

a dad's point of view

By Jason Jakubowski



Twins Again?

The grainy black-and-white ultrasound couldn't have been any clearer. Two small circles, two dark spots, two little flutters.

We were having twins... Again.

Alex and Madeline were four and a half, Katherine was not quite 18 months and there we were, back in the same exam room where it all started, finding out we were having two more.

For a good, solid minute we sat in silence, taking deep breaths and staring at the monitor as if we were in a trance. Finally my wife blurted out: "Oh my God - what kind of a car is going to fit five kids?"

Without cracking a smile our doctor shrugged and deadpanned: "A Suburban."

Most statistics put the average American family at somewhere between 2.06 and 2.10 children – a fact which has come to explain the novelty of having five kids in today's Western culture. From the minute we saw those

two little flutters we knew we'd be branded a social anomaly.

My mother-in-law, for example, burst into hysterical laughter when we told her we were pregnant with numbers four and five. So did my mother. My father literally took an hour to absorb the news, while my father-in-law simply told us to get a bigger house... and soon.

When word got out to the rest of the world, most people gasped and told us how lucky we were (a legitimate reaction given our doctor's claim that the odds of naturally conceiving twins twice is about the same as getting struck by lightning). Others suggested we get our own reality show on TLC.

And of course all of the people who thought we were crazy to have three children had plenty to say about our fourth and fifth. From the generic "How will you afford it?" to the more caustic "better you than me," people didn't mince their words.

Buried within the novelty, though, was the very real feeling that our life

was changing – and for real, this time. The jump from zero children to two was big but expected; and the jump from two to three was nothing. But making the leap up to five was an unequivocal game-changer.

For starters, my father-in-law was right: we needed to move. Our three tiny bedrooms just weren't practical anymore; plus, we wanted a town that offered a myriad of sports and activities so our five kids, who all already have different interests, would have plenty to choose from.

Mostly, though, we just needed to adapt to the everyday nuances that exist outside the American "norm". Most strollers are built for one or two children; we needed one that could hold three. Most restaurants have booths to fit five; we'd always need one for seven. And most deals, specials, coupons and prizes are for a "Family 4-Pack." With us that would barely cover half.

Kevin and Elizabeth were born full-term on a rainy September morning only a minute apart and weighing-in at

a combined 14 pounds, 15 ounces (which I'm fairly certain qualifies my wife for sainthood). Coming from a comparatively small family, I was in awe – amazed, even – the first time I saw all five of my children together.

As early as our hospital stay, though, random strangers felt the need to weigh-in on the size of our brood. One woman chastised us for having so many children, citing the world population and the growing need to adopt. Another said we should have just stopped after the first set of twins. And plenty of uninhibited types had the nerve to ask, “natural or in-vitro?” with the same ease a waitress would ask “regular or decaf?”

Lucky for us, peppered within all the cynicism and commentary was genuine excitement - mostly from people who either came from or had big families like ours. They assured us that what most saw as a novelty was simply just our life.

That got me thinking. With five kids in public school, I will never again complain about paying my property taxes. And with five kids living under my roof, I should be able to stop shoveling snow by the time I'm 40.

With five kids, they will have to learn patience, independence and responsibility (since my wife and I can't do everything for everybody). They will have to learn how to share, how to fight and how to resolve conflicts; and they will have to learn how to tolerate other opinions and adapt to other interests.

And with five children there will be plenty of people to take care of my wife and me when we're old. More importantly, though, there will be plenty of them to take care of each other.

Life with a big family won't always be easy. We've already had (and will surely continue to have) our ups and downs. But at the end of the day my wife and I rest well knowing we wouldn't have it any other way.

Of all the questions we are asked, the most common is always: “How do you handle all those kids?” I wish we had some snazzy, magical answer; but when people ask how we do it the simple truth is: we just do.

And we haven't even needed a Suburban... yet. ♡

Jason Jakubowski lives in West Hartford, CT with his wife and five children and is the Director of Corporate, Community & Educational Development at Charter Oak State College.



The Jakubowski children: Fraternal twins, Alex & Madeline (6-years-old); Katherine (2-years-old), and Kevin & Elizabeth, fraternal twins (9 months-old).

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