

Beyond the Bond: Insights into Navigating the Challenges of Being or Raising a Twin

By: Joan A. Friedman, Rocky Pines Press, 2025; 163 pages

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Beyond the Bond: Insights into Navigating the Challenges of Being or Raising a Twin integrates psychoanalytic and attachment theories with the author's clinical and personal experience in this insightful primer for both clinicians and parents or caregivers of twins. The author brings a unique perspective to her writing as an identical twin herself, as well as the mother of twins and a thought leader on the inner world and relationships of twins. Trained as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, she consults with and treats twins in her private practice. *Beyond the Bond* is Dr. Friedman's fourth book on being, raising and treating twins.

An edited collection of Friedman's essays and blog posts on the topic of twins, *Beyond the Bond* is written primarily for a lay audience of twins and their families. However, with its thoughtful integration of psychoanalytic, ego psychological and attachment theories, it also serves as a helpful resource for therapists and other helping professionals embarking on work with twins. Friedman weaves colorful and poignant case examples throughout the book to demonstrate how the psychological development of twins can be impacted by both their twinship and by the degree of parental attunement.

Beyond the Bond is structured in a developmental format - beginning with the musings of the pregnant mother of twins, moving through the unique psychic challenges of caring for multiple

babies at once, the struggles of childhood identity formation, the need for separation in adolescence and early adulthood, to the loss of one's twin through death or estrangement. Friedman begins by examining and confronting cultural assumptions about twins, the romanticized idea that twins are always a harmonious unit of love and support. When people learn of someone's twin status, they often exclaim, "You must be so close!" or "How wonderful to have a built-in best friend!" Such assumptions can shut down twins' lived experience and foster shame around relationships that feel competitive, resentful, or distant. Friedman posits that as parents, caregivers and twins themselves acknowledge, rather than deny, the tension inherent in twinship, they can cultivate more authentic closeness and support.

In the first section, "Parenting Twins," Friedman addresses the parental concerns from the perinatal period through the infancy and latency stages of childhood. Drawing from her unique perspective as both an identical twin and the mother of twins, she illuminates the psychic vicissitudes of parents of twins—the elation mixed with fear, and the abundance of multiple babies tempered by the loss of the imagined one-on-one bond with a single child. Using her grounding in attachment theory, Friedman invites readers to imagine the experience of an infant who is never alone and whose capacity to be alone is continually impinged upon by the presence of an other. She also offers practical guidance for helping twin children to develop frustration tolerance, self-regulation, and comfort with separateness by not insisting on everything always being fair. "Multiples who are always treated the same go through life expecting that they must maintain equality between themselves. This unspoken pact interferes with their freedom to be separate" (p. 12).

This constant togetherness presents unique challenges in separation, which Friedman explores further in the section on “Caretaking Behaviors.” Twins’ needs and feelings become intertwined almost immediately. Without careful parental attunement, growing twins may accommodate each other’s desires because “they are dependent on one another to feel secure and safe” (p. 17). One twin may become the emotional caretaker of the other, “becom[ing] hypervigilant about keeping the emotional climate calm” (p. 49) and subsuming her own needs to protect her twin. As noted by Margaret Mahler, all humans long for the original symbiosis with mother, and twins can deny separation by clinging to the twinship. Because this intricate psychic dynamic is so subtle, many parents and teachers may overlook it.

Woven throughout these chapters, Friedman’s layered twin experience shines. She suggests concrete strategies to foster secure separation and the development of unique identities: enrolling twins in separate extracurricular activities or play dates to support unique interests, providing separate bedrooms to encourage the capacity to be alone, and even celebrating shared birthdays with two cakes and two sets of candles to honor two distinct lives born on the same day.

When parents attune to these developmental needs, the path through adolescence can be less fraught. For twins entering adolescence without strong individual identities, the push and pull of separation is intensified. The twin—long a safe harbor or parental substitute—becomes both an object of longing and resistance. Friedman’s case studies in “Parenting Adolescent Twins” vividly illustrate this conflict: one twin may feel abandoned when the other begins dating, while another may stifle her own independence to remain emotionally close to her sibling. Twins who

have not been encouraged to individuate may flounder when attending college apart for the first time. Friedman again offers practical suggestions—such as attending different summer camps, developing separate friend groups, and considering separate universities or career paths—to support healthy individuation.

Friedman further applies concepts of intrapsychic conflict and object relations theory to understand the developmental challenges and tasks of twin adolescence and adulthood. In “Romantic and Marital Relationships Involving Twins” and “Older Adult Twins,” she examines the unconscious pull to cling to the twin as a safe, familiar object. This dependency may lead to a splitting off of anger, which is a force of separation, through various defense mechanisms.

In her chapter entitled “When a Wedding Feels Like a Funeral,” Friedman poignantly illustrates the perceived threat to the “twinship...a sealed space, sacred and fundamental” (p. 87) when one twin forms a serious romantic relationship. She describes a male patient who fell into a severe depression when his twin brother planned to marry. Unable to acknowledge his anger at this “abandonment,” he masochistically turned it inward, paralyzing himself emotionally and impeding his own capacity for adult intimacy. Such examples highlight how early difficulties with separation may resurface in adult relationships if left unaddressed.

The final section, “Twin Loss and Estrangement,” explores other separations and severings caused by conflict or death. When individuation has failed and conflict becomes unbearable, some twins may seek emotional or physical distance as a means of self-preservation. Friedman’s

sensitivity, informed by her own twin experience, is especially moving here. She describes the death of a twin as a loss so profound that it is felt as the loss of a part of oneself. Drawing on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*, she suggests that prolonged depression following such loss may represent an unconscious attempt to hold on to the missing twin and preserve psychic wholeness.

In conclusion, this compact, accessible volume offers invaluable guidance for both parents and professionals working with twins. With the rise in twin births due to fertility treatments and later maternal age, *Beyond the Bond* is especially timely. While psychoanalytic clinicians may wish for deeper theoretical analysis—available in Friedman's *Twins in Session: Case Histories in Treating Twinship Issues*—this book excels in translating complex psychological dynamics into clear, compassionate insight. Ultimately, the greatest value of *Beyond the Bond* lies in Friedman's rare integration of lived twin experience with psychoanalytic understanding, offering a deeply humane and practical resource for anyone seeking to navigate the intricate terrain of twinship.

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