



8 TIPS FOR DONOR-CONCEIVED ADULTS Who Just Found Out

1. Talk to your parents.

Take some deep breaths, and try to relax. Many people have walked this path before you, and although the road can get a bit bumpy for a little while, they have all survived. Secrecy implies shame, and you have nothing to be ashamed of, so do not let the “secret” persist. Set aside time as soon as possible to discuss the situation with your parents. Talk with other close family members and friends who can provide good support.

2. Ask questions.

Ask your parents why they used a donor and what the experience was like for them. Ask them why they kept the secret. Most parents don’t tell because they’re afraid of how the truth will affect the family. Often, the non-biological parent is afraid of being looked at as not the “real” parent. You can assure your non-bio mom or dad that this news changes nothing in your relationship. Your parents will always be your parents. This knowledge doesn’t change that fact or diminish your love for the parents who loved and raised you.

3. Explain *very honestly* how this news has affected you.

Tell your parents what you are feeling. You might be experiencing a wide variety of emotions, including anger, sadness, confusion, or even relief. Understand and explain that your feelings are valid and to be expected — and that working through these emotions might take some time. Have patience with yourself. If you’re upset, don’t feel guilty. This was your information to have, and it was kept from you.

4. Listen.

Your parents may have made the best decisions they could with the information they had at the time. Many parents were advised to lie to everyone, including their children. Find out what they know about the donor or any half-siblings. Gathering information about the other half of your genetic identity and relatives may help you better understand yourself. Many offspring report feeling a sense of relief as they reassemble the puzzle of their physical, emotional, & intellectual selves.

5. Be willing to forgive.

You may never fully understand or agree with your parents’ reasons for keeping this information from you. However, staying angry doesn’t help you move forward. Empathy and compassion will be extremely helpful in repairing any damaged relationships. Work through your emotions, with the help of a therapist if necessary. Understand that forgiveness is the only path to true healing. It’s important for your parents to know that you can forgive them for not telling you the truth, even if this might take some time.

6. Continue the conversation.

This is not a one-time conversation. Let your parents know that you will ask them to continue the conversation as you process this new information, tell family and friends, and incorporate it into your identity. Invite your parents to walk beside you as you explore your genetic roots and figure out what it means to you and your life to be donor-conceived. There is great opportunity for a stronger family bond if you can keep the lines of communication open. Let your parents love and support you.

7. Accept your new reality.

Feel good about the fact that your family will now have a basis in truth. Understand that any curiosities you have about your half-siblings and/or your unknown biological parent, your ancestry, and your medical history are normal and to be expected. It’s an innate human desire to want to know where we come from. You can’t change the past, but you can control how you move forward. This is your story to own and share as you see fit.

8. If you are curious...

If you do desire to know more about your donor family, give yourself permission to search for the information and the genetic relatives you’re curious about. Your curiosity is not a betrayal to your parents, particularly your non-biological parent, in any way. Adding new family members or ancestral information doesn’t take away from or diminish the importance of your family of origin. Let your parents know how important it is for you to have their support as you look to discover more about your ancestry, your medical background, and your genetic relatives. Join the Donor Sibling Registry for connection and support.

“You can’t really know who you are and where you’re going unless you know where you came from.” —Bruce Springsteen