

# girl talk

help with your mother load by amy wilson



**Q:** How do I prepare my 18-month-old for our new baby? He doesn't have the foggiest idea of what's ahead.

**A:** Your firstborn may not have a clue, but look at it this way: neither do you! You're both about to be blindsided! The baby won't be real for anyone until it actually arrives. Even then, there may be a false honeymoon period. When my second child was born, my 19-month-old, Cooper, seemed miraculously accepting for about the first two weeks, which I took as clear proof of my excellent parenting. Then one day, as we packed up the car to visit the grandparents, a cheery Cooper waved out the window: "Bye, bye, baby!" "No, silly. The baby is coming with us," I said, seeing the terrible truth dawning in his eyes. Cooper slowly turned and spotted his brother, Fergus, there to stay, in his infant car seat. And then both of them cried the whole way to Scranton.

Once your oldest finally realizes you're not losing the bambino, it's time to lock up the steak knives. Okay, not really. But your firstborn may become more clingy, demanding, write on the wall in his own poop... really, each child comes up with his or her own way to show you how much he cares. And the only thing that really makes it better is time. Fergus is 4 now, and he still hasn't forgiven me for having a third, his 18-month-old sister, Maddie. I give him Special Mommy Time when I can, and just cut him some extra slack when I can't.

What won't help is freaking out about something inevitable. Most of us have withstood the emotional trauma of a new sibling, so how bad can it be? Plus, no one remembers anything before kindergarten anyway. So don't worry about your son—worry about you, and how you're going to manage two under two!

**Q:** I overheard my husband saying how tired he is. Hello? I'm the one who has to get up and breastfeed the baby!

**A:** First, let me take you gently by the metaphorical shoulders and tell you: yes, you certainly deserve the Bone-Tired Award much more than that snoring lump of nonhelpfulness you married. Feel better?

To a new mother slowly being lobotomized through lack of sleep, there's nothing worse than a whining father. My first baby had reflux, and didn't sleep more than 90 minutes at a stretch for months. When my husband had the gall to remark how tired he was one morning, I reminded him that he had, in fact, spent the night in bed, not pacing the floors. "Well, yes," he said. "But I have to work all day today."

Oh. Yes. He. Did. I gave him the expected tongue-lashing, but he did have a point: Both of us were having our sleep disturbed hourly. That's when I came up with the Separate Room Solution. Introduce a bottle if you haven't already, and then take turns. You do the last evening feeding, then retire to the separate room. He gives the bottle at the next feeding while you sleep on for, hopefully, five or so hours. The next night you're on duty. Soon your baby will start sleeping more, but until then you shouldn't have to be the only one sacrificing.

*Contributing editor AMY WILSON created the one-woman show *Mother Load*, now on national tour. Read her blog and get more details at [motherloadshow.com](http://motherloadshow.com).*