

## Multiples Unfiltered Draws Attention to the Unique Challenges of Parenting Multiples

By Mary Adcock

President

Exhaustion, joy, stress, gratitude: Sounds a little like the emotional roller coaster of a day spent parenting multiples. In fact, according to *Multiples Unfiltered*, a new publication from the Australian Multiple Birth Association (AMBA), it's an exact glimpse into the lives of those raising twins, triplets, or more.

The online publication, released in March 2024, shares the results of research by our sister organization, along with first-hand accounts of the unique challenges faced by mothers of multiples.

“Mothers of multiples are often told they are ‘supremums,’ but what if we were told they weren’t,” shares the foreword to *Multiples Unfiltered*. “When they hand you your twins, triplets, quadruplets, or even quintuplets, they don’t inject you with superpowers that mean you can suddenly survive without sleep. Or ... just because they are multiples, does not mean that as newborns they are any less low maintenance. In fact, they are more likely to have additional medical issues due to the increased risk of being born premature.”

Statistics reported in the publication point to difficulties that families with multiples face. Factors cited include an overwhelming amount of work, a lack of hands-on support and the need for added financial assistance.

For example, according to AMBA’s research, it takes on average 28 hours and 12 minutes a day to care for triplets.

“Yes, that is more than there are hours in a day,” the *Multiples Unfiltered* report admits.

The obvious conclusion: One person, even a supermom, can’t do it alone.

Other research findings further highlight physical, financial, and medical challenges for parents of multiples, asserting in part:

- Parents of multiples are nine times more likely to experience disabling exhaustion.
- 67% of parents of multiples report that childcare was not affordable to them.
- Parents of multiples are five times more likely to experience postnatal depression.
- Up to 1 year of age, the costs of twins are almost five times higher than those of a singleton, and the cost of higher order multiples is 13 times higher than a singleton.

Unfiltered stories from 35 parents of multiples living throughout Australia bring those numbers to life by offering a peek inside their homes.

There’s Anne Marie, a mom of twins, who feels isolated and alone in parenting her newborns.

... continued

### The International Scene

The International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations (ICOMBO) recently launched a redesigned website with a fresh, modern look: <https://icombo.org/>. The website has more than it looks! It boasts a new book review section, featuring summaries of some fiction and non-fiction stories about multiples: <https://icombo.org/book-reviews/>.

A compilation of the most recent research conducted by ICOMBO as well as resources on bereavement, education, and adolescent multiples also can be accessed on the website.

“I never get a break or down time, or have time for selfcare. Ensuring my basic needs are met is an ongoing struggle,” she explains.

Taylah, a mom of quadruplets, also speaks to feelings of isolation.

“Having multiples affects everyday life,” Taylah shares. “I am no longer able to leave the house on my own. I can’t connect with other mothers in my local mothers’ group. I spend more time feeding my babies than I do sleeping, and we’re constantly stopped and looked at when we do go out.”

Caitlin, a mother of twins, recounts her struggles with postnatal depression.

“The first six months I was so lost, I didn’t know how to be a mum to two tiny people,” she explains. “It was double the pressure and work to keep us all going.”

Financial concerns plague many of the unfiltered families. They even started during pregnancy for Judith, who lives in a rural town. She had to travel six hours each way to reach a high-risk birthing unit. And Sherre, a parent of twins, highlights the financial burdens that come after birth, noting she is unable to return to work because childcare costs would be higher than her salary.

Parenting multiples is not a continual struggle, though. Parents reveal that there’s also a measure of joy amid the stress and challenges.

“It doesn’t always feel fair that you miss some of the things you imagined with one baby, but it’s special and like nothing else,” Caitlin shares. “My twins are really close, and I feel so lucky to be a mum to these unique but bonded people.”

“My life has also changed in many wonderful ways,” Taylah adds. “I now know my purpose and my heart has quadrupled in size, and we have connected with incredible people who will move mountains to help us.”

By covering both the joys and challenges, *Multiples Unfiltered* aims to draw attention to the unique needs of multiple birth families.

“Mothers of multiples are extraordinary because they are ordinary mums,” the report summarizes. “They didn’t plan to give birth to more than one baby at a time. It was thrust upon them, and they adapt and take on the challenge with an open heart and unwavering determination.”

The full report can be read or downloaded for free at <https://www.amba.org.au/>.