Kathy. The Baby Dances. Illustrated by Tony Kerins. Candlewick, 1999.

While written for children, adults report feeling moved when they read this sweet book. Lovely illustrations depict the growth of a little girl, born in the winter, rolling over in the spring, crawling in the summer, standing in the fall, and walking in the next winter. Finally, safe in her big brother's arms, the baby dances. A gentle look at first-year milestones and a young sibling relationship.

Henkes, Kevin. Julius, the Baby of the World. Greenwillow, 1990.

Lilly loves her baby brother until he is born and her parents give Julius much love and affection. Even though Lilly receives love, affection and special privileges, her attitude doesn't change until Cousin Garland visits and calls Julius disgusting.

- Hest, Amy. [You're the Boss, Baby Duck!](#) Illustrated by Jill Barton. Candlewick, 1997.
Baby Duck feels overlooked when a new baby ("Hot Stuff") comes to stay. Grandpa agrees that new babies can't do much, but eventually Baby Duck discovers an appreciative audience in the little one. Large, over-sized illustrations.
- Hoban, Russell. [A Baby Sister for Frances.](#) Harper, 1993.
Everyone seems to have plenty of time for little sister Gloria, but no one has time for Frances! Frances "runs away" (under the dining table) but comes home when she realizes how much Mother and Father miss her.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. [Peter's Chair.](#) Viking, 1998.
Peter is a little uncertain about his place in the family when his father paints his cradle pink for Susie. He runs away with his little chair before they can paint it, only to discover that he can't fit in it anymore. He then returns home and helps Dad paint the little chair himself.
- Kubler, Annie. [My New Baby.](#) Child's Play International, 2000.
This lovely boardbook is filled with charming illustrations that tell their own story without words. Using pictures, the book shows a young boy getting used to his new brother or sister, with his parents making sure he is never left out.
- Lansky, Vicki. [Welcoming Your Second Baby.](#) Book Peddlers, 3rd edition, 2005.
For parents, the thought of having a second child can be joyous, traumatic, or more likely both. It can be equally difficult for a displaced first child. With her trademark humor and practical advice, best-selling parenting author Vicki Lansky guides parents through the major transition from one child to two.
- Look, Lenore. [Henry's First-Moon Birthday.](#) Illustrated by Yumi Heo. Atheneum, 2001.
Older siblings will enjoy Jen ("a.k.a. Older Sister") and her family preparing for Baby Henry's one-month birthday. Fascinating illustrations of Chinese customs.
- Murkoff, Heidi. [What to Expect When the New Baby Comes Home.](#) HarperFestival; 1st edition, 2001.
Each two-page spread features a question likely to be asked by new big brothers or sisters: "What do new babies look like?" "Why do new babies cry so much?" "Why can't new babies do anything by themselves?" "Why do new babies get so many presents?" In his sensitive, respectful way, Angus answers each of the questions and offers some fun activities to help children get to know the newest member of their family, as well as making sure they get their own needs met. ("It's nice to be held, even when you're big.")
- Root, Phyllis. [What Baby Wants.](#) Illustrated by Jill Barton. Candlewick, 1998.
When Mama needs to rest and Baby won't sleep the rest of the family offers to babysit. Baby cries and each family member offer a (silly) solution. Finally, Little Brother seems to know "what Baby wants."
- Shields, Brooke. [Welcome to Your World, Baby.](#) Harper Collins, 2008.
Becoming a big sister is a big event! There's so much to share—and do—and celebrate! Beloved actress, author, and mother Brooke Shields paints a warm and loving picture of the joys of sisterhood in this merry book with exuberant artwork by the talented Cori Doerrfeld.
- Thomas, Shelley Moore. [A Baby's Coming To Your House!](#) Photos by Eric Furtan. Whitman, 2001.
Lovely photos show families of several ethnicities preparing for babies. Nice narration explains all the changes and what a baby will need.