

iz Stone and Kelly Susa hold their newborns and laugh as they compare the amount of hair on their infants' small heads. Jake, Liz's son, is dressed in a baseball outfit and has only a pale halo of fuzz. Madeline, Kelly's little girl, decked out in a pink-and-white jumpsuit, has a shock of dark hair that sticks out in all directions. "She's having a bad hair day," says Kelly.

The two new mothers live within a few miles of each other in Westchester County, near New York City, talk on the phone several times a week, and visit each other regularly. But of course, they're much more than just close friends. It may sound like a brainteaser, but Jake is Madeline's uncle, although he's just three weeks older. And Kelly is Jake's older sister—by 25 years!

"My husband, John, and I had been trying to conceive for a while," recalls Kelly. "Then, last August, when we were spending a weekend with my parents at their beach house in New Jersey, I thought I might be pregnant because I was sleeping a lot and food tasted really funny.

"About that time I noticed that my mom seemed more tired than usual, and grumpy. I assumed she was going through menopause—in fact, I'd just given her a book about it!"

After Kelly visited her doctor, she and John couldn't wait to tell her parents. "'We thought you might like to hear the patter of little feet again,' I said. My mom and dad said nothing—no reaction at all. It was really weird. I asked them, 'Are you ready

by Nicole
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Like Mother, *Like* Daughter

When 25-year-old Kelly Susa found out she was pregnant with her first child, she couldn't wait to tell her parents. Little did she know her 46-year-old mother had some surprising news of her own!



Countdown to motherhood: With less than eight weeks to go, Liz, left, and Kelly compared their babies' kicks—and tried to guess who'd deliver first.

to be grandparents?' For another moment there was dead silence—finally, they snapped out of it and were very happy."

Kelly soon found out why her parents had acted so strangely. "Three weeks later, my mom invited the whole family over for a Labor Day barbecue. When everyone was gathered together, she announced, 'We're having a baby.' At first I thought she was talking about *me*. Then I noticed my father was grinning and looking a little sheepish—and suddenly it dawned on us what she meant. My grandmother looked shocked. But then she said, 'Oh, my God, we've got to stay healthy so we can babysit!' My brother-in-law turned pale. He was probably afraid it was contagious."

Liz says she first suspected she was pregnant the same August weekend that Kelly did. "I'm usually on the go, and suddenly I was taking a lot of naps. I felt pregnant, but I thought I just *couldn't* be, since we were taking precautions. I decided I'd better get a checkup as soon as possible.

"The next week, I came home from the doctor and said to my husband, Andy, 'Congratulations, you're going to be a father!' He couldn't believe it! We have three children already and are down to only James, who's twelve, in the house. But we were very happy. We decided to wait before telling the family because it was still so early in the pregnancy. I wanted to be sure everything was going to go well.

"My mother, who is seventy-six, was thrilled, unlike some of my friends whose kids are all grown up. They were absolutely horrified—and glad it wasn't happening to them!"

Liz wasn't sure how James would react to the news—after all, he'd been the baby of the family for years—but she needn't have worried. "He was very excited and said he'd always really wanted a little brother," she says. "He's even looking forward to being the designated babysitter."

Ironically, Liz's pregnancy was a breeze, while her daughter, 21 years younger, had a rougher time. "I was commuting by train to work as a book publicist, and for the first four months, I threw up in the station almost every morning," Kelly recalls. "I carried a little garbage bag with me everywhere."

ut Liz was surprised by how much procedures and attitudes had changed since she had her first three children. "People are much more reliant on machines and tests than they used to be," she says. "They're more educated about some things, like car seats for babies, but they've also gotten fussier—I'd even say sillier. You can even buy kneepads for babies now!" Early in her pregnancy, Liz had a sonogram but opted not to have amniocentesis. "I'd heard of

people losing perfectly healthy babies after having amnio, and I decided it wasn't worth the risk," she says. "Besides, I was going to have this baby no matter what."

Jake was born three weeks before Madeline. "It was the easiest birth of all my kids," recalls Liz. "Andy was with me in the labor room but not during delivery—I didn't want to put him through it. A friend who is a nurse stayed with me the whole time, which was nice." Andy, a 48-year-old vice president for an office-furniture company, had also been in the labor room when his other kids were born—but back then, it was considered unusual. "When I had Kelly, I was abandoned for a while when the nurses kicked Andy out," says Liz. "It was the same way after the baby was born—at feeding time, the nurses would announce, 'The babies are coming!' and husbands would have to leave."

Liz had hoped her daughter's delivery would be just as easy as her own. But during Kelly's labor, her doctors suspected toxemia. All the signs were there—high blood pressure, too much protein in her urine, and swelling. "They hooked me up to an IV and gave me medication while I was still in labor," Kelly says. "Then, right after delivery, I started hemorrhaging and had to have a transfusion. It was scary, even though John was with me. Everyone was so relieved when everything was okay."

Now that the traumatic part is over, Kelly and John, a 32-year-old production manager at a marketing company, are experiencing all the thrills of first-time parenthood. "John is ecstatic!" says Kelly. "When we got home, I didn't change diapers for the first few days—John took time off from work and did it all. Now, as soon as he gets home, he wants to take care of Madeline. During the night, whoever hears her crying first will go to her, but I try to do it more because he has to get up early for work." After Madeline was born, Kelly left her job. "I really want to raise my kids myself—partly because of my mom's example."

Though Liz and Andy weren't expecting to spend their fifties raising another child, they're both happy about the prospect and share a strong feeling that it was meant to be. And being older parents this time around has made some things easier. "We're more experienced and confident—we don't worry about every little thing," says Liz. "We probably won't go camping as often as we did with the other kids, though. We don't have as much energy."

Kelly likes to tease her parents about their "advanced" age, but they just laugh along with her. "My dad says it's good to have kids when you're older so they can run upstairs for you."

For Kelly and Liz, the fun of being new moms together is just beginning. Liz decided to give up her job as a part-time teacher's aide, though she may go back to work in a few years. During the summer, the whole family, babies included, vacationed near the Saranac Lakes in upstate New York. When Jake and Madeline are a bit older, Liz and Kelly plan to plop them in a twin stroller and take day trips to New York City to visit museums, puppet shows, and the zoo. The kids may even end up in the same kindergarten class at the local school—and both new mothers are glad about that. "Most of all, I just hope they'll be friends," says Kelly.

The one drawback to their situation, Liz and her daughter agree, is that they'll have to resist the temptation to spoil each other's children. "I'd love to fuss over my new little brother, but since he and Madeline are so close in age, I'll have to be firm with him, or she might resent it," says Kelly. Liz feels the same way about her first grandchild: "I'd always looked forward to being a doting grandma, but I'm really going to have to control myself—I can't have Madeline eating cookies in the kitchen while Jake's out doing chores in the yard! We'll have to try to treat them as equally as possible, like they were brother and sister."

At a time when most mothers and daughters have moved on to different stages of life, Liz and Kelly feel closer than ever. "When I first told my friends that my mom and I were both pregnant, a lot of them said they couldn't imagine going through that at the same time as their mothers," says Kelly. "They wanted to know if I minded, or if I was nervous to raise a child with her. Some also wondered if her pregnancy would take away from the excitement of mine."

But none of that happened, says Kelly. "The companionship with my mom has been an *added* bonus. She doesn't tell me what to do, but I learn from watching her. I hope I can be as good a mom as she is."

Liz, too, sees their situation as a blessing. "I look on it as an opportunity to be friends with my daughter, raising our children together." □



Crib mates: Jake, left, is much more mellow than Madeline—she's the sensitive one. "When she cries," says Kelly, "Jake doesn't even seem to notice!"