



Julie Bowen's Modern Family

The sitcom star and mom of Oliver, 6, and twins, Gus and John, 4, jokes, "Immaculate conception is the only way another kid is coming out of me!" yet she offers up plenty of parenting positives.

interview by PATTY ADAMS MARTINEZ

How does your parenting style compare with that of Claire, your character on *Modern Family*?

I have learned a lot from playing her because she understands that though you might like to be your kids' best friend, that is not what's best for the kids.

I've had mine say, "You're not a nice mommy." But if I'm best friends with them I'm not setting boundaries that are going to help them become better people.

You've gotten into a bit of hot water for saying that raising little ones was "awful at times."

Yes, that got me in trouble to say the least. But I think we need to be honest about motherhood. It's not always perfect. I love being a mom, but if every mom is honest with herself she knows that it's hard work and not always fun. I'm not sure why it's so wrong of me to admit that.

What's surprised you most about motherhood?

That it's harder to get a driver's license than to become a mom! You come home from the hospital with a baby, and you're thinking, "Are you kidding? I don't know what I'm doing!" It's been how many years and I'm still in shock every time one of my kids calls me Mom. I'm like, "Me?"

What was the first thing that popped into your head when you found out you were having twins?

"Please let them be boys." I always wanted a girl, but when I found out they were

twins I thought, "Oh, Lord, if it's a boy and a girl or two girls I'm going to have a whole equipment change with toys and clothes that you can't pass down." And I got my wish. But they are very, very different.

How so?

I grew up with all girls, so to me there was no subtlety between boys—they were just dirty and yelling. To the outside, I'm sure it still looks like that because my kids are fairly dirty and loud, but John is extremely focused, Gus is sensitive and constantly trying to make peace with everyone, and Oliver is a complete ham.

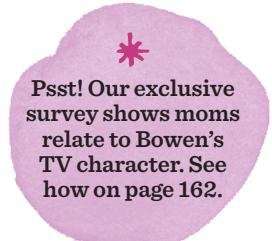
At one point Oliver was jealous of the twins.

How did he act out?

When I'd ask, "What are your brothers' names?" he'd say, "Gus" and "Other Gus." He wanted to make sure I knew he didn't care! But about eight months ago, he made a shift. He gave up his own room and now all three of them have pushed their beds together so they have a giant nest where they snuggle, fight, wrestle, kick, cry, and hug. They are so close it's ridiculous.

Sharing a room happened naturally?

Completely. We had friends who were out of town and



Psst! Our exclusive survey shows moms relate to Bowen's TV character. See how on page 162.

Read more of our interview at parents.com/bowen.

we watched their kids for five days. Since the twins have a bigger room, we made a forest of air mattresses in there and Oliver said, "I want to be in that room too." And he never went back. He tells us that his room is filled with spiders—which, of course, it isn't. He just doesn't want to admit that he loves being with his brothers.

"I freaked out," she remembers of her son's allergic reaction. Now she works for awareness.

Oliver is allergic to nuts and bees. How did you find out he was allergic?

I was working on *Boston Legal* and newly pregnant with the twins when my husband sent me a photo of

Oliver, then 2, saying he was eating peanut butter and was stung by a bee. I thought, "He's eaten peanut butter before—it's not a big deal." Then, I received another photo and my son's face was all distorted and I freaked out and just started yelling, "Take him to the hospital!" There he was diagnosed with an anaphylactic reaction to nuts *and* the bee sting. That's why I got involved with the Anaphylaxis 101 Campaign—to get parents educated, aware, and prepared for a deadly allergic reaction.

What advice would you give parents whose kids are diagnosed with a life-threatening allergy?

Go to anaphylaxis101.com [sponsored by Mylan, the makers of EpiPen] and get educated. I don't want anyone to be confused in a dangerous moment. I want them to say, "I know what this is, and I know what to do: Go to the hospital." I don't want anyone to lose a life when it is preventable.

Thanksgiving is right around the corner. What are you most thankful for when it comes to your family?

With the anaphylaxis stuff being such a real thing and seeing so many friends suffer from dangerous allergies, it sounds like a cliché but I'm most thankful for the health of my kids. That's the most important thing in the world. 😊



Bowen keeps it together as her character, Claire, at top, and in real life with her three sons.

MODERN FAMILY: COURTESY OF ABC; JULIE BOWEN AND FAMILY: PHAMOUS/SPLASH NEWS.