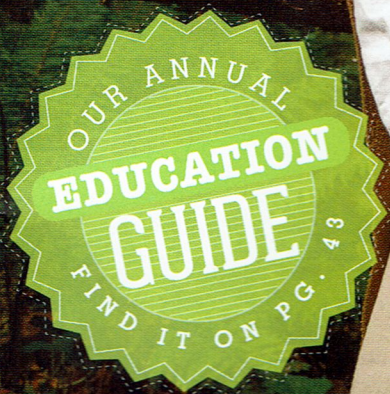


[ FREE ]

Family Health | Montavilla Moves | Fall Arts

# MetroParent

PDX for families



## HOMEMADE HALLOWEEN

costume hacks for your kids, pg.18



# Take Two

Having a second child means a lesson in patience, for everyone in the family.

BY CATHERINE RYAN GREGORY

A brand-new family of four.

Back when I was a mom of one, I felt on top of the world. I had memorized more than 30 minutes' worth of kid-friendly songs, to belt out during car rides, much to my daughter's delight. I had the bedtime routine on lockdown. And with the right encouragement, I could get my headstrong toddler to walk upstairs, lie down for a diaper change or leave the park.

In short, I was a pro.

Then our second beautiful daughter, whom we nicknamed Kiwi, was born in July and my cozy illusion of motherhood expertise went poof.

Relatives swooped in to help us transition to a family of four, lavishing attention on our older daughter, nicknamed "Peeper," and making sure I was stocked with cherries — my snack of choice whenever the nursing munchies took over.

But whenever I was on my own, I felt like a failure.

I'd be trying to fix breakfast one-handed when a hungry Kiwi would start to cry; the noise scared Peeper, who would start to scream, too. Inevitably, I had to choose whom to comfort, and it rarely worked. I felt as if I were letting everyone down.

"I don't think I'm cut out for this," I texted to a dear friend after an overwhelming morning. "It feels like I'm failing at least one of my kids at all times."

When Peeper was born more than two years ago, I often faced that deep disappointment in myself — when I struggled for months with breastfeeding, when Peeper didn't gain weight, even when I accidentally melted a Tupperware container in the dishwasher and was sure I'd poisoned my entire family. I thought that as a veteran mama who had faced her share of parenting dilemmas, I'd have earned the confidence to take these new challenges in stride. What's more, I thought that all the skills I mastered with Peeper — how to

breastfeed, how to calm a crying infant — would make caring for Kiwi easier. But here I am again, wracked with feelings of insufficiency.

As the weeks go by, though, I'm beginning to find my groove as a new mom of two. I'm adding new skills to my repertoire — using my toes to take off Peeper's shoes while I nurse Kiwi, say, and taking a family bath with the three of us in the tub together.

As hard as this transition is, our family is transforming into something greater than it was before. True, I have to divide my time and energy between them (not to mention work and my very patient husband). That means I can't always read a book (or 10) to Peeper, and I don't dote on Kiwi with tummy time and developmental games I find on Pinterest, as I did with Peeper.

This — in theory — will help them learn independence, patience and the very important lesson that the world does not revolve around them. At least that's what I tell myself when I tell Peeper "later" for the umpteenth time.

Most of all, my learning to balance our new family dynamics gives them both a chance to have a sibling, with all the love, quarrels, negotiation and sharing that goes along with that gift.

My daughters may not have a hundred percent of my attention, but they have each other. And that's what counts. ■

For more essays on parenting visit:  
[metro-parent.com/FirstPerson](http://metro-parent.com/FirstPerson)

West Linn-based freelance writer Catherine Ryan Gregory is earning her chops as a mom of two. When she's not redefining the meaning of "multitask"—breastfeeding during a conference call, say, or comforting two screaming kids at the same time — she blogs at [TenThousandHourMama.com](http://TenThousandHourMama.com).