



ABIGAIL POGREBIN

ONE
AND THE
SAME

My Life as an Identical Twin
and What I've Learned
About Everyone's Struggle
to Be Singular

attachment. . . . So by virtue of the parents not understanding what each child needs, the twinship becomes powerful, and the parents get left out. . . . My discovery is that, while it may seem counterintuitive, when both twins are securely attached to the parents, the twinship becomes a more cherished, healthy, balanced relationship. The counterintuitive piece is that if you separate twins as much as you may have to—in order to encourage that parent bond—then people think you're hurting the twinship."

She says her patients report the same regret my parents have. "I can't tell you the number of times a mother says to me, 'Why didn't I ever take them separately? Why didn't I think about it? I could have left one home.' These women had nannies; they could have done it. But they didn't want to. In their minds, they'd be breaking up something so wonderful that they couldn't justify doing that. Or their twins resisted the idea and they listened to them. Even though everybody knows—it's not my research—every attachment theorist tells you every infant needs alone time with its mother."

Jean Kunhardt, cofounder of the Soho Parenting Center in Manhattan, echoes Friedman. "The intimacy dance is such a one-on-one thing, it's a monogamous thing. My biggest urging to new mothers is to really take the time to have an individual moment with each twin. Twins demand it less because they don't need it as much. So it's the quiet moments of engagement with your baby that are sometimes missing with twins."

Skipping one-on-one time seems to backfire both ways: Twins miss out on forging a clear identity, while parents miss out on a specific intimacy.

Even back in 1954, psychologist Dorothy Burlingham wrote in her study of identical twins that mothers can't connect to their twins until they get to know them apart from each other. "Several mothers have plainly said that it was impossible to love their twins until they had found a difference in them," Burlingham wrote.

According to psychologist Michael Rothman, one way mothers of