

# Life

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## And baby No. 2 makes . . . upheaval

While you're changing him, he's changing you. A study shows that the second child alters family dynamics, finances and roles far more than the firstborn.



ERIC MENCHER / Inquirer Staff Photographer  
Sophie Siegel, 5, and brother Sam, 2½, clown with parents Rachel Somers and Barry Siegel. With two, "you're more exhausted," Siegel says.



Sophie Siegel plays with Tinkertoys as father Barry plays with Sam in their Penn Valley home. They're now a one-income family.



Deborah Epstein Henry does bedtime with sons Spencer (left), 2, and Oliver, 5. The attorney cut back to part time when Spencer arrived.

By Alfred Lubrano  
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

**A**fter the first child, many parents figure, the second will be a piece of cake.

By now you're used to the sleepless nights and emergency-room visits, the supermarket tantrums and the sticky kitchen.

In fact, you tell yourself, you're ahead of the game, because you already have the clothes.

But in truth, recent research shows, having a second child hits a dual-career, middle-class family harder than the first baby — despite the notion that the two-parent, two-child model is the American ideal. A family goes through bigger changes — such as the mother's quitting or cutting down on work — than it did the first time around.

In a study released in November, anthropologist Rebecca Upton of the University of Michigan Center for the Ethnography of Everyday Life reported on the impact of a second child on 40 Midwestern middle-class couples.

Aside from compelling women to reduce or eliminate work outside the home, Upton learned, the second child's arrival compelled them to return to traditional American mom roles, responsible for shopping and housework. Also, she found, men became more involved with the second child than they were with the first, thanks to the increased demands for hands-on parental time.

Some of Upton's findings resonated with local parents who were asked to compare their lives with those of the 40 couples in the study. "After my second child," says Rachel Somers, a Penn Valley mother and former executive, "I became the 1950s housewife."

Some conclusions didn't ring true. "I don't feel I've spent as much time with our second child as our first," South Philadelphia father Nicholas Ryley says.

See **SECOND CHILD** on J6

# 2 parents plus 2 children equals formidable upheaval

**SECOND CHILD** from J1

All agreed with Upton's implication that the second child, though loved and wanted, made life tougher.

"What takes them by surprise," Upton says, "is that two children are decidedly not easier than one."

Here are reports from the front lines of family life, as local parents negotiate the two-child juggle, and deal with changes in their relationships.

### Rachel Somers and Barry Siegel

Somers, 36, was the mother of a little girl, and a regional manager for a large cosmetics company that required her to work in Manhattan twice a week and be on the road six weeks out of the year.

When Somers was late getting home — as was often the case with her high-pressure job — her husband, Barry Siegel, an attorney, would fetch little Sophie from day care. He'd return to his office, laying the girl on the floor by his desk to sleep as he worked into the night, sometimes until 10 p.m.

"I didn't feel good about that," Somers confesses. "That bothered me."

By the time Sam was born, the family decided a change was in order.

"With the second one," Siegel says, "we decided the juggling was not worth the aggravation and energy."

So, like many women in Upton's study, Somers quit work. It wasn't an easy decision.

"It took me a long time to give up work," she says. "It felt like a sacrifice. I was incredibly worried about turning into my parents." It didn't help when Somers' mother disappeared. "What are you doing?" she asked her daughter. "Go back to work. How could you give it up?"

Both Somers and Siegel decided that they could live on Siegel's salary, and that his earning potential exceeded his wife's.

Still, Somers disliked being un-

able to contribute financially, and being forced to spend only her husband's money. "I have no clue about our finances now, no awareness of money coming in or going out."

In time, Somers accepted her new role. "Now," she says, "I cook, do all the laundry and the housework. Barry's life is really good. When he comes home, his dinner is always in foil, the kids are bathed, and all he has to do is read them a book, and then it's night-night."

Unlike the men in the Upton study, Somers says, her husband bonded more with Sophie, the older child, because Somers wasn't around as much in those days.

Overall, Somers says, "I'd rather be poorer and be home." Of course, Siegel adds, the second child cuts into private time.

"You're more exhausted taking care of two, and have less energy for each other," he says.

**Laureen and Nicholas Ryley**

Things changed radically for this South Philadelphia couple when their family grew.

A geriatric psychiatry nurse-practitioner, Laureen, 38, worked full-time until Alexander, her first son, was born. She reduced her schedule, and husband Nicholas, who works at a nautical-chart agency, was often able to take Alexander to work with him.

"I had a playpen with toys, videos, books, everything," Nicholas, 41, says. "We'd pound around the city together, and I often had him from morning straight to bedtime."

William was born three years later. Life got harder, time got shorter. "It was more pressured with William," Laureen says. "Just getting two kids dressed and in the car is hard. You don't go shopping with two kids like you could with one. And it's harder to entertain two."

William needed more attention than Alexander did, and Nicholas was unable to give it while he worked. "William is very hands-on," Nicholas says. As a result, William spends more time in preschool, which is fairly distant from

Alexander's school.

Logistics are tough, and affect everything. "I spent an awful lot of time with our firstborn," Nicholas says. "I just haven't been able to spend as much time with William."

**Deborah Epstein Henry and Gordon Henry**

A Center City attorney, Henry cut down to part-time work when her second child, Spencer, came along.

"I wanted flexibility and greater participation in my children's lives," she says. "Field trips, sick days. I just wanted to be more available to them."

Still, Henry, 33, says, she didn't want to completely cut herself off from the working world.

"As a mother, I have a distance where I have my own life going on, and come back more energized to be with my kids," says Henry, who lives in Ardmore.

Like the people Upton studied, Henry's husband, Gordon, who is 39 and a dot-com executive, became more involved with child-rearing when Spencer was born.

"When it was just our first child, Oliver, he focused more on me than Gordon," Henry says. "When Spencer came along, it seemed there were not enough hands to go around. My husband became more of a participant."

**Alison and Staton Winston**

When Winston's son, Julian, was born, she left work for a year. When her daughter, Kira, was born six years later, she stopped working for almost three years.

And when Winston, 39, of Marlton, went back to her accounting job, it was for part-time hours only.

"Full time is just too demanding with two children," she says. Besides, she adds, laughing, "my husband, Staton, needed help. If I wasn't there in the evening, the baby would still be up and he'd say, 'You didn't tell me to give him a bath.' Like, duh."

Thankfully, Staton has been helping more since Kira arrived. "Male



Deborah Epstein Henry and Gordon Henry read bedtime stories to sons Spencer (left), 2, and Oliver, 5, in their Ardmore home. Deborah says Gordon became more of a participant in child care after Spencer was born.

ERIC MENCHER / Inquirer Staff Photographer

participation gets better with more kids," Winston says. "And that's better on the marriage."

Ultimately, Upton concludes in her study, parents have to realistically accept the added burdens.

For example, she says, the message women receive from the culture is that no matter how many children they have, they must be able to do it all — be good mothers, and be fit and attractive professional women as well.

"Yet with a second child," Upton says, "they find they have little time or other resources to do so."

And while women may realize "how damaging and negative" the images of the perfect woman are, "most still say there is always pressure to live up to the ideal at home, at work and as a woman," Upton says.

As for men, Upton says, the birth of a second child marks a major transition. They often become more involved parents because of the extra responsibilities.

"We were a family with one child," Upton quotes a father in her study. "But it really took the two to make me a father."

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