



BABY & TODDLER
KATE & JEFF DAVID, MURPHY (2)
AND MCKENNA (3 MONTHS)



Please Take the Stage

BY ANDREA KENNEDY | PHOTOS BY PENNY SYLVIA

To everything, there is a season. A time for binkies, a time for bicycles. A time for “Sesame Street,” a time for “Sports Center.” A time for dress up, a time for makeup. A time for diaper bags, a time for driving lessons.

When kids enter the picture, parents hop aboard the good ship Crazy Train for the ride of their lives. Each leg of the journey more surprising, more intricate, more hilarious, more challenging, and yes, probably more expensive than the last. But who could want to bypass any stage of it? From babies to kindergarteners to tweens and teens, parents reminisce on the past, squeeze tight to the present, and plan for the future.

Meet four of our local *Kidaround* families with kids at four different stages of the game, and get a sneak peek at their daily grind—the good, the bad, the adorable, and the messy.

{ BABY & TODDLER }



New baby? Quite the handful. New baby plus a pint-sized tot? Pass the wine, please.

Kate and Jeff David recently welcomed new baby McKenna. She’s also the new baby sister to Murphy, age 2. The David’s story is one of complete dependence. “One of the girls always needs help being fed, bathed, put to bed, or all of it... at the same time!” says Kate. “You learn to go on a little sleep and LOTS of caffeine.”

This story of dependence goes beyond the little ones’ reliance on mom and dad. Kate says at this stage of the game her lifelines—in addition to sharing kid duty with her hubby—include Diapers.com, double-seater strollers, ocean wave tracks for sleepy time, and Angel Dear blankies (pink lamb for Murphy and yellow duck for McKenna). Don’t even think about taking an afternoon beachside for a relaxing read of *50 Shades of Grey*. This mommy’s reading material looks more like *Happiest Baby on the Block*.

And happy little ones they are—that is, unless one of them has a meltdown moment like on their recent trip to the mall. “Both girls were crying in stereo,” Kate recounts. “We left the mall, defeated.”

Normally, though, Murphy loves helping with her baby sister and Kate crosses her fingers that McKenna will mirror her positive patterns. “Murphy is a great sleeper,” says Kate, “and I’m hoping McKenna will be, too.”

This stage of dependence also brings the numerous benefits of two cuddly little wubbly bears. Favorites? “The cuddles, quiet feedings, and mealtimes and playtimes. And the baby coos are THE best.”

Another fun facet: With the baby’s and tots’ clothing sections typically grouped together, who can resist doubling up that adorable wardrobe? “Matching outfits are my current obsession,” says Kate. “I can’t help myself... it’s SO fun!”





KINDER KIDS
SARAH & GABE TIERNEY,
FINN (5) AND ROWAN (3)



{ KINDER KIDS }



So long diaper bags and au revoir to the binky! Sarah and husband Gabe Tierney, parents to kindergartener Finn (5) and preschooler Rowan (3), have said their goodbyes to the baby days. Enter: the stage of rambunctious rabble-rousers. “I love the busy chaos of two little people running around,” says Sarah.

Along with those two little people come their not so little toys. “We’ve moved on now to scooters, little cruiser bikes, baby dolls, play kitchens, and lots of NERF guns!” says Sarah. As evidenced by the Tierney’s playroom, “more stuff” also means “cooler stuff.”

“One of the best investments is the iPad,” says Sarah. (Insert smiley face icon.) For the manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination, obviously!

In addition to developing their tech savvy, kinder kids Finn and Rowan are also developing their personalities and personal style. “I love the fact that they are little independent beings,” says Sarah. Take wardrobe, for example. The younger man of the family sports his A’s and Giant’s jerseys with his favorite Nike sneakers.

But, of course, what would kid life be like without the more “interesting” clothing choices? “I cringe to say this, but Finn would wear a muscle shirt seven days a week if he could!” says Sarah. “Ro wears her T-shirts, leggings, tutus and cowboy boots almost every day.” (Let’s not forget, the tutu **MUST** be twirled.)

As for parents, now’s the time they start sharing more interests with their kiddos, carting them to play dates, sports practices, and dance classes. Naturally, it’s not all fun and games. Teaching kids social skills from “please” and “thank you” to wrapping up potty training can certainly be taxing. But, as Sarah says, the older they get, the more fun life gets. “I love the little people they are growing up to be.”



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{ TWEENS }



The jump to tween-hood can seem like an Olympic-sized hurdle. “The TV shows have switched from cartoons and ‘SpongeBob’ to ‘Sports Center’ and ‘Glee,’” says Sonia Susac. But TV is just the tip of the iceberg.

Sophia, 12, and Anthony, 9, are hard-core students with rigorous year-round competitive sports schedules. Playing with dolls is long gone in lieu of playing with nail polish, an influx of hip music and clothing, and the realization of what Sonia calls her “biggest fear”: that it’s not cool to kiss mom goodbye at school. Her response: “I still make [Sophia] do it when no one’s looking or I threaten to blast Mexican Fiesta music and roll down the windows of my car!”

Though Sonia is still the chauffeur (with a sense of humor), she says that the tweens are significantly more independent. But that doesn’t mean her and husband Johnny’s roles don’t continue to kick into high gear. “Parenting continues to get more challenging as they get older, but the issues are different,” she says. For example, Sonia and Johnny are holding out on getting the

kids digital devices—from cell phones to video games—and encouraging playing outdoors or with their (increasingly cooler) toys like a ping-pong and air hockey table, bikes, baseball equipment, and pool. Sometimes, though, not even those snazzy sporting goods can hold their attention. “Their favorite interest is going to their friend’s house—probably to play video games!” says Sonia.

With Sonia coaching Sophia’s synchronized swim team and Johnny coaching Anthony’s baseball team, family time is still premium; and enforcing the rules, especially chores, is considered critical. “I’d suspect bribery if someone put their plate in the dishwasher without being threatened,” says Sonia. Even with their big-kid responsibilities, they are still kids, after all.





TWEENS

SONIA & JOHNNY SUSAC

SOPHIA (12) AND ANTHONY (9)





TEENS
LISA WIBLE WRIGHT & ED WRIGHT
WILL AND MADELEINE (17)



{ TEENS }



Having trouble hearing yourself think? Then you might have a teen. Just ask Lisa Wible Wright who has two. “Everything is louder,” she says. “Voices, television, music, ring tones.”

The household whirlwind is powered by twin 17-year-olds Will and Madeleine, with Lisa keeping them from whirling all the way to Oz. She even squeezes in treasured family time when slowing the kids down seems as impossible as slowing the rotation of the Earth. And she wouldn’t trade it for anything.

“Having teenagers in the house adds energy, angst, and a tempo that I notice is absent—and missed—when they aren’t around,” says Lisa. “Life with my teens has kept me younger at heart.”

At the brink of adulthood, the twin teens toe the line of self-sufficiency. Mom and dad have exited the driver’s seat—literally and figuratively—while Will and Madeleine generally self-manage sports, school work, and social life schedules. Of course, they still depend on their

parents for plenty, but these days it’s tougher to tell when. “What’s been harder than expected is bouncing between when they don’t want my help and when they do, with no obvious rhyme or reason,” says Lisa. “It’s hard not to take their mixed signals personally.”

Though emotions can waver (blame their hormones, not yourself), a constant in the Wright home is the ever-present cell phone. “We text a lot,” says Lisa. “We are very dependent on technology to stay in touch, more so than ever.”

And as the teens flex their wings, more adult topics come to the table, including everyone’s favorite: money. “I wish... that I’d started teaching money management skills sooner,” says Lisa, who now sees bills for high school activities and car expenses. “Just like in adult relationships, money issues with teens need lots of attention and good communication.” ☞



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