

# november @ symbio

## upcoming events

All events are held in our San Francisco office. Fees for presentations are \$40/person or \$60/couple. No fee for the November meeting of the book group, subsequent meetings will be \$25/person. For more information visit our website: [www.symbiosf.com](http://www.symbiosf.com).

### Book Group: Positive Discipline

Wednesday 05 November @ 6:00 pm

Join us for the first meeting of our new book group. We will be discussing Positive Discipline: The First Three Years, by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin and Roslyn Ann Duffy. The point of the evening is to generate an exchange of ideas and experiences; there will be plenty of room to agree and disagree with the contents of the book. We'll explore what does and doesn't work in real-life and why, and look at how the principals of this book can best be applied to your parenting.

### Getting Your Baby To Sleep

Thursday 06 November @ 7:00 pm

This presentation will cover basic sleep theory and techniques, and include a step-by-step "how to" for a simple sleep training program. We will also address the most frequent pitfalls and stumbling blocks encountered by would-be sleepers. The evening will provide information for those wanting to get a sleep program in place, within the parameters of each family's preferred approach (e.g.: co-sleeping, cry-it-out, no-cry). We will also troubleshoot with parents who have hit snags and roadblocks in an established program.



Photo by Suzanne Sizer: [www.suzannesizer.com](http://www.suzannesizer.com)

## q & a

I just gave birth to my second child and want to make sure I get him on the proper sleep track early. His older sister didn't sleep through the night until she was almost two and I have no desire to repeat that trajectory, nor do I have the patience or energy to get up at night for the next two years. I know I did a lot to create her sleep issues and would like to avoid the mistakes I made with my first. Can you give me some suggestions for getting off on the right foot?

Congratulations on your new addition, and on having the mental clarity to think ahead as you launch back into life with a newborn. Things are likely to go much more smoothly for you this time around because you are planning ahead. Although your baby will not be old enough to sleep-train for another few months, getting good sleep habits in place early will lay a foundation for better sleep throughout childhood (and an increase in your sense of sanity). Here are some basic things you can do to get on the right track:

- Create a flexible feeding and sleeping routine for your little guy. Routines are what help children feel safe and secure and are of particular importance around sleep. Bedtime routines don't have to be long or complicated, just predictable, and can start from the very beginning. (continued on page 2)

## Introducing New Siblings

Tuesday 18 November @ 7:00 pm

There are few things in life that result in more change to one's lifestyle, routine and sense of self than becoming a parent. Becoming a first time sibling may be one of them. We will talk about how best to prepare young sisters/brothers-to-be for the addition of a new family member before the baby arrives; and how to help them through the changes that take place after he or she comes home as a family recalibrates to include a new member.

## Book Group: Siblings Without Rivalry

by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Wednesday 03 December.

Time TBD – please check our website for updates.

## Discipline with Toddlers and Preschoolers

Thursday 04 December @ 7:00 pm

Discipline is an omnipresent topic for parents trying to guide young minds and protect young bodies. This presentation will consider common approaches to discipline from a psychological perspective. We'll discuss how to tailor tactics and techniques to your child's particular personality and temperament; how to balance setting limits and sharing control; and how to use discipline to lay a foundation for self-esteem, emotional regulation and healthy communication.

## Managing Holiday Transitions and Disruptions

Tuesday 16 December @ 7:00 pm

Along with a spirit of celebration and connection, the holiday season can bring a host of challenges to families with young children. Schedules and routines get disrupted by travel, visitors, breaks in school or daycare and the multitude of special events surrounding this time of year. We'll discuss how to plan for, and cope with, the impact of disruptions, when to push through and when to opt out, and how best to return to normal routines when the session winds down.

- For the first 4-6 months, don't let more than two hours of daytime wakefulness pass without putting your baby down for a nap. More than this often causes babies to get over-stimulated, which can make it difficult for a baby to fall asleep.
- From the start, as much as possible, put your baby down drowsy but awake for naps and bedtime. This encourages self-soothing, a skill that's important for him to learn how to sleep through the night.
- Pay attention to what your newborn associates with falling asleep (e.g. rocking, feeding, motion, pacifier, etc.) as it can interfere with self-soothing. You want to encourage your baby to be able to fall asleep with as few sleep crutches as possible.
- Encourage soothing techniques other than sucking to fall asleep. If your baby gets used to multiple ways of falling asleep (e.g. rocking, holding, etc.), it'll be easier to make changes when/if necessary as he gets older.
- Don't always use feeding as a way to get your little guy to fall asleep. It can be helpful to occasionally feed him upon waking and use other methods to get him to fall asleep.
- Use a pacifier for soothing, not as a sleep crutch. Many newborns need the non-nutritive sucking that a pacifier provides; however, this need typically subsides between four to six months. It's fine to use the pacifier but try to avoid letting it become the only thing he associates with falling asleep.
- Around the age of 10-12 weeks, your baby's surroundings can impact his ability fall and stay asleep, so create a sleep friendly environment. Make sure your baby has a quiet, dark place to sleep. White noise (or anything rhythmic) is fine but avoid lullabies or music while your baby is sleeping because it can disrupt your his sleep cycle.
- If your baby has colic or reflux, all bets are off for the first few months and you'll have to do whatever is needed to get him to sleep. Babies with reflux often need to be held upright after feeding and/or need to sleep upright for several months. Babies with colic will need lots of movement (e.g. bouncing, rocking, swinging) to help them sleep. These are necessary interventions and once the colic or reflux is behind them, you can start working on getting sleep in order.

My partner and I are the adoring parents of a rambunctious two-year-old who has been the center of our lives and the queen of our household. We're expecting our second and third child (yes, we're having twins) next year and are heartbroken at the thought of our daughter feeling dethroned. She's typically a really easy-going child but we can't imagine how to prepare her for the invasion of not just one, but two, needy newborns after she's been used to having all our attention. This is complicated by the fact that we're two dads so she won't have the experience of watching a mom's pregnancy develop over nine months as a marker for the change. Can you help us figure out how to ease her (and us) through this major life change without her feeling absolutely displaced?

Congratulations to you all! It's certain that you are all in for many changes and adventures as the size of your household nearly doubles. Older siblings respond to the arrival of new babies in many different ways. Some are mostly excited and welcoming, some are resentful and jealous, most have a mix of positive and negative reactions (sometimes in rapid succession). How an individual child reacts depends largely on temperament. Although positive reactions are easier for parents, they do not correspond to a better adjustment in the long run.

(continued on page 3)

## Private Presentations

Presentations on any topic for groups of eight or more can be arranged by appointment. These presentations can be done at your home or another space of your choice, or at our San Francisco or Marin locations. For more details, contact us at: [symbio@symbiosf.com](mailto:symbio@symbiosf.com).

### **symbio**

psychological services for families with young children

[www.symbiosf.com](http://www.symbiosf.com)

noelle cochran, psyd  
lele diamond, mft license # 40325

There is little you can do to influence your young queen's temperamental tendencies; what you can influence is how easily and successfully your daughter adjusts, regardless of whether her reaction to the twins is to invite these strangers into the castle, or to banish them to the dungeon. Keep in mind that one of the most important things you and your partner can do to help your daughter is to remember that this adjustment will be a process for her, just as it will be for the two of you. At two years old, your daughter already has her own preferred ways of meeting new things, coping with change and mitigating her own distress. Your jobs will not be to move her through this process, but to support her as she undertakes it in her own fashion. This does not mean that you should leave her to figure it out for herself; she'll need your help to understand both the external reality of the change and her own internal experience. And she'll need you to create structure, to provide encouragement and empathy, and to set limits. But it's easy for anxious second-time parents to fall into the trap of trying too hard to get a first child to have a particular experience, or keep them from being upset, on the arrival of a new sibling (or a pair of them). By thinking of your job as facilitators and guides for your daughter's adjustment, you and your partner will empower, rather than undercut, your daughter's resilience. This will also help to mitigate your guilt when she does struggle. You can think of your daughter's impending transition from solitary monarch to big sister as being divided into two parts: preparation and adaptation. There is much you can do to help her with both parts of the process:

**Preparation:** Despite the fact that she will not see the development of the pregnancy, you can create the same gradually increasing sense of impending change: over the months begin preparing the house for the baby, starting with less obvious changes and progressing to preparing the babies' room, stocking newborn diapers, etc. If you have contact with the birth mother, show your daughter pictures. In the final month before the arrival, talk with your daughter a lot about how she came to be your baby, and how the twins are coming to join the family. Read books about babies coming home and make some of your own books and stories that reflect how your babies will come into your family. Draw pictures with your daughter of the twins joining the family and be sure that some of the characters in your stories and drawings have feelings similar to whatever your daughter is expressing. Just before the twins arrive, explain in as much detail as you can what will happen when they come home. If the process will include one or both of you leaving, prepare her for that too; tell her who she will be with, plan how you will say goodbye when you leave and how you will return. All of this will establish consistency and predictability. It will also help to create the emotional experience of the three of you facing this change together, which will be soothing and reassuring to your daughter in the times when she wants more of your attention than she can have.

**Adjustment:** Keep your daughter's rituals and routines as intact as possible; she'll really need the structure and consistency as she reorganizes herself. If you will have to make changes in her routine to accommodate the babies, do so before they arrive. As she interacts with the twins give her room to have whatever feelings she has. Don't make positive feelings "good" and negative ones "bad". Just empathize with her: "I can tell you really like your little brother right now because you brought him a toy" or "You're scowling at your little sister right now – we know you hate it when we hold her sometimes." The empathy will increase her sense of connection to you and free her from the impossible job of trying to have certain types feelings in order to stay close to you. Draw a clear distinction between feelings and behavior, and let her know what behaviors are acceptable: being mad at the babies is fine, saying you don't like them right now is fine too, trying to hurt them is not. Finally, talk with your daughter a lot about all the change. Tell her how you feel, how you each miss not having more time with her. Give her special times when it's just the three of you – even if that's just a few minutes each day. Show pictures and tell her stories of when she first came home to be your little queen. In all these ways, you'll give her the sense of structure and emotional support she needs to feel secure, and the sense of confidence and acceptance she needs to find her own way through as her little queendom expands.