

Individuality – A Complex Process

Encouragement for individualisation in twins, triplets and more includes respect for the deep connection they have with each other.

NEWS

10 October, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – The International Council of Multiple Birth Organisations (ICOMBO) has announced the theme of this year’s Multiple Births Awareness Week (November 16 - 22) - *"Helping our Multiples Shine as Individuals"*. ICOMBO utilizes Multiple Birth Awareness Week to address specific issues in the **Declaration of Rights and Statement of Needs of Twins and Higher Order Multiples** and to stimulate international discussion and action on a specific theme.

ICOMBO was formed at the 1980 International Society for Twin Studies (ISTS) Congress, held in Jerusalem. For the past 34 years its membership has been raising awareness of the unique needs of multiple birth infants, children, adults and their families promoting their health, education and welfare.

One of the challenges faced by parents of twins, triplets and more is to foster the unique development of each child while encouraging the unique bond between their children. In order to assist their multiple birth children to shine as individuals, parents must encourage them to make individual decisions. The theme also draws attention to the need for immediate and extended family, friends, caregivers, educators and medical professionals to consider their interactions with the multiples. It also reminds the media and general public to consider how they view and represent multiples.

For twins and higher order multiples (triplets and more) to grow into strong, independent adults, they must learn to make their own, individual choices. Sometimes being an individual means that the ultimate choices are the same and sometimes it means that the multiples will choose very different paths. The important note here is that the multiples have been able to make their choices as individuals and not as part of a set.

ICOMBO has produced some resource materials supporting this year’s theme. They can be found on the website at <http://icombo.org/international-awareness-week-2014/>

QUOTES:

"Allowing twins, triplets and more to make independent choices starts at an early age. It is important to allow them to articulate individual likes and dislikes, which can be the same or different from each other. To encourage the multiples to grow as independent adults, listen to each person and assist them to make their own individual choices, and then support each child in their choice."

Monica Rankin
ICOMBO Chairperson

“Twinning rates in western nations have increased dramatically over the last three to four decades. Recent statistics show that twinning rates have virtually doubled since 1980, reaching a high of 1/30 births. This increase is partly explained by the fact that (1) women are delaying the child-bearing years, leading to increased fraternal twinning, and (2) infertile couples can take advantage of a wide range of assisted reproductive technologies to have families. All of this means that greater attention to the unique psychological and behavioral circumstances of twins, triplets and more is needed. No one knows this better than the members of ICOMBO (International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations) in their launching of International Multiple Births Awareness Week, 2014.

The theme of this year’s event is fitting and timely: “Helping Our Multiples Shine as Individuals”. Twins grow up in tandem, sharing birthdays, school grades and many other experiences. They are often seen together, causing many people to view them as an inseparable unit. However, twins are individuals in addition to belonging to a unique and special twosome. Even identical twins who share all their genes show differences, possibly linked to early birth events or school experiences. Celebrating each twins’ individuality, while acknowledging their twinship, is a key goal toward which we should all aspire. “

Nancy L. Segal, Ph.D
Professor of Psychology
Director, Twin Studies Center

“Nurturing individuality within a twinship is a developmental process that requires attention and attentiveness. Right from the start it is important to think about twins as two babies who happen to be born at the same time. Spending time alone with each baby helps parents get acquainted with the babies’ distinct temperaments. It also facilitates bonding, which is quite overwhelming at the outset when caring for two babies. Feeling attached to both babies individually helps mitigate our natural tendencies to have preferences, make comparisons, and create labels.

As our twins grow into their distinct selves and we concentrate our efforts on parenting two different children, we must resist becoming seduced by the ‘twin mystique’. This term implies how easily we slip into embracing a romanticized notion of twinship. It is crucial for our twins’ emotional well being that we champion their autonomy rather than have them live up to the doctrine of best friends forever. If we can enable our twins to articulate some of the hardships and obstacles they confront, they will have the capacity to develop a simultaneous appreciation of separateness and connection. Ultimately this will put them on their path toward healthy intimate connections as adults.

WWW.JOANAFRIEDMANPHD.COM

QUICK FACTS

- Declaration of Rights and Statement of Needs of Twins and Higher Order Multiples – <http://icombo.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Declaration-of-Rights-2014.pdf>
- ICOMBO membership includes representation from over 30 countries - <http://icombo.org/links/>

MEDIA CONTACT

Monica Rankin, ICOMBO Chair, Melbourne, Australia.

chair@icombo.org