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Preface

After I wrote *Emotionally Healthy Twins*, about raising twins from infancy to young adulthood, I began to hear from adult twins who wanted to know more. They wanted to know if the struggles they were encountering as adults were related to being a twin and, if so, what they could do about their situation. Twins who came to my speaking engagements and workshops or who found me online said that they were relieved to discover that they were not alone—that other adult twins faced similar issues, such as feeling overly dependent on their twin, having trouble forging intimate relationships, worrying that one twin will feel abandoned if the other gets married or moves away, resenting the ongoing role of caretaker to their adult twin, competing with their twin's significant other, tiring of the comparisons to their twin, and wondering if they will ever be perceived and valued on their own terms.

In speaking and blogging about such concerns, treating clients in my private practice, and listening to so many adult twins eager for answers and advice, I realized that I had to write a second book. As a therapist specializing in twin issues, a mother of adult twins, and a twin myself, I knew a book was needed that specifically addresses the unique interpersonal and existential problems faced by adult twins, a group whose numbers continue to grow. According to a January 2012 report by the National Center for Health Statistics, the rate of twin births rose 76 percent from 1980 to 2009. In 2009, one out of thirty births was a twin birth.¹

The Same but Different deals with the reality of being a twin, which bears little resemblance to the idealized portrait presented by the media. That portrait draws from what I call the *twin mystique*, which holds that twins

are essentially mysterious, inseparable, and magical. Twins are assumed to be each other's predestined life partner and to feel lost without the other. They are thought to be able to read each other's minds and finish each other's sentences. Together they comprise a kind of singular entity—two as one. Such romantic assumptions thwart our understanding of what twins actually experience.

If you are a twin, as you read the stories you will identify with many of the twins' personal histories. These are women and men who have confronted and in most cases successfully dealt with the twin-related concerns we will explore throughout the book. My hope is that their stories will provide not only emotional validation but also psychological insight and meaningful guidance. Developing the capacity to be self-reflective and authentic will enhance the quality of your relationships with your twin and intimate others.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply and eternally indebted to the twins who have entrusted me with their stories and struggles. I hope that our collaboration will encourage twins to explore their relationship issues without stigma or shame.

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Finally, my chaotic, lively, and engaging family is the love of my life. My five adult children are terrific critical observers and avid supporters. My husband, Robert, watches over me with dutiful devotion so that I am able to complete my work without interruptions or distractions. To each of them, I am immensely grateful and appreciative.

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Outing Your Feelings

Being a twin is a blessing and a curse. It's heaven when we get each other and hell when we don't. Our disagreements are like stab wounds. My brother can't accept that we might have a different opinion, so he'll react by saying something harsh that will just cut to the bone. I'll have a visceral feeling and just shut down. He makes me feel so guilty for not being in 100 percent agreement with him. —Jeff, 31

When Jeff talked to me about his relationship with his twin brother, Jamie, it was the first time he had ever expressed his true feelings about being and having a twin. He spoke about being unable to have a disagreement with Jamie without one of them feeling offended or crazy. He said he is unable to be himself around his brother, which he assumed was abnormal for twins. And he resents always being there for Jamie when Jamie rarely reciprocates. At the end of our initial conversation, Jeff admitted that he felt guilty for expressing such negative thoughts about the relationship that has meant more to him than any other. The anger and disappointment he had expressed to me had made him feel terribly uneasy, and he apologized for crying, saying, “I know my feelings aren’t normal.”

I assured him that they are.

In my many years of counseling adult twins, hundreds of women and men have confided that being a twin is a secret struggle. Secret because twins assume that their ambivalent feelings—about a relationship that others idealize—should be kept under wraps and a struggle because masking one’s emotions can be stressful and traumatic. When I assure adult twins that depression, betrayal, and resentment are common responses to twin-related issues, they always express an overwhelming sense of relief. Adult same-sex twins are surprised and reassured to find out that their concerns are shared by other twins, regardless of their age or background. They are comforted when they realize that they are not alone in confronting disturbing issues stemming from one of the closest relationships imaginable yet one they didn’t choose.

As you begin the self-reflective journey that this book represents, I invite you to be open with yourself about your experience of being a twin. Acknowledging conflicted or negative feelings is the first step toward understanding your twinship, discovering who you are as an individual, and deciding what you want from your relationships and your life. It wasn’t that long ago that I took those initial steps myself, which led me to write this book.

Uncovering My Real Feelings about Being a Twin

My identical twin sister, Jane, and I were very close growing up. That’s how we appeared to others, and that is how I characterized our relationship in my mind for many years. We were each other’s favorite playmate as little girls, we enjoyed the twin celebrity status in elementary school, and we hung out together as teens. There wasn’t a lot of overt conflict between us, and only years later did I discover the essential reason why we got along so well: we desperately needed each other. That need was so intense that we couldn’t afford not to get along, so we became very good at avoiding conflict. The basis for our mutual neediness was rooted in our parents’ inability to give us the nurturing attention we required. Embroiled in their own marital issues,

they essentially left Jane and me on our own emotionally. I became Jane's loving caretaker, and she became my cherished dependent. And since we didn't really have anyone but each other, we tiptoed around any potential conflicts, unconsciously protecting our crucial connection.

After graduation from high school, Jane and I went to separate colleges, and our lives and paths began to diverge. Still, we spoke on the phone frequently, as my father attested with his complaints about the phone bills. As young adults pursuing our respective careers, we each made close friends and didn't seem to need each other as we had when we were young. Not until after we got married and had children did our unacknowledged childhood issues start to crop up.

I realized that I resented being Jane's caretaker and never getting back what I so automatically gave her: my emotional support and attentiveness. And I am certain that Jane resented my caretaking, which could come across as overbearing and intrusive. I came to understand that I had been fearful about our competitive feelings and had defended against them by keeping everything nice. Of course, we never had a hint of any of these issues when we were growing up because our authentic feelings were unknown even to ourselves.

How did I come to out these and other feelings, which had been buried throughout our childhood and young adulthood? Shortly after we were married, my husband started questioning me about how Jane and I related to each other. For instance, he wanted to know why I always seemed to defer to her and suppress how I really felt. His observations took me by surprise. I had never really thought about how Jane and I interacted. Now that our twinship seemed to be impacting my marriage, I realized I needed to take a closer look at it.

Up until then, I had seen my twin sister only from the perspective of a young twin. Jane was someone whose moods and well-being I constantly monitored. I watched out for and took care of her almost as a mother would a child, and it was a role I played from as early as I could remember. But

I did not have an accurate picture of who Jane was as an adult woman or how I authentically felt about our relationship. With the help of a therapist, I realized that although Jane and I had relied on each other as children and were connected in a unique and loving way, we had also unknowingly colluded in a kind of false closeness.

In the course of my therapy, the therapist would introduce subjects that pertained to Jane's and my relationship and ask how I felt. She would chip away at various issues, and I would respond by saying, "Are you sure?" "Really? Do you think that's true?" A part of me wanted to defend myself, Jane, and our twinship—and to deny what had really gone on between us throughout our lives.

I came to understand that my inability to see our relationship for what it was had to do with my unconscious need to maintain our twin connection. I wanted to hold on to the belief that Jane's and my feelings and responses and inclinations were exactly the same because if they weren't, according to my unconscious assumptions, our relationship would be severely threatened. Although I certainly hadn't worked this out in my mind when I was a young adult, I had operated under the principle that the only way to maintain my connection to Jane was to believe that we were identical in a very essential way—that we shared the same feelings and perceptions and that she felt toward me the way I felt toward her.

My therapist helped me understand that twins often have an ongoing wish to be the same that is in conflict with the ongoing wish to be different, and these opposing desires arise throughout life. A twin's desire to be the same as her same-age sibling in terms of feelings and perceptions is particularly persistent, which is what I had experienced with Jane. I *wanted* her to mirror my feelings and observe situations from an identical perspective, so I assumed that was the case.

Once I could accept that Jane was a unique person, with distinctly different ways of experiencing life, I was able to expand my viewpoint beyond an idealized twin perspective and see our twin dynamic much

more clearly. I could acknowledge that I resented her needing my protection, and that she probably resented my caretaking. And I could finally recognize how different Jane is from me—which is how it should be. Acknowledging these truths didn't jeopardize our relationship. It offered the possibility of deepening it.

Perhaps you are struggling with the discovery of unacknowledged feelings about your relationship with your twin. Perhaps, like I once did, you tend to deny any conflicts between the two of you for fear you will upset the status quo, make matters worse, or endanger your twinship. But denying what's real rarely makes the situation better. Acknowledging that you have issues, on the other hand, can begin to shed light and create an opening for positive change.

Acknowledging Negative Feelings: An Act of Treason?

The belief that twins are intimately connected forever is so deeply embedded in our culture that when same-age siblings *don't* feel that connection, are ambivalent about maintaining it, or want to sever it and become just siblings, they often feel that something must be seriously wrong with them. In fact, such concerns about being a twin are widespread, and outing your feelings is a healthy sign that you want to acknowledge the truth about what you're experiencing.

Adult twins who contact me are grateful to finally be able to talk about their twin-related issues. Not only have they been unable to acknowledge these problems, but they also have felt that no one will understand their conflicting emotions. Given that our culture continues to cast twins in the role of enviable soul mates, an outsider may have difficulty understanding that twins sometimes feel that they don't really exist apart from their same-age sibling, that they're trapped in a quasi marriage they didn't choose, that they hate being dependent on their twin but would be lost without her or him, or that they want to break free from the one person they feel closest to. To admit such feelings can seem like treason.

Feelings of confusion, anger, and inadequacy—and even intense hostility and hatred—are common reactions twins experience and nothing to feel ashamed of. Still, many twins suffer shame and guilt when they begin to acknowledge their less-than-overjoyed feelings about being and having a twin.

Monique, an identical twin in her midtwenties, felt guilty about disclosing her feelings in our first conversation. She was distraught and angry with her twin sister, Denise, for needing her too much. Monique said she felt guilty about being so annoyed with Denise and for not wanting to be constantly “on call” for her as she had been throughout their lives. Denise called Monique every day wanting Monique to listen to her and help her figure out what to do with her life. Monique was growing increasingly impatient and was grateful to be able to talk to me about issues she had been keeping to herself for years.

“I actually feel bad that everything is going so well for me right now,” Monique said. “I’m happy in my profession, I have a boyfriend I really like. But I feel bad because Denise doesn’t have what I have. She lost her job, she wants a relationship but doesn’t have one, and she’s just very depressed—all the time. So how can I feel good about my own life when she’s so down?”

Monique was not only conflicted about the discrepancies between her own life and Denise’s but also about the incongruity between her love and her disdain for her twin. She was concerned about Denise and yet enraged that her sister still needed her so much. “How can I take care of myself and my own needs and yet be constantly available to help my sister?” Monique asked. “On the other hand, how can I *not* want to take care of my best friend? I feel so guilty!”

I listened to Monique express her love and resentment toward her sister and assured her that this kind of conflict and ambivalence is experienced by many adult twins. It was understandable that she resented her twin’s ongoing neediness and understandable, as well, that her resentment made her feel ashamed. It was important for Monique to recognize that it is

natural to have these contradictory feelings—and to work them through. I explained that if she didn't try to deal with these issues, her relationship with her sister would always be a thorn in her side, likely leaving Monique unable to move on with her other relationships.

Like so many adult twins I have counseled, Monique conveyed an enormous sense of relief at being able to out her feelings. "I've never talked about this," she said. "I've never put my thoughts together. I've never felt comfortable confronting these things. And I've never found anybody who would understand that it's not that I don't love my sister!" I told Monique that a twinship is a complicated relationship, and nontwins can find it very difficult to understand the intricacies involved in how much twins mean to each other, and yet how desperately they may yearn for independence as adolescents and as adults.

In talking with twins about their conflicted feelings, I often notice their initial disbelief that someone else actually "gets it." At first, it is as if they are saying, "Do you really understand that I don't hate my sister? Do you really understand that I love her, but I also have these dark feelings?" Once the disbelief subsides, there is a profound sense of gratitude for having their emotions validated by someone else. They then feel free to ask such questions as, how can I cope with these extreme feelings about this person that I love? How can I manage *not* to feel like a traitor to my twin?

Jeff came to me with similar questions. He felt like a traitor but had an intense need to tell somebody about how his twin brother, Jamie, irritated him and didn't understand him. "I experience things and believe things that Jamie can't possibly understand or tolerate," Jeff told me. "I've never spoken about this with anyone because not only would I feel horribly guilty about talking behind my brother's back, but I've never had a place where I could come in and talk about it and have it be understood." Knowing that I am a twin myself, that I specialize in twin issues, and that I have counseled many adult twins, Jeff felt comfortable and trusted that I could hear his complaints about his brother and understand that those grievances don't

imply he is a bad person. Rather, I can understand Jeff's complaints as part of a love/hate continuum, which is common among adult twins yet rarely discussed.

While it may feel unconscionable to admit to yourself, let alone to a third party, that there are personality traits you find intolerable about your twin sibling, that you wish you could lead a more separate life, or that you resent his or her neediness, such feelings are part of the confusion that exists in many twinships. Twins fear that to harbor negative emotions toward one's alleged best friend means being disloyal to the one person most worthy of loyalty. What twins need to understand, however, is that strong feelings of love, need, and caring toward one's twin are not negated by equally strong feelings of resentment, anger, or guilt. Such emotions do not make you a traitor; they reflect a normal ambivalence that most adult twins experience and need to manage.

So why do so many twins feel they are double-crossing their same-age sibling by acknowledging negative feelings? Twins are conditioned by their families and by society into believing that being a twin is a privilege and a benefit, that it bestows a spiritual connection that will last a lifetime. And for many twin pairs, this is precisely their experience. Granted, two babies being born at the same time is a wondrous event; however, parents of twins often idealize the twinship to such an exaggerated extent that they offer no space for their twin children to express the normal sibling rivalry, competitiveness, and jostling for attention that most sisters and brothers confront in their families. While parents might admit that their twins fight, they tend to do so with a sense of surprise because they envision twins as best friends who treasure their compatibility. So when twins consider revealing to their parent that they feel stifled, irate, or bored with their same-age sibling, they worry that such revelations could be met with parental shock and distress. Parents might accuse them of being disloyal.

Perhaps you have played along with the "best friends forever" expectations of your parents and others, keeping any negative feelings under wraps.

Friends and relatives may assume that your relationship with your twin is something that it is not. So acknowledging the truth about your twinship may seem intolerable. In fact, it is a necessary step toward clarity, personal growth, and a better relationship with your twin.

Pain, Shame, and Validation

Most often what compels adult twins to contact me is that they are in pain over issues related to their twinship. They need to understand why they feel so upset or ashamed or angry—and how to rid themselves of those feelings. Maybe they have felt too ashamed of their feelings to mention the subject to anyone. Often they have lived with the emotional pain for so long that it feels almost normal, and they tell themselves that they can handle it or that circumstances will get better. The bottom line, however, is that you need to confront your feelings and understand what's going on between you and your twin before you can begin to resolve your conflicts.

One thing that often stands in the way of an adult twin outing her or his feelings to a therapist is a sense of shame that her twin connection feels uncomfortably constricting. Clients have said they feel embarrassed to come out and say they hate the fact that their twin is still so dependent on them. In a certain way this confession is similar to a mother venting to a therapist, "I'm sick of being a mother! I don't want to take care of my child anymore, but I feel so guilty for even thinking that!" Many twins often feel guilty that they, too, want to sever their caretaking role. They have been taught to believe that it is their obligation to take care of their twin sister or brother, but they are tired of being saddled with that obligation because it is seriously interfering with their own quality of life.

If you and your twin have remained locked in a synergetic relationship for a long time, you may feel so ashamed of your ultracloseness that to out such feelings can take real courage. Such was the case with forty-five-year-old Glenn. Glenn was grateful to talk to a fellow twin (me) about his predicament because he was embarrassed about the extent to which he and

his brother Gary were emotionally tied together, or *enmeshed*. He had never revealed this to anyone, but Glenn confided that he felt his body “tingling” whenever his brother was upset. He would get an actual physical reaction to news that his brother was going through even a relatively minor difficulty. The level of his enmeshment with Gary was so profound that Glenn felt he would be ridiculed for admitting it. But he was finally compelled to make an appointment with me because his brother was falling apart, there was nothing Glenn could do to help him, and he could no longer tolerate his feelings of helplessness. Glenn was worried and concerned for his brother’s well-being but also terribly angry—because nothing he was doing was putting his brother back together again.

I told Glenn that it made perfect sense that he felt angry; after all, he and his brother—because they are twins—had been made to feel responsible for each other’s happiness throughout their lives. Who *wouldn’t* feel angry about continually bearing the burden of looking after someone whom you love but cannot “fix” or make happy? Why *wouldn’t* you feel angry that you aren’t allowed to focus on your own life and be responsible solely for yourself, as a nontwin is allowed to do?

It also was understandable that Glenn was ashamed of his overly close relationship with his twin. Singletons would rarely be so devoted to a sibling, or become so extremely upset by every troubling event in a brother or sister’s life—especially at age forty-five. To exhibit such extreme emotions can be humiliating, even for a twin, whom society expects will care about a same-age sibling as a spouse would his mate. Being held hostage by the emotional neediness of his brother was indeed a shameful situation for Glenn.

And, of course, his feelings of shame and anger were causing Glenn a great deal of emotional pain. How could it be any other way, when those feelings were largely suppressed and unexamined?

What Glenn realized in our initial meetings was that the pain and shame were understandable—and normal. It was comforting for him to

know this, to have his feelings finally authenticated. Validation of such troubling and ongoing emotions became a launchpad to Glenn's journey of self-discovery, individuation, and independence.

Breaking Through the Twin Mystique

Why does outing your feelings about your twin often seem so difficult—as if you were violating a taboo? I believe the fundamental reason is that our culture idealizes and romanticizes twins. We are perceived not simply as individuals who are born at the same time, but as mystical creatures who shared a womb and will forever share an unfathomable intimacy. Most people think of twins as intensely close soul mates connected to each other through a kind of sibling ESP. Many assume that one twin not only knows what the other is thinking and feeling but also can make up for any deficiencies in the other's persona. Twins are seen as inhabiting their own private world. It is assumed that they feel lost without the other and that they seek to preserve their twosome status even as adults. Nontwins fantasize that in a twin relationship one always knows what the other one wants and needs; this creates a sense that twins are each other's predestined partner and confidant.

Each of these assumptions contributes to what I call *the twin mystique*. There is something inherently captivating about the idea of having a double because it invokes a human longing for an intimate, lifelong companion who thoroughly understands his or her partner. People believe that with such a companion, one would never be abandoned or alone. Nontwins project this longing onto twins and see them as enjoying a magical, intermingled relationship.

In fact, twins *can* be lifelong friends, and they can fulfill many emotional needs for each other. But if they are expected to fulfill the fantasy of telepathic soul mates who inhabit their own world, they will never feel free to develop as truly separate people. When the longing to see twins in a

romanticized way prevents others from seeing same-age siblings as individuals, twins feel as if they are merely playing a role in someone else's fantasy.

And then there are the cultural references that further embellish the romantic notion of hyperconnected, indivisible twins. In the film *The Social Network*, identical twins Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss go up against Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg for allegedly stealing their idea. Before they take their case to their lawyers, the brothers consider punching out Zuckerberg. Attempting to convince his brother that Zuckerberg will be easy to defeat, one twin says, "I'm six-foot-five, 220 pounds—and there are two of me." The remark gets a laugh from the audience and reinforces the notion that twins are essentially clones. The actual Winklevoss twinship is further embellished in a *Washington Post* article, in which the writer states that "The real Winklevosses have recently completed matching MBAs at Oxford."² Matching MBAs? It is as if the writer even wants to depict the brothers' academic accomplishments as identical—or at least in sync. In fact, Tyler Winklevoss seems to think of himself as quite distinct from his brother. When asked by a reporter if he thought he looked like the actor who played him, he replied, "Asking a twin that question is funny because we're used to seeing the smallest differences between each other."³

The media often portray twins as an awesome duo—a more potent force than a mere singular character, given their double identity. Whether they're aligned with the good guys or the forces of evil, twins are thought to deliver twice the wallop, and thus their presence in literature and film is both exotic and thrilling. One charming set of twins currently appealing to younger audiences is the Weasley Twins in the *Harry Potter* books and movies. Mischievous and creative, Fred and George Weasley are said to fight tyranny and hatred with their clever sense of humor and daring sense of adventure. Their personalities are described as very similar, yet completely opposite from their older brother, Percy. According to their younger sister, Ginny, "The thing about growing up with Fred and George

is that you sort of start thinking anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."⁴ It is clear that two Weasleys provide at least twice the fun and excitement than either would on his own.

Embodying the evil side of the twin spectrum is the twin brother and sister team, Jane and Alec, in the *Twilight Saga* book and film series. Imbued with magnificent, sadistic powers, they are considered to be the Volturi's most offensive weapons. Each twin possesses the ability to crush an opponent, earning themselves the moniker "the witch twins."⁵

On a slightly more realistic level, Phoebe, the loveable yet quirky character on the television series *Friends*, has an identical twin named Ursula whose outrageous, bad girl behavior is mistaken for Phoebe's. In one instance, Phoebe receives unwanted attention from men until she discovers that Ursula is starring in pornographic films using Phoebe's name. In another episode, Ursula sells Phoebe's birth certificate to a Swedish runaway. Such twin antics reinforce the notion that having an identical twin provides the perfect opportunity for devious schemes and trickery. And the Phoebe/Ursula twinship also bolsters the idea of the good twin/bad twin dichotomy, a notion that is apparent in popular culture.

The double whammy threat of the Winklevoss whiz kids, the dual charms of Harry Potter's buddies, and the underhanded pranks of a *Friend's* conniving twin—each stereotype plays into and fortifies the twin mystique. Enjoying such portrayals as entertainment is fine, but when it comes to your own behavior, breaking through the twin mystique means rejecting cultural expectations and, instead, honoring your individual feelings and your right to an individual life.

Getting Comfortable with Ambivalence

Honoring your individual feelings about your twinship may sound like a straightforward assignment, but for many twins it can be daunting. That's because recognizing both the positive and negative parts of your relationship contradicts what twins are often taught. Having minor squabbles

with your twin may be okay when you're young, but as adults, twins are generally expected to appreciate and treasure their twin and the twinship. Thanks to the twin mystique, many twins feel they aren't entitled to a more nuanced, ambivalent perspective on their relationship. They believe they must live up to the expectation that twins only recognize the best in each other and are essentially on the same page. With the standard set so high, a twin may sense that any negative feeling toward his or her same-age sibling has the power to destroy the twinship. But are twin relationships really that fragile—or can adult twins be truthful about how they feel without fearing it will be the end of the world?

The key to a healthy twinship is becoming comfortable integrating two opposing emotions that you might feel toward your twin. Handling ambivalence means allowing contradictory feelings to surface and realizing that, when you do, you'll be better equipped to deal with problems in your relationship. A prerequisite for healthy attachment is the ability to hold both loving and upset emotions toward someone. When you can acknowledge reasonable negative feelings without the fear of destroying the relationship, you position yourself to engage more authentically and deeply with those to whom you're closest.

Perhaps your interactions with your twin often leave you feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, or excessively disappointed. Learning to feel comfortable with ambivalence means that you can accept such unpleasant feelings as a natural consequence of your connection to your twin, just as your love for him or her is also natural. The more comfortable you become with such mixed emotions, the less guilty you're likely to be when you acknowledge and express your negative feelings.

Nora, a lively and insightful twenty-five-year-old, struggled to articulate and understand her authentic, yet conflicting, feelings toward her twin sister, Lynette: resentment, guilt, and love. "I never thought there was any problem with my relationship with my twin sister," Nora told me in an interview.

We were pretty much inseparable during grammar school; we were put in separate classes but went to the same birthday parties and had the same friends. Then at college we roomed together and socialized together, but I started having more friends of my own. Usually, though, I'd ask them if it was okay if Lynette joined us—not because I wanted her there necessarily but because I knew she was shy and had a hard time making friends. It wasn't until we graduated college and I was working and living on my own, about ten miles from her, that I noticed this kind of nagging feeling whenever Lynette would call me during the week and ask what I was doing on the weekend. I could hear in her voice that she was lonely and wanted me to fill in that void for her. My chest would tighten, and I knew I couldn't just go about my life without her.

But I really just wanted to *not* have to worry about her for once. We were both all grown up now, and I wanted to finally do my thing, be my own person. But I felt so sorry for her, that I absolutely couldn't abandon her. And that part of me that felt uncomfortable and angry. I tried to just stuff it down—until I kind of blew up at her one time about something totally unrelated to anything. With the help of a therapist, I started looking at my relationship with Lynette and realizing that these feelings of *not* wanting her around all the time were beginning to get to me. Now, sometimes anyway, I can say no to my sister when I don't want to be with her, and I feel okay about it. There's still a twinge of guilt, but I'm understanding more that it is okay to disappoint her. It doesn't mean I don't love her.

Unfortunately, most twins don't feel they have permission to express what they authentically feel about being and having a twin. Many fear that to do so would mean jeopardizing a relationship that is often valued even more highly than a marriage. Sadly, when your honest feelings about your twinship are suppressed, what is presumed to be the most intimate of relationships becomes one of the most inauthentic and dishonest. Rather than acknowledging any negative feelings toward your twin, you may either put up a good front or constantly argue without getting to the root of what's bothering you. Whether your twinship is superficially compatible

or outwardly combative, neither extreme can reflect the spectrum of your authentic feelings. Every close relationship involves ambivalence, and this is especially true of twins who may feel they must live up to the unrealistic expectation of lifelong closeness and sanctioned codependency. Given such intense pressure to match the twin ideal, the very real connection most twins feel, and the inevitable conflicts that arise, it is no wonder that adult twins feel a mixture of resentment and love, guilt and loyalty, anger and delight.

When you become comfortable with ambivalence, you can abandon the simplistic belief that adult twins must be either perfectly matched soul mates or fractured enemies—and begin to believe in the healing power of emotional truth.

Rocking the Emotional Boat

By rocking the boat I don't necessarily mean outing your feelings to your twin or to a therapist, although you may decide to do so at some point. I am talking about being honest with yourself about how you feel toward your twin and the relationship the two of you have shared throughout your lives. Giving yourself permission to acknowledge your true feelings is incredibly liberating. Finally being able to say to yourself, "I'm angry at my twin for holding me back from what I really want to do" or "I'm fed up with needing my twin too much," will be a first step toward setting yourself free from the constraints of an unhealthy, binding relationship. But freeing yourself cannot happen without emotional honesty.

When you hide your feelings from yourself, you restrict your ability to know yourself and authentically relate to others. Unacknowledged emotions spill over into your interactions not only with your twin but others as well, so that you react to people without understanding your reactions. Keeping secrets becomes a breeding ground for confusion, distortion, and misperceptions. You may get intensely irritated or upset but are unable to trace your emotions to the feelings hidden in that twinship boat, which

you don't want to rock for fear of capsizing. The truth is that you cannot be authentic with anyone if you're not in touch with your emotional core, and for twins that core includes the person who was born on your birthday.

Being afraid to confront your true feelings about your twinship is understandable because doing so is a signal that you're ready to make a change, and change is scary. Although you may be apprehensive about confronting the truth, facing your twinship issues and working through them will be immensely liberating. You'll discover you have the option to release yourself from the stereotypic ways that twins are forced to relate to each other. You'll be able to choose the type of relationship you'd like to have with your twin brother or sister. And you'll feel that you deserve to live your life as a singular adult, rather than as half of a duo. You'll gain perspective on yourself and your twin so that you can enjoy each other as friends and siblings rather than idealized partners. And you'll understand that your adult relationships don't have to replicate your twinship.

Rocking the emotional boat doesn't require that you and your twin "tell all" to one another; you can certainly keep your revelations and insights to yourself. What it does require is giving yourself permission to recognize the troubling emotions you've been carrying in that boat so you can deal with them in a beneficial way—and get on with your life.

If outing your feelings is step one, what's next? The process of acknowledging, exploring, and dealing with your twinship issues can be summed up in these essential steps:

1. Rock the emotional boat by outing your feelings.
2. Explore those feelings—either on your own (in conjunction with this book) or with a therapist who is familiar with twin issues.
3. Deal with your twin-related feelings and issues so that you feel free to pursue the life you choose.

Throughout this book, we'll be discussing the most common issues that arise between identical and nonidentical same-sex twins. Certainly

every relationship is unique, but many twins face similar emotional hurdles. As you identify those issues that most closely resemble yours and learn how others have confronted and dealt with them, you'll begin to discover what you can do to improve your twinship—and flourish in your own life.

Adult Twin Survey

I invite you to read through the following list of survey statements and identify any concerns and feelings that you share. This will help you to recognize your particular issues so you'll be better prepared to address them throughout the book. Reviewing these statements will also help you to realize that you are not alone in feeling many of the distressing emotions you may have been reluctant to acknowledge.

- I'll never love anyone as much as my twin, and that worries me.
- I've never had the chance to figure out who I am apart from my twin.
- I would be lost if my twin moved to another city.
- I feel guilty for wishing that my twin lived somewhere else so that I could be more independent from her/him.
- I don't know how to tell my twin that I need more space without hurting her/his feelings.
- I can't concentrate on my own life because I'm constantly worried about my twin's well-being.
- I feel guilty for not wanting to introduce my friends to my twin for fear I'll have to share them with her/him.
- I feel resentful that I can't achieve what I know I'm capable of, because I don't want to outshine my twin.
- I am often disappointed in my friends because they don't match up to my relationship with my twin.
- I feel hurt that my twin shuts me out of his/her life.
- I get very depressed when I think of how my twin and I have grown apart.
- I get extremely upset when my twin expresses an opinion that's so opposite of mine. It feels like we're no longer connected.

- I can't be straight with my twin and tell her/him how I really feel about our relationship.
- I always feel that I'm competing with my twin, and this holds me back from what I really want to accomplish.
- I feel like I have to fake feeling closer to my twin than I actually feel.
- I hate it when my twin tells me how he/she wants us always to be as close as we were when we were kids. That's not how I feel at all, but I can't tell her/him that.
- I wish I had never been born a twin.
- I'm envious of nontwins who enjoy a more normal relationship with their siblings.
- My boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse resents how close I am with my twin, and I don't know what to do about it.
- I feel ashamed that I don't want my twin to feel closer to his/her partner than he/she feels toward me.
- It bothers me that my twin doesn't approve of my choice in partners, and I worry that I'm too influenced by his/her opinions.
- I think my relationship with my boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse would be much better if I didn't have to worry about my twin.
- I'm constantly disappointed in the partners I choose because these relationships don't compare to the closeness I feel with my twin.
- I feel ashamed of how much I still need my twin; I want to let go, but I'm terrified to be without his/her emotional support.
- I feel guilty for hoping that my twin will replace me with someone else.