

Relationship Advice: How Can You Seamlessly Welcome A New Baby?



By Dr. Jane Greer

There is no question that the announcement of a baby brother or sister is exciting. It can be a wonderful time when you are expanding your family and planning to welcome your next child into your home. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle recently told the world that they are thrilled to be expecting baby number two who will join big brother Archie. And while everyone rightfully expects this time to be joyful, it can also be stressful and harder than you might think to navigate. With the...*Arrival* of your newest addition, for the child who is already there it actually can be a...*Rival*. They may worry about

what it will be like to have to share their parents' attention and may fear that they will stop being the center of their parents' world. And while the prospective parents may view it as a gain, the child can see it as a loss. So how can you make the experience less fraught and more positive?

There are certain things to keep in mind which will help make the homecoming of your new family member as smooth as it can be.

The first thing you can do is to include your child or children in the adventure of your pregnancy so they feel a part of it, and so they can get excited about being involved. Help your child look forward to the birth of their new sibling by sharing with them how the baby is developing, and how their presence will enhance the family unit and not take away from it. If you are able to illustrate how much they can contribute and be helpful to you in caring for their new brother or sister – whatever that might mean based on how old they are – they can look forward to feeling valued and needed.

Another thing to consider is how birth order will affect the dynamics of your family unit. I talk about this in my book *Adult Sibling Rivalry: Understanding the Legacy of Childhood*. It is fairly well accepted that we make decisions about how many children we want to have based on the structure of our family of origin. For example, if you are one of four kids, that can seem normal and comfortable, and you may want to replicate that when you begin to discuss building your own family. What isn't talked about as much is the fact that your place in your family growing up – whether you were the baby or the oldest, the middle child or an only child – can often shape how we interact with our own children. If you were the youngest and were always pampered, you may look to treat your

youngest the same way. If you were the oldest and felt you were given too much responsibility, you could take that in two possible directions. The first is to offset what you thought of as negative treatment and consequently be more indulgent with your first child, thereby letting them off the hook. Or you might take the opposite approach and think if I had to do it then they should too, and therefore be more strict with them. Recognizing this in yourself can help you as you prepare for your new baby, and how you might relate to them based on your family experience.

The crux of sibling rivalry is having to share your parents love with your sisters and brothers, and worrying that you won't get your fair share. Everyone understands that. But it is possible to use this necessary sharing as a means to learn how to compromise, how to care about your siblings and develop concern for the best interest of others, how to deal with disappointments, and finally how to accept that you can't always have your way. Taking this into account, sibling rivalry can be viewed as a positive experience.

If Harry and Meghan keep these things in mind, they will likely be hands-on equipped to deal with the unknown and the sibling rivalry that is an inevitable part of an expanding family, and you can be, too.

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