

# Top Ten Sanity Savers for the First Year with Multiples

© 2003 Elizabeth Lyons. Used by Permission.



The first year with your multiples is going to be an incredible one filled with joy, food-stained clothing, tears, questions, and a whole lot of amazement. Precisely what it will require to survive this year will differ for everyone, but there are ten surefire products and attitudes that will ensure that your sanity stays intact while you're working your way toward that first birthday party.

## Sense of Humor

While the ten items on this list are in no particular order, it's no coincidence that "sense of humor" is number one. There will be many opportunities for you to throw in the proverbial towel during the next 365 days or so. However, if you remember that very few of them will matter in a week or a month, let alone a whole year from now, you'll be far better off. I mean really, five years ago, did you honestly ever picture yourself sitting in the middle of a nursery in the same pajamas you'd been wearing for four days (or more), hair in disarray, trying to ascertain why on earth babies can't learn from Day 1 to communicate their needs in a language you can understand?

## Good Lotion

Be sure to keep good, thick lotion by each sink in your home. You will not believe how many times you will wash your hands each day. Especially during the winter months, this constant hand washing is going to cause dryness you've likely never experienced. It's so important to put lotion on after each washing so that your knuckles don't spontaneously split open one evening as you're diapering a baby. Some of my favorites: No Crack Hand Crème found at Restoration Hardware, and Cooks Lotion by Crabtree & Evelyn.

## Crockpot

The crockpot is not what it used to be—and no one is more pleased than I. Did you know you can bake quesadillas in the crockpot? Pork chops even? It's come a long way, baby! You can put your ingredients in the pot when you have a spare minute; then whenever you're ready to eat (6-8 hours later), it's ready! Best of all, if a baby needs you the minute you sit down to dinner (which is inevitable at least six nights a week), you can return your portion to the crockpot and it will be ready when you are. No more cold dinners!

If you don't currently own a crockpot, invest in one before your babies are born.

## A Great Friend

Believe me, if you don't have one of these, one is going to just show up one day—possibly even in a strange place like the grocery store checkout lane. This is the person who is, or becomes your most trusted confidant. The person whom you can call to ask, "Does the fact that my babies are six months old and I still don't feel like engaging in sex with my husband mean my marriage is falling apart?" The person to whom you can admit, "I love these babies but I just can't listen to any more crying!" If possible, this friend needs to be available to take these sorts of calls at 3:00AM. I met my sanity-saving friend in our Marvelous Multiples® class, so, like I said, she can show up anywhere. Don't panic if no one who fits this job description comes to mind right away. It may be someone you are only just beginning to have a relationship with—or haven't met yet—time will prove the reason for her entrance into your life.

## Bottle Prop

I realize that the idea of using something intangible to feed your babies probably sounds a bit ludicrous, if not downright cruel. However, at some point, all of your babies will need to eat at the same time, and any strategies you had previously developed to accommodate them simultaneously will no longer work—either because the babies are bigger, or squirmier, or because they decide that at that moment they don't want to be next to one another. I'm not suggesting that you use the prop to feed a baby so that you can have your hands free to type an email to your long lost friends or scrub the kitchen floor. I'm only suggesting that there may be times when you'll believe that although it may not require an entire village to *raise* your children, it may require four or six arms to *feed* them. The bottle prop is as close as you're going to get without another adult in the house. The baby for whom you prop the bottle should be near you at all times so that you know if she is having trouble. You can sing to her, have a foot on her foot, anything possible to reassure her that you are there. Again, it's often an "I only have so many hands" thing.

The model that we used was The Bottle Bundle, from Little Wonders ([www.littlewonders.com](http://www.littlewonders.com)). It's almost like a mini Boppy pillow, so it's soft to the touch. It's shaped like a "U" with an elasticized band on top to hold the bottle, and you place it on your child's chest and around his shoulders in the manner necessary to keep that formula or breast milk flowing.

## Cute, Comfy PJs

Invest in a few of these prior to giving birth. You will be wearing them a lot, and you should enjoy them and feel cute and comfy in them. When you've been wearing one pair for days, you won't want to take them off to wash them if you don't have

another pair handy, so have at least one additional pair around that you can throw on while the first pair sits in the dirty laundry—until your husband gets so desperate that he actually *does* the laundry. (And then pray that he knows to separate whites from the new, never-before-washed deep reds.)

### **A Diaper Bag for a Mother of Multiples**

Most typical diaper bags on the market are not the best option for a mother of multiples. They are simply not meant to accommodate more than one set of everything. You will need a bag that can be carried hands-free and one that will not bang against your hip and/or awkwardly hang from (and then fall off of) your shoulder as you push your Cadillac-size stroller. My recommendation is to purchase a well-outfitted backpack, one likely meant for outdoor excursions where you need the lightest, smallest bag possible that will accommodate water bottles, keys, and possibly a day's worth of other necessities. Look for one with a mesh water bottle holder on each side. I was able to fit fit two bottles easily in each side. Mine also had a mesh holder on the back where I often stored the formula-measuring container, another set of bottles, or burp cloths (things you will need in a hurry and won't have time to rifle through a bag to find). If the bag has multiple interior compartments, you can store diapers, wipes, a changing pad, some toys, and even extra clothes in case of accidents in one, then smaller items such as your keys in the other.

Be sure not to throw out the cute little complimentary diaper bags you will probably receive from your obstetrician and/or the hospital. No, they are not big enough to hold all the gear required for an outing with young twins, but they often contain valuable coupons or samples. A great idea: Fill one with water-filled bottles, single-serving formula packets, diapers, wipes, and changes of clothing, and store it in your car in case of an emergency. That way, if—heaven forbid—you get into an accident or are heavily delayed by traffic, you don't have to worry about further delaying a starving or wet baby.

### **Realistic Expectations**

Many mother of multiples are wired at birth to be organized, efficient, and fond of a controlled environment. However, during this first year with your babies, some of these

qualities will come in handy (efficiency and organization), while others will work against you (the need to control everything). Having realistic expectation is of paramount importance to getting through the first year. Relinquish your need (if you have one) to have your entire house clean and in perfect order all the time. Pick up a copy of one of my favorite books: *Forget Perfect*, by Lisa Earle McLeod. Lisa reinforces the importance of putting ourselves at or near the top of our priority lists instead of the grime behind the kitchen sink or the toys strewn across the family room. Notes Lisa, "You are not trying to create a perfect childhood, you're trying to create a functioning adult." Your time would be better spent singing nursery rhymes than scrubbing walls.

### **Formula Pitcher**

If you will be supplementing with or feeding your babies formula outright, you can (and should) make your formula in one big batch—whether the babies are on the same or different formulas. This is more for your mental health than anything else. There will be days when you truly don't think you can mix another bottle, and the ability just to pour it from its container will save you hundreds of dollars in therapy. Once mixed, formula is good for forty-eight hours in the refrigerator, so as soon as you get a grip on how many ounces you'll go through in forty-eight hours, you could actually find yourself mixing formula every other *day* as opposed to every other *hour*. In addition, many formulas, when mixed on the spot and shaken vigorously, develop a lot of bubbles that can make a baby's tummy uncomfortable. When you pre-make your formula, those bubbles dissolve as it sits in the refrigerator; once you give your babies their bottles, the formula is bubble-free.

### **Scented Candles**

One secret I rely on heavily to soothe my mind (and fool others into thinking I have more free time than I do) is scented candles. I prefer those by Yankee Candle Company®. The "Banana Bread" scent will give the impression that you've been cooking all day. "Clean Cotton" will fool visitors into believing you cleaned the whole house just before they arrived. "Lavender" will soothe your mind at the end of a long day.

As Zora Neale Hurston once said, "*There are years that ask questions and years that answer.*" This year will most certainly do both—I guarantee it! And I will make you the promise that my great friend Mollie always makes to me: You're going to make it!

*Elizabeth Lyons is the mother of a 4 children, including twin sons. She is the author of Ready or Not...Here We Come! The REAL Experts' Cannot-Live-Without Guide to the First Year with Twins and Ready or Not...There We Go! The REAL Experts' Guide to the Toddler Years with Twins*  
Visit her website at [www.elizabethlyons.com](http://www.elizabethlyons.com).