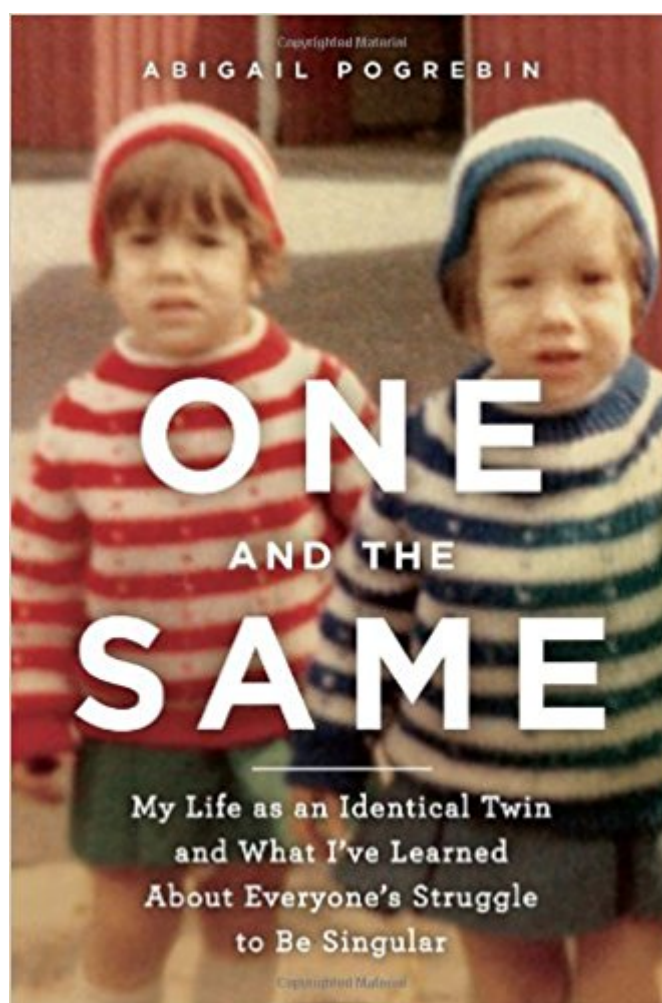


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# One And The Same: My Life As An Identical Twin And What I've Learned About Everyone's Struggle To Be Singular



## Synopsis

One blueprint, two souls. How do you become your own person when there is someone else—your twin—who is exactly the same? Abigail Pogrebin is a mother, a New Yorker, a writer, a daughter, and a wife, but the role that has most defined her, she knows, is that of identical twin. In *One and the Same*, she weaves her quest to understand how genetics shape us into a memoir of her own twinship. What does it mean to have a mirror image? How can you be one, singular, unique, as we all like to think we are, when somebody shares your DNA? In *One and the Same* Abigail crisscrosses the country and travels the world to explore the relationship between twins, which can range from passionate to bitterly resentful. She interviews football stars Tiki and Ronde Barber, who admit their twinship comes before their marriages; a bawdy, self-proclaimed “twin ambassadors” who have created a media business around their twinness; a sisters who stopped speaking for three years; and brothers whose shared genetic anomaly wrought unspeakable tragedy. She explores the new science of epigenetics, which shows how the same DNA can yield different results—a moody twin, a happy twin, one who gets cancer, one who doesn’t. She speaks to the twins experts and tries to answer the question parents of twins ask most: Is it better to encourage their closeness or separateness? Threaded throughout *One and the Same* are Abigail’s own memories of a buoyant childhood growing up with her twin sister and best friend, Robin. “The Pogrebin Twins” were outgoing, cheerful and hammy, very much alike, and effortlessly close. But hey don’t have the same intimacy anymore, and Abigail traces the bittersweet process of growing apart from someone she thinks of as part of herself. This is a riveting portrait of twin life by an accomplished journalist who exposes twinship from the inside. It yields fascinating truths about how we become who we are and about the struggle for singularity that defines us all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jane Isay Reviews *One and the Same* Jane Isay is the author of *Walking on Eggshells* and the forthcoming *Mom Still Likes You Best*. She has been an editor for over 40 years and edited such nonfiction classics as *Reviving Ophelia*, *Praying for Sheetrock*, and *Friday Night Lights*. She lives in New York City, not too far from her children and grandchildren. Read her exclusive guest review of *One and the Same*: Abigail Pogrebin's *One and the Same: My Life As an Identical Twin and What I've Learned about Everyone's Struggle to be Singular* is a terrific travelogue through the world of identical--and fraternal--twins. She tells the story of the twin experience from the inside out, and shines a smart and loving light on this special relationship. Pogrebin brings heart and brains to her own experiences with her twin sister Robin, from infancy to a ripe maturity. And she has done prodigious amount of research, speaking with scores of twins--together and apart--and interviewing dozens of experts on all aspects of the twin experience. Modern medicine has given us more multiple births every year, and so more and more people are parents of twins. When we see so many pairs of kids riding in their double strollers, we ask ourselves so many questions. What's going on in their little minds as they grow up together? Do they feel like they're one person, or two? How do they relate to other kids in school? Do they feel that it's a privilege to be a twin, or do they find it a burden? What about the social expectations that they should love each other best and should be ever so close? How do they separate enough to get married and form their own families? What is the mistake parents most often make in rearing their twins? Abigail Pogrebin has answers to these questions and many more. In each chapter she writes a bit about her and her sister, and then brings in testimony from other twins and the experts. In addition, this book is valuable because of the light it sheds on all sibling relationships by describing the closest pairs we know. Even people without a twin in their lives--and most of us are fascinated by twins--will benefit from reading *One and the Same*. If you're considering IVF, if you are a twin or have a twin, or are married to a twin, or dating one, this book is a necessity. In addition, Abigail Pogrebin's family is one of those singularly successful and loving ones, and basking in the warmth of her life is a pleasure.--Jane Isay (Photo © Robin Holland) Abigail Pogrebin on *One and the Same* Who knows what makes each

of us feel distinctive in the world, understood, really known? If individuality is a hurdle, it's raised that much higher when you're a twin. I started my book, *One and the Same*, to plumb the depths and intricacies of growing up as a double, but also because I knew that twinship is just a magnified version of everyone's challenge: individuality. What made it complicated for me and my twin, Robin, are the same elements that can make it complicated for any person: a sense of being blurred, over-compared, generalized; an uncertainty whether the people in your life truly know you apart from others. Psychologist Joan Friedman, a twin and parent of twins (who counsels both) talks about the difference between "being noticed, and being known." I know that difference. As an identical twin, you definitely get noticed; my sister and I were kind of famous just by virtue of looking so alike. (And okay, we were kind of cute before we hit the merciless stage of adolescence.) But the inherent "star power" in twinship has a short shelf life. Ultimately you need to feel sure of a separate worth, an identity beyond twinship. If I'm not mistaken, we all need the clarity of uniqueness. What do I bring to the table? How will I leave my mark? What do I have with this friend that's unlike what they have with someone else? It's not that we spend all our days self-obsessed, asking how we're special, but there's some fundamental need to know we're singular. My parents could not have been more loving, stimulating, or "modern" in their childrearing, but it literally never occurred to them to spend time with Robin and me separately and that omission backfired at the end of the day. When I interviewed my mother for my book, and asked her why she and Dad never took us anywhere separately, she looked pained. "Because we didn't think that way," she told me. "We just thought in terms of doing things as a family. I should have been aware of it because I should have been smart enough to figure out that something is gained when you're alone with a person. I should have realized that. But it never occurred to us. It always was a matter of 'Let's. Not: 'You come with me and you go with him.'" She said they realized their mistake in one powerful instant when I was eighteen and they invited me to go with them for a weekend at a bed-and-breakfast. "You said you were uncomfortable coming along because you'd never been alone with us. It was like somebody shot us between the eyes; we couldn't believe it. How could this have happened? We never noticed that we had never been with one child." "It was clear that you felt you had a performance level you had to keep up," my father recalls, "and you felt that, without Robin, you wouldn't be able to hold up your end in terms of pleasing us, as if that was anything you had to do. So that was a real realization that we'd missed something. I think we were always so careful to have equality of treatment that it turned out to be undifferentiated." Psychologist Dorothy Burlingham wrote in her 1954 study of identical twins that

mothers can't connect to their twins until they get to know them apart from each other. "Several mothers have plainly said that it was impossible to love their twins until they had found a difference in them," Burlingham wrote. That could be rephrased for all of us, twin and non-twin alike: it's impossible to feel loved, acknowledged, understood, valued unless we're sure people have "found a difference" in us. Unless we're sure we're uncommon or particular in some way. *One and the Same* is a window into the truth about twinship. But it's also, I think, an unpacking of how we each ultimately find a way to say, "Look at me alone."--Abigail Pogrebin

Journalist Pogrebin (*Stars of David*) explores in a palatable, nonscholarly format some of the sticky issues of identity that accompany being a twin. Enjoying an extreme intimacy from embryo to adulthood, twins, especially identical, achieve a unique, somewhat exclusive self-sufficiency that can be comforting and enriching as well as stifling and restricting. Pogrebin, whose own twin, New York Times reporter Robin, grew less needy for the other's presence as they grew older, interviews numerous twins in various walks of life to probe the source and stages of their emotional development, from football stars Tiki and Ronde Barber to a pair of 86-year-olds who were operated on by Dr. Mengele at Auschwitz. Some of the recurrent topics that Pogrebin superficially explores include the sense of not needing other people as much as twins need each other, thus making it harder to find intimacy outside of the duo; feeling jilted when the other finds a partner or spouse (Anybody who marries a twin, asserts one, has to understand that they're marrying two people); dealing with the amplified competition and constant comparison; parental favoritism; and the importance of establishing a distinct identity from the other. Touching on timely medical topics such as the risky business of multiple births, especially by in vitro fertilization, and recent discoveries in DNA research, Pogrebin's personal journey will prove helpful to other twins, but is not the end word on the subject. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

I loved reading this book so much that I was not able to put it down. My twin sons are fifteen years old and I was looking for a bit of direction as to the normalcy of their twinship and how they relate to their peers. I gave it five stars because it was not only reassuring that they are in fact "normal" identical twins but it did give me the direction I was looking for as far as developing their identities and spending more one on one time together with each of them. I would recommend this book to anyone who has twins in their lives, to better understand their unique bond.

I didn't find this book until our 10th wedding anniversary but really wish I could give it as a wedding present to all twin spouses. This helped me reframe my expectations of an in-law whose twiness is more central to his identity than my husband's is to his own. The book provided great context for my husband and I to work through the latest drama productively, and for me to have greater empathy for my brother in-law. It is easier to be mad at an in-law than your twin, even if many of the offending behaviors were initiated by your twin. The authors heart-felt look at the separation process and most importantly, how different that can be for one twin than another in the same pair, was **AMAZINGLY** helpful. Thanks for saving us a years of therapy!

I have always wondered what it is like being a twin. My wife is a twin and I have twin daughters but I have never understood their experience. Abigail Pogrebin has written a very good book for all of us who have ever wondered. While every set of twins is different, there are some common elements from the personal stories Pogrebin portrays, which can help us come a little closer to understanding the twin experience. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is wondering what it is like to be a twin or any twin who is wondering about the struggle to find an identity separate from his/her twin. As Pogrebin writes, "How does one start as a set and end up successfully single? Not just single meaning solo but single meaning singular: differentiated, distinct, particular, confident in one's separateness."

I have identical boys and found this book provided great insight into understanding how their relationship will impact their lives. As a parent of twins I am always looking for that balance of celebrating their special relationship yet encouraging them to be individuals, just as the author describes in her relationship with her sister.

This is a fascinating book describing in thorough detail the issues involved in raising identical twins. Pogrebin provides excellent references to research in addition to her own interviews. There is much to be excited about and much to give parents pause. I'm reading this as an about-to-be grandmother of twins so having already reared my own singles, I see some issues that relate to any set of siblings (competition and comparisons) while recognizing that these issues are heightened when you look exactly like another. The bottom line is that for thoughtful parents, this book offers a lot of insight. From my rocking chair where my role will be to simply spoil them both, I am looking forward to the event even more because of this book. I was reading this as I had lunch and the

waiter told me that he was an identical twin. The bottom line: he beamed when speaking of his brother and still revels in their friendship even as both have gone their separate ways.

This feels like such an important book in its attempt to answer fundamental questions about what makes a person who he or she is. While it includes the requisite freaky-twin stories that captivate us all, its truly intriguing elements are the multi-layered explorations of the meaning of being born essentially married. While parents of twins will be riveted to this book, I really hope it breaks into the singleton-reader world, as its essential discussion is not about twins per se, but about what twins teach us about being human. That should interest any reader--twin or not. Meghan

Regan-Loomis author, *Juggling Twins: The Best Tips, Tricks, and Strategies from Pregnancy to the Toddler Years*

I was particularly drawn by the sub title, "everyone's struggle to be singular". The author did some very interesting interviews, across a range of ages. I found her method of interviewing very interesting and informative. I was disappointed to not have more edification on parenting styles. We are strongly influenced by the style in which we are raised. My twin and I were our mother's prize. The more alike we were the happier she was. We were dressed alike always, she called us "Twin" and we called each other "Sister". Given that there were indeed two separate individuals in that twinship, how was one to differentiate? We were not allowed to compete or to fight. I simply let her do the talking, the decision making, and the thinking. It wasn't until I was 37 and went into therapy that I found my feelings, my own ideas, and finally my individuality. I "broke" the twinship in my quest for myself, hurting my sister deeply. Now in our seventh decade there is not the closeness that was expressed by most of the subjects in the book. Most important to me is that I am Myself, not half of a whole. People still get us confused, mistake us for the other. I, even at this age, try to look different from my twin, a seeming impossibility.

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