mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “What’s it like to be a twin?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

[Video Call]

- Hi, Doug!

- Hi, Juliette!

- I have a question for you. What is it like to be a twin?

- That's a great question.

The funny thing about this question, it's something I wondered a lot about, too when I was young because as you can see from this family photo of me and my siblings, two of my sisters are twins! That's Nicole, and that's Heather. They look so similar that people who don't know them very well always get them confused. They tell some funny stories about when they were growing up, like, they were usually put in different classes in school, and one time, there was a new teacher at school who didn't know that Heather had a twin. Every time they'd go out for recess, she'd see Heather go run off onto the playground, but then, almost like a second later, she'd turn around, and there would be Heather again. The teacher said, "Heather, how do you move around so fast? I could've sworn you just ran off in the other direction a second ago." Finally, one of Heather's friends said, "That's not Heather, that's her twin sister, Nicole." People would sometimes ask them funny questions, too, like, "How do you guys tell each other apart?" That one always made me laugh. Like, uh, they are different people, you know. Or my favorite,

"If one of you gets hit in the arm, does the other one feel it?" No, it doesn't work like that. These are funny stories my twin sisters have shared with me, but I myself really have no idea what it's like to be a twin. I'm not a twin. So, I decided to call my sisters Nicole and Heather and ask them what their experience is like being twins. But before I share that with you, I'm curious, what do you think it would be like to have a twin? Share your thoughts with someone near you.

VIDEO 2

Well, when I asked my twin sisters what it's like to be a twin, they had some interesting things to share. For both of them, there are some things they find a little frustrating. Like, here's my sister Heather, in her own words.

[Audio Clip]

- [Heather] So, one thing that annoyed me when I was younger was that people would see us as the same person, and treat us like the same person. Sometimes people would joke about, "Haha, you're the same person," or if they messed up my name and call me Nicole they'd be like, "Oh, no big deal, you're just the same person." That was annoying because we're two different people.

Her twin, my sister Nicole, had similar thoughts. Here's what she said.

- [Nicole] You know, often twins are made to dress alike. People often assumed we were just kind of the same person, and that was a frustrating thing to deal with, that people would treat you like you were the same being and not separate beings.

But then, Nicole shared something I'd never heard her say before.

- [Nicole] I think another thing is, you know, people get shy, like, they couldn't tell the difference and so they would just—it would make them not want to interact with me

sometimes because they didn't know who they were talking to and they were embarrassed to say.

Wow, so, one experience that some twins have is that some people might feel too shy or embarrassed about telling them apart, and so they just avoid them, they don't talk to them. My sister Nicole shared that for her, she wishes people wouldn't have worried so much about that. Just go up to her and talk to her. But being a twin isn't all bad. There are some things about being twins that my twin sisters told me they really love. Like, here's Nicole.

- [Nicole] When I was younger, it can be more frustrating to be a twin, because you constantly have to share everything, you know, you always have that other person there. Now, I love being a twin. She's one of my best friends, she knows me, certainly better than anyone else. I always had a playmate, I always had somebody to hang out with and be with and talk with. Like, we were never apart, we were always together.

Nicole even said something that really surprised me. She had a question she wondered about people who aren't twins, people like me, or maybe like you.

- [Nicole] To me, maybe it's lonelier to not be a twin?

From her perspective, she wonders, what's it like to not be a twin? Being a twin is all she's ever known. Wow, I hadn't thought of that! Now, it's funny, because even though I'm not a twin, being their younger brother, I've known their faces my whole life, and I'm one of the only people who can tell them apart, no matter what, even in baby photos. See, that one's Nicole, that one's Heather. We found out recently even using Face ID on their phones, their phones can't even tell them apart from each other. Heather can use her face to unlock Nicole's phone, and vice versa. My sisters Nicole and Heather are identical twins, twins that look so similar to each other that most people have trouble telling them apart. But that's not the only kind of twin. Being a twin just means you were born from the same mom on the same day. You share a birthday with each

other. There's a second kind of twins where the two twins don't look very similar to each other. These are called non-identical twins, or sometimes another word that's used is fraternal twins. For example, any time you see twins where one twin is a boy and one is a girl, those are always non-identical twins. They share the same birthday, but their bodies and faces are not identical-looking. They don't look exactly alike. And there are non-identical twins that are the same gender, too. If you meet two sisters who were born on the same day from the same mother, but just don't look exactly alike, chances are, they're fraternal twins, not identical twins. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Juliette, for asking it!