

TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Unbreakable bond: Twins separated by COVID still connected



Provincial border closures still in place are feeling especially difficult for Sophia Reddin and Kathija Kurji, twins who live in Quebec and New Brunswick respectively. The pair has been calling each other every day and frequently found themselves making the same dish as each other over the last few months. This is the pair on their fiftieth birthday. PHOTO: Submitted/Sophia Reddin

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Provincial border closures have been especially difficult for Sophia Reddin and Kathija Kurji, identical twins who live in Quebec and New Brunswick respectively.

“My twin is the most important person to me,” said Reddin, on the New Brunswick side in Cap-Pelé. “We talk on the phone every day, but it’s not the same at all,” she said.

“Usually, we would see each other every two to three months,” said Reddin, a period which has long since expired.

“We are so close in every way,” Kurji said. “She is my half.”

The sisters have had similar career paths, both formerly in the RCMP, said Kurji.

Yet, many kilometres apart, the pair has continuously found themselves doing the same thing, said Kurji. “On many occasions lately, I will call her and we will be cooking the exact same thing,” she said. “This happens so often, it’s weird.”

A month ago Reddin said she was thinking of her twin and some of their mutual friends and decided to, out of the blue, send an old photo of the group from her iPad. Kurji called her right away in shock that she was about to send the same photo in a message on her own device, said Reddin.

The strange connection they feel started long before the pandemic, said Reddin. When Reddin was out of town at a ski camp when she was young, she burned her arm and said her sister felt an intense pain and called the camp in distress certain something had happened, said Reddin. During separations or other traumas, they each describe feeling sad for reasons they couldn’t explain, only later to learn the other was sad.

Nancy L. Segal, a professor of psychology specializing in twins at California State University-Fullerton, told the Times & Transcript that because identical twins are genetically the same, they find themselves responding to the world in the same way.

“A lot of research shows that so many of our behaviours are partly influenced by the genes - our intelligence, our personalities, our reactivity, so many things about us - and so it gives the impression for identical twins of some kind of telepathy when, in fact, it’s just them acting naturally,” said Segal.

Dr. Simon Sherry, a psychology professor at Dalhousie University, said stories like this “do not surprise him at all.” A predisposition to tearfulness because you both have certain personality traits would be a factor in the story at the camp, he said.

Scientists have studied weird situations like the one described, but they didn’t find empirical evidence that anything more than the influence of shared genes and growing up together was at play.

“We hear about these things all the time,” said Segal. “Because twins are very concerned about one another and very involved in each other’s lives, they can anticipate certain things that might happen.”

And during the pandemic where emotions like anxiety and a concern for one another is heightened more generally, we might see this more, she said.

“We always hear about all the hits, but we never hear about the misses - when one might be upset and the other one is just fine,” said Segal.

Science is behind choosing the photo too, said Sherry. "Personality influences your preference for a certain memory or a certain texture, which would increase the probability that coincidences like what they described would occur."

The Times & Transcript also spoke to a set of triplets separated during the pandemic by inter-provincial and even intra-provincial borders.

Britt Hanley lives in Cambellton, Courtney Hanley in Riverview and Dylan Hanley in Calgary.

When Cambellton, in New Brunswick's Zone 5, had a COVID outbreak, no one could travel in or out of the zone. "To know that I couldn't see them has been hard," said Britt.

Courtney, in Riverview, said she'd often see her sister multiple times a month. And she still doesn't know when they will see Dylan again as they reply on the summers to travel there or for him to come here, she said.

Sometimes I might be thinking of something like a song and Britt might start signing it, even over calls, said Britt. But neither Courtney nor Britt could recall any coincidences so eerie it freaked them out.

Still, said Britt, they feel like they have a special closeness as triplets, more intense than with their other siblings.

The family moved around a lot, but they always had each other, said Courtney. Growing up together with similar environmental factors would be a big factor here, said Sherry.

Sherry was not surprised to hear that identical twins, who would share 100 per cent of their genes, would experience more coincidences than non-identical twins or triplets, who share about half that.

With no announcement of a Canada bubble yet, the twins and triplets will have to wait a little longer to reunite.

Reddin said, "I know a lot of people are in the same boat whether they are a twin or not. The only thing we can do is take it day by day and hope."