

# Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

I trust this finds you all well and winning the mosquito war! Wow are they HUGE this year. MBC's Annual Conference is in Kitchener-Waterloo this weekend and I hope some of you can make it. As usual it promises to be a great learning experience and a great place to meet new friends. It isn't too late to register.

Kim (MBC Chair) and Gail (MBC Communications Director) will be attending the ISTS meeting in Belgium the following weekend. They've got lots of stamina and it will hold them in good stead. Having attended one of these meetings in the past, I know that they will come away enriched with ideas and enthusiasm about improving support and resources for Canadian multiple birth families. In addition, and knowing these two Ladies very well, they will be sowing a few seeds of their own as their share MBC's accomplishments these past three years (ISTS meets every 3 years).

Also attending ISTS will be Beth Pector (see her article herein) and Jean Kollantai from CLIMB in Alaska. Both women have been providing support, resources, information and giving talks worldwide as they raise public awareness of loss in multiple birth and its unique challenges.

Best wishes to all of you,  
Thinking of you,  
Lynda

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Dedication to Megan's Surviving Twin - Rhys Anthony Schulz

*Sometimes half a picture is what I see  
But I love you just the same;  
For sometimes that picture which I see  
Is the thing that keeps me sane.*

Reprinted with permission from Lynne Schultz's book, **The Survivor**.  
(Editor's Note: Lynda wrote the forward for Lynne's book.)

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Follow-up from Valerie Samuels book, Always My Twin in Issue #07-04 of **Forever Angels**. You can also purchase a copy of this book from Valerie herself. She can be reached at: [samuelsvr@yahoo.com](mailto:samuelsvr@yahoo.com)

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Top 10 Lessons ... a Decade Down the Road

As my surviving twin hits double digits this year, I've taken time to reflect on a decade of raising a twinless twin. In David Letterman fashion, I give you my Top Ten Lessons.

10. It is possible to heal from the deepest, darkest tragedy a parent can face...but grief can't be rushed. Most of my grief seemed to resolve about 5-6 years after my twins were born. However, even since then, I feel that every year my heart grows a little lighter, and each year I feel I have a little more in common with parents who've never lost a child. Yet I don't think I'll ever feel I am entirely part of their world. My deceased twin son will live forever in my heart and memory...but the part of my heart that broke from his death no longer feels so shriveled, bitter and heavy.

9. On a long journey, take some traveling companions. Soon after my loss, I found a few bereaved moms who, like me, had once happily belonged to a local Mothers of Twins Club. We formed our own informal "club", the one no one wants to join but is glad to find after an overwhelming loss. That has evolved to a Chicago-area online group, Bramble, which I now help to moderate. CLIMB and several online groups have also helped sustain me on my grief journey, and I count fellow bereaved parents among my closest friends. There's a deep understanding that transcends our differences, and I'm privileged to have caring friends who will always listen when I have a "mommy moment."

8. Faith, hope and love are the things that endure. Faith in God and/or in our inner strength; hope that time and grief work will ease our pain; love for our deceased children, and for living family and those friends who are willing to stand by us during times of trial.

7. Multiple pregnancies, parenting and losses are much more complicated than I ever would have guessed. Looking back, I chose to be incredibly naïve during pregnancy due to other stresses in my life. I trusted that God and my doctor would bring both my boys into the world healthy & fine. As it turned out, a last-minute cord accident took our beloved Bryan, so fretting about extreme prematurity, TTTS or other identical-twin risks would not have helped me. But since then, I have met parents whose multiples had those and other outcomes; people with 1 in a million circumstances who hoped and prayed but had a devastating loss, sometimes at the same time as ongoing challenges. It takes a certain hardiness to survive parenting intact sets of multiples; those who have survived loss within their multiple set have my undying respect as true unsung heroes.

6. Parenting "my twins" will be a lifelong process. At the time of my loss, I rationalized the time grief took from my interactions with Jared by saying that I was giving both Jared and Bryan the same relative amounts of attention they would have received if Bryan had lived. Now, since I've learned that adult surviving multiples encourage honest dialogue with surviving children about their lost siblings, I cannot put "it" behind me or get over "it." That would be unfair to my living son. "It" has a name—Bryan—and as part of my parenting responsibility to Jared, I have to share his history with him in a way that is not burdensome yet is also not deceptive.

5. I am much stronger than I ever thought I could be before to my loss. I've accomplished things professionally, personally and in bereavement work that I never would have imagined I could achieve. My early life goals were simple: join a group medical practice where I wouldn't have to worry about business; and have a couple of healthy kids who would need only gentle guidance. After ups & downs in group practices, I opened a solo practice just 3 years after my twins were born, which has tripled in size in 6 years. Although I never pictured myself as a parent of twins, I managed to get through the death of one and raising a survivor with club feet, developmental delay, irritability and other challenges that thankfully have greatly eased. I can tell you that the actual guidance we've given our child was much more intensive and not always as "gentle" as I would have preferred. In regard to bereavement work, I've worked with CLIMB & others to foster sensitivity toward multiple-loss parents & parents of preemies. It warmed my

heart immeasurably to hear about cases where my efforts led to memories & mementos that wouldn't have come about otherwise.

4. Parents of multiples can be either the most sympathetic or the most clueless in understanding our experiences. The first few weeks after loss, the twins club membership chair and the woman who'd been my "stork mom" for support during pregnancy both were very kind and helpful. Others since then have been incredibly respectful of my pain and know exactly what I lost when Bryan died. Unfortunately, there are those who cannot fathom how deep our pain goes, and complain ad nauseam how hard it is to raise their infant and toddler twins. Losing our children is not easier than their tribulations!

3. I can now genuinely rejoice for the good fortune of successful parents of multiples. Right after loss, I was so shocked it didn't even occur to me to envy parents of intact pairs of twins for having their children together, alive. I mainly felt confused, since I hadn't seen or held my twins together. Soon after that first shock wore off, for years I was jealous of even "nice" parents of intact multiples. On a few occasions I brought up my loss to multiple parents when it wasn't necessary... causing them deliberate discomfort out of my selfish, socially unacceptable need to still be counted as a mother of twins. My greatest joy in the last couple of years has been welcoming a couple of sets of twins to my practice. Some parents have known and accepted my history; others I didn't tell. One parent will never know how meaningful it was for me to briefly hold their twins in my arms together a few days after they were born. To finally have a chance to hold twin babies together, 9 years after mine arrived—and to be able to hand them back with no regrets and with honest joy for their parents, is the best sign of healing I could imagine. We now have neighbors with infant twins...and I expect to happily watch them play in the coming years, instead of sobbing & grumbling under my breath.

2. I am glad I was, am, and always will be a mother of twins. The pregnancy for me was not easy, but also was not as complicated as it could have been. Feeling two babies wiggle, squirm and fight was a unique joy I'll always treasure. For many reasons... the friendships I've made, tough life lessons I mastered, struggles within our family to understand and accommodate Jared during difficult periods...I am a much healthier person than I was before my twins, and I would not trade my experience now, as painful as it was.

1. I am, indeed, lucky to have one. For many years, I viewed this statement as a curse from cruel or clueless passersby. However, I have to concede that I am quite fortunate to have the opportunity to raise Jared: a clever, funny, intelligent, maddening but ultimately lovable boy. With grief mostly behind me, I can now concentrate on giving my best to him: pushing him when he needs it, and pulling for him where he needs that, too. Twinship will always be a part of who he is...but it will likely be just an intriguing, background fact like my status as an adoptee was during my life. Twinship is his birthright, but more important (as it is for twins who both survive) is ensuring that he becomes a trustworthy citizen, good student, faithful and compassionate member of society. As a 4th grader who succeeds in advanced math, and enjoys chess, Scouts, church, piano, swimming, soccer and baseball...I think

Written by Beth Pector, the Mom of 3 boys (a singleton and a surviving twin) and first published in *Our Newsletter*, CLIMB's (Centre for Loss in Multiple Birth)