

I was thrilled to reunite with my college friends at one of our daughters' birthdays recently. Between six of us, we have ten children, all girls. Despite the physical distance between us these days, our kids keep us linked. We see each other for birthday parties and [baby showers](#) and have a regular text chain about everything from our post-baby bodies to potty training our toddlers.

One of us has three children, two have two each and the other three have one apiece. During a quiet, moment, I chatted with one friend about her plans to have a second child, which I know was on her mind for this year.

She admitted they were trying and then added, "This is terrible, but I really feel like I'm just doing this for her." She nodded at her daughter. "The thought of going through it all again..." Her voice trailed off. I nodded in commiseration, remembering how hard that second pregnancy and first year with two kids was.

I never had an internal debate about [having a second child](#). My husband and I always wanted more than one. I leaned towards three, but he was firmly in the camp of only having two.

I'm one of three myself. My brother was born when I was three and my sister followed 20 months later. I have no memory of life without them. Sure, we fight sometimes, especially when we were growing up, but these days we're as close as we can be given that they both live across the country.

It's rare to see my siblings more than once or twice a year in person, but when we do see each other, it's a flurry of inside jokes, movie quotes and occasional squabbles. I wish we lived closer to one another, but I'm grateful for technology like FaceTime that helps us see each other regularly. I can't imagine life without them.

That was why I always planned on having more than one child. We were thrown by our struggle with [infertility](#), but even when going through IVF, we talked about having twins or going through the whole process again a year or so after having our first. When we ended up having a singleton pregnancy, we paid to stay on COBRA so I would have access to the four rounds of IVF my insurance allowed.

Because COBRA expired after 18 months, we always knew that if we were blessed with a second, he or she would be very close in age to our first. Time was not on our side; we didn't have the luxury of waiting until our older daughter was potty trained or no longer napping. We had to go for it when she turned a year old to get those IVF rounds in before the insurance expired.

Of course, we ended up having a spontaneous second pregnancy the first time we tried, so our daughters are 20 months apart.

I remember reading something like, “You have the first baby for yourself, the second for your first child.”

Now, I can't imagine life without both my daughters, but I am trying to remember whether we had our second because we wanted a companion for our first. I know that the exact reason why we got a [second cat](#), but is it why we had a second kid?

My second daughter's early days were a blur. I have so many specific memories of my older daughter as a newborn or young baby, but recently, I realized I have none of those for my little one. I knew [she cried a lot](#). I know I struggled with moments of depression. I know she had a tongue tie and a dairy intolerance. But beyond that, I have very few memories of what her infant days were actually like.

Did I fail her in that sense? Is this normal for a second child, to lack the time and energy to pay attention to and record every last moment of infancy like we did with our first babies? Was it just because my kids were so close in age that I was incapable of processing those newborn days? Was it because she was a harder baby?

I don't have any answers to these questions, but what I do know is that I am so happy that we had a second child. And I'm even happier that we've decided to stop at two. I have my moments where I think about friends who lost their siblings and think, what if that happens to one of my girls and then they're all alone? But I know two was the right number for us.

For a long time, I thought of my younger daughter in the context of my older one, like about how close they would grow up to be or how sweet it was to watch them play together. In that sense, it did seem like I had her to be a companion to my first child.

But suddenly, at two, my baby has become a person. “She's so much more fun now,” my mother recently remarked. I can't agree with that more. Her verbal skills took awhile to emerge, but suddenly she has sentences and opinions, which she never hesitates to share. She can ask for specific music or a book or movie. She has a totally different personality from my first daughter, which is sometimes a challenge, but most of the time, a complete joy to watch unfold.

With my older daughter in school three mornings a week, I have a good amount of one on one time with my little one. In the last few months, we've had so much fun getting to know each other in a way that we never have before. She really is so much more fun now.

When I watch my daughters play together, it makes me so happy that they will always have each other. I hope that they stay as close as they are now as they grow up. I'm also grateful that I have a second child to love and bond with. My older daughter is very close to my husband, but for now, the baby prefers me, which is very special to me, even if it doesn't last.

There are a million reasons to have a second (or third or fourth) child and plenty of other reasons to just have one. Can you afford a second? Will your home accommodate them? Does your health permit it? Are you prepared to have your life change? Why do you want a second? Are you ready to do it all again?

These are very personal questions and a very personal decision.

My friend and I never got to finish our conversation. I wish we had. I know what I would tell her. From my experience, the second time around was so much harder, from pregnancy to childbirth to the infant days. That first year was really tough. But I also felt more confident as a parent, despite facing different struggles. I was able to use my experiences from the first time to make better decisions.

As hard as it was, I am so happy we had her. My daughters right now are the best of friends and I have the joy of bonding with a second smart and funny little girl.

In the end, it doesn't really matter why we decided to have a second child. She's here. She's wonderful and challenging and very much her own person and I love her for being her, not just for being a sister to my older daughter. I can't wait to see my friend again and tell her all of this to help support her on her road to adding to her own family.