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Even Andrea Canning, who's covered disasters for ABC News, can be stressed by the needs of her toddler, Anna, and her newborn, Charlotte.

Two Under Two

Dealing with one kid in diapers is tough enough, but add in an infant and it can be complete chaos.

Learn what it's like—and get smart advice from moms who've been there.

BY HEATHER GOWEN WALSH

I'll never forget how my 22-month-old reacted when we brought her brother Tommy home from the hospital. I wasn't even supposed to hold her, because I was still recovering from a C-section, but Katie looked so in need of a hug that I scooped her up and held her tight. Then I took her to look at the baby. The next thing I felt was pain—she'd bitten me on the shoulder.

At that moment it became clear: Navigating life with two kids under age 2 was going to be tricky. That's not to say it isn't amazing too—there's nothing more heartwarming than seeing your toddler fall in love with the baby and, though she's still in diapers herself, take on the role of big sister and protector.

But when you're trying to avert a massive tantrum while calming a colicky newborn who won't let you put him down, what you really need is practical advice for getting through it. That's where these real-life, real-mom solutions come in.

Handling Two Sets of Needs at Once

"My 15-month-old had diaper blowout just as the baby was howling. I didn't know which problem to solve first. I was almost in tears myself!"

Andrea Canning; New York City

HOW TO DEAL Keep this mantra in mind: There's only so much I can do, so just handle the greater need first,

recommends Joanna Cormier, of Quincy, Massachusetts. That's the right approach, say the experts. Try to prepare for those "everyone needs me" moments: Set up baby-changing stations around the house and keep healthy snacks handy so you can quickly soothe your toddler. And if one kid has to wait for a minute while you tend to the other, remember: "This is where kids

learn life lessons like how to share and wait their turn," says psychotherapist Yael Sank, of Soho Parenting, a family counseling center in New York City.

Going Anywhere

"Before I leave the house, I have to nurse Kip, change him, and get him in the car seat—and if I'm too slow my toddler grabs my keys and runs wild. Then comes the hard part: carrying everything and everyone to the car!"

Lisa Farrell; Chicago, Illinois

HOW TO DEAL First, leave extra time to get where you're going. Second, stop lugging a diaper bag and keep your car stocked with anything you might need, from diapers to snacks. Third, think about how you'll get from the car to your destination: Are you happiest with your infant in a BabyBjörn while you hold your older child's hand? Is a double stroller more your style? Just put safety first—if your toddler can't be trusted to not dart into traffic, strap her in.

Also consider *where* you're going, says Jennifer Bingham Hull, author of *Beyond One: Growing a Family and Getting a Life*. "With a toddler spilling orange juice while you try to nurse the baby, that coffee shop you used to frequent with just one may not be a good fit," she says. So seek out places that are meant for young kids and the noise and mess that goes with them, from storytime at the library to the local park. And don't feel ashamed if you suddenly become a homebody: There's nothing wrong with staying in your backyard and having another mom and her kids over when you need to socialize.

Guilt, Guilt, Guilt!

"I sometimes feel bad for our 6-month-old, because we're so focused on our older son, who is very active and grabs our attention."

Caryn Winkler; Arlington, Virginia

HOW TO DEAL It's impossible to be the same mother to your second that you were to your first, but that's probably for the better, says Hull. "With your first, chances are you were constantly fretting over him; children don't need that kind of laserlike focus."



Canning often feeds Charlotte expressed milk so she can more easily cope with Anna if something comes up.



Getting out the door can be a struggle—but it's worth it to be able to take a relaxed stroll through the park.



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On the other hand, perhaps you're worried that the newborn has rocked your older child's world. Good news if she's under 16 or 17 months: She might not notice much. Young toddlers are in a great place: They're happy with themselves, not yet pushing the boundaries of their independence and kinda clueless about how a new baby might affect them. "Tessa was just 13½ months old when Sienna was born" says Jodi Trivax, of Birmingham, Michigan. "She just accepts that her sister was always in the picture."

If your firstborn is 18 months or older, life probably won't be so rosy. But you can do things to make the

seven months pregnant, I signed James up for a daddy-and-me soccer class on Saturday mornings," says Farrell. "It brought my husband and son closer together—in fact, James looks forward to it all week. And it gives me time to focus on the baby."

Pure Exhaustion

"I'm 'on' all day, carrying my girls around, changing diapers, racing to run errands only to race home for naptime. By the end of the day, I feel like I've been hit by a truck!"

Michele de Bourbon, New York City
HOW TO DEAL First, remind yourself that you're doing the best you can.

"Caring for two is taxing, physically and emotionally. You're dragging car seats and carrying around these little bodies," says Sank. "But what's harder is that they aren't rational: They need you to do everything and they can't tell you what exactly they want."

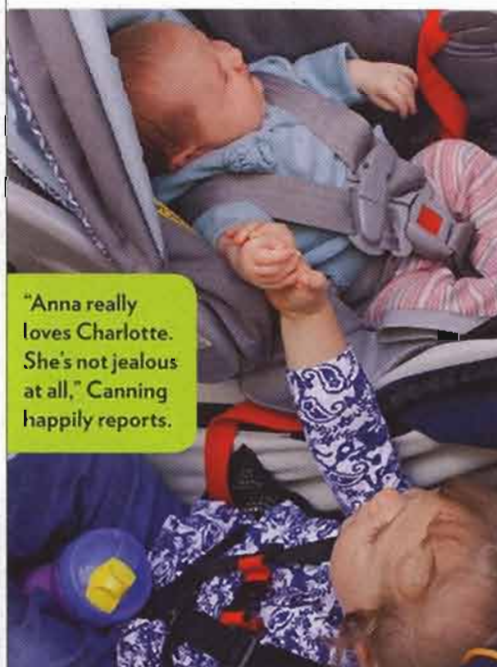
Then, remember that if you try to do it all alone, you're headed for burnout. Hire a sitter or lean on friends, even for an hour. If that's impossible, carve out downtime during the day. "Carleigh was 17 months old when Luke was born," says Melissa Breen, of Manhasset, New York. "When I was at the end of my rope, I'd strap them in their car seats and go for a drive.

They'd snooze and I could recharge." On the way back, hit the drive-thru for coffee; it can be a godsend when your patience is shot!

A Clingy Toddler

"Nursing my firstborn was great, but with Ava it was like, 'When can I be done?' because I always had a 23-month-old pulling at me."

Lisa Brewer, Presque Isle, Maine
HOW TO DEAL Even a toddler who likes her new sibling is apt to get jealous. "Remember, 18 months is the start of a tough stage. A child is experiencing the emergence of will, but she doesn't have the words to tell



"Anna really loves Charlotte. She's not jealous at all," Canning happily reports.

transition easier. "No matter how young he is, prepare your toddler for the newborn's arrival—and revisit the topic in the months following it," says *Parents* advisor Jenn Berman, Psy.D., author of *SuperBaby: 12 Ways to Give Your Child a Head Start in the First 3 Years*. By talking about it you reassure him that everything is okay. "Read books about having a new sibling, buy him a doll to play with, and explain how things will be different—but also emphasize what will be the same."

You may also want to consider enrolling your older child in a big-kids-only activity. "When I was

you what she wants," says Dr. Berman. Throw a new baby into the mix and of course she's going to act out. In fact, one of the biggest mistakes parents make is not allowing their firstborn to have negative feelings toward her new sibling. "If your toddler tries to hit the baby, or says, 'I don't like her,' the worst thing you can do is say, 'Yes you do. Be nice,'" Dr. Berman explains. Instead, validate her feelings by saying, 'I know it's hard to share Mommy,' and then sit down together to cuddle. "One-on-one time is the best inoculation against acting out," says Dr. Berman. Another way to guard against jealousy is to encourage your child to be involved with the baby. "When I'm giving the baby a bath, I let Anna gently rub her legs with a washcloth," says Canning. "She loves being Mommy's helper!"

Of course, none of this helps much mid-feeding, so you just might have to grin and bear your toddler attempting to get your attention. Your best bet is to try to distract him by keeping a basket of special toys and books that only come out when your boobs do. If all else fails, you may need to call on *Dora*, like Brewer did. "I accepted that if an episode gave me 30 minutes to calmly feed the baby, so be it."

You're Mad at Dad

"Both my husband and I had a full-time job, yet arranging child care, food shopping, and planning dinners still fell to me!"

Cara Gately; Darien, Connecticut
HOW TO DEAL Even if your husband is trying his best, there will be days that you think your marriage is imploding. "Suddenly, there's more to do and less time to do it in. And in many a mom's eye, the father could always be more involved," says Sank. So talk with your partner about how you're feeling and come up with ways to make things better. It worked for Winkler: "I can't food-shop with both kids, so my night-owl husband goes at 11 P.M."

Also seek out other moms with young kids. "Female friendships are key. You can have 'aha' moments like, 'Gee, your husband's driving you nuts too?'" says Dr. Berman. "Laughing about it makes a huge difference."

Finally, remember to make time for just you and your husband. "I know it's a cliché, but having a date night really does help us reconnect," says Canning. "Even though it's expensive to pay a sitter, it's worth it to be able to just relax and focus on each other for a few hours." □

The Good Stuff

There's lots to cheer about when you've got two under 2.

They may be extra-close.

Siblings who are closer in age often have more in common, which can bring them together from the start. "Patrick and Ryan share a room and look out for each other. If Ryan has a nightmare and comes into our room, Patrick will show up later in the night, saying 'I miss Ry-Ry' and bring him back to their room. In the morning I'll find them cuddled up together," says Cara Gately.

Tough stuff is over faster.

It can be a relief to get the challenging baby and toddler years done in one fell swoop. Just ask Amy Holovaty, of Spring, Texas, who had her first two children 16 months apart—and a third 18 months later. "Now that my kids are 5, 3, and 2, I'm almost done with diapers. That's better than having it go on for nine years straight!"

The children share a schedule.

Having kids closely spaced often offers logistical benefits. Notes Jennifer Bingham Hull: "They're more likely to share activities and spend more time at the same schools, which makes for easier planning—and less driving."

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