

Am I an individual?

It's easy to lie to people when you tell them what they want to hear. But today, I am not going to lie. I am not going to smile and laugh and respond with, "it's fine, I'm used to it", because although I am used to it, it is not fine. Today I will tell the truth.

Let's start with the matching outfits. My parents always wanted to treat us equally, so of course, they dressed us in the same clothes. My sister and I choose our own clothes now, but having a similar fashion sense means that every so often there's a groan when I see her, the reflection in my full-length mirror that I glanced at after getting dressed. An obvious issue with being a twin is that people have trouble telling me and my sister apart. I have gotten used to the harsh examination and comparison of my appearance to my sister's, where every minute detail is scrutinised right down to the deciding factor – seemingly, I am slightly chubbier. Ouch. It hurts even more the next time, when people still don't get my name right. Happens over and over. It's like they don't even care. Everyone can agree that it would be tedious and annoying to be repetitively called the wrong name or be asked what their name is again and again. Wait – why don't we make it fun? I'll try to guess who is who! And naturally, a lie slides smoothly out of my mouth because any option that isn't screeching "THAT'S NOT FUN YOU IGNORANT – ", (you get the idea), is not the truth. After knowing me for several years, one of my friends eventually plucked up the courage to inform me that before we were friends, for months she had thought my sister and I "were the same person". Stabbing pain. I grit my teeth and force out a laugh. How could I respond to her? I know she's not the only guilty one.

Sometimes I lie down on my bedroom floor and cry. 'Everyone is unique.' It often feels like I'm being lied to. I get up. It hurts. I dress my own wounds and wrap the bandages tightly around me. Holding myself together.

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a twin? The idea appeals to many people, especially at a younger age. They like the idea of having someone to talk to, share difficulties with and having someone who will understand because they think in a similar way to you. Well I certainly wouldn't go running to my twin sister with my problems. People seem to think that twins have some kind of special bond, I am often asked "are you two telepathic?" What? Are you seriously asking me if I can see into someone else's mind? Just because my sister and I have been stuck together for our entire lives does not mean that we share the same thoughts. Despite some people's mistakes, we are not the same person.

When two people are seen as one person, it often means that one person is treated as half of a pair. To me, this is one of the worst aspects of being a twin. I want to be seen as an individual, I'm tired of invariably being paired with my sister in people's minds. I might look much the same as her, but I have my own thoughts and feelings and want to be treated as such. For instance, both my sister and I went on a school trip to Normandy and towards the end of the trip something resembling a prize or present giving ceremony was arranged. The teachers would say something nice about each student, then present them with a small gift. Each person was called up individually to accept their gift. Apart from my sister and I. We were called "the cutest and most gorgeous twins" and had to go up together to receive our gifts. I wanted to strangle those teachers. I smiled and said thank you. The scab from my previous wounds had been torn off and was bleeding again. Clearly, my sister and I weren't seen as individuals, we were seen as two halves of a pair. I wish people would see *me*. Can you imagine what it's like having to share your life with someone because people constantly view you as one?

Sometimes I lie awake in bed at night and stare up at the ceiling. 'Everyone is unique.' Am I being lied to? I close my eyes. At least, to my dreams, I can escape. But sometimes even in my dreams she is there with me.

Everyone hates being compared. It hurts when someone is prettier than you, cleverer than you or better than you at something you thought you excelled at. In other words, it makes you question your worth and can make you believe that you may never be as good as other people. You will be compared to others for your entire life but usually not to one specific person. Being a twin makes it difficult not to be regularly compared to the very person that you are trying not to everlastingly be associated with. My sister and I are compared in almost every aspect of our lives - appearance, interests, exam results, the list is endless. In school, our test results are often compared - when I receive my results teachers often ask me if I achieved a higher mark than my twin. Other times they'll tell me if I have or not. Or they'll tell my twin whether I have or not, despite having told them multiple times that I would rather they didn't. It's discouraging if I get a lower score than her - I don't want to be seen as a less good version of my twin sister. No one wants to be viewed as the twin who isn't as clever, funny, pretty or kind. My (our) friends often joke about who is the "better twin" and I know that they're not being serious but underneath I'm almost always competing. My sister and I take the same subjects at school, have the same hobbies and interests, and that means there's the constant struggle of feeling as if I have to be better, all the time.

Maybe some people like the idea of being a twin because it seems advantageous to have someone there for you as you experience the ups and downs of life and growing up. But another part of growing up is learning to be independent. Would you really want to have to share this one-time experience? I wonder what life would be like if I wasn't a twin. But I know that I cannot change it. People feel awkward if I get annoyed at them for getting my name wrong, or treating me as half of a pair, or comparing me to my sister. What can I do but lie? So even when I want to scream at them, even when I want to cry, a smile will suffice. I smile and laugh and respond with, "it's fine, I'm used to it", and they believe me, because it's easy to lie to people when you tell them what they want to hear.