

[Donor Sperm: The Story Beneath the Baby](#)

Lesbians across the country, nay, across the world may be dreaming of making babies of their own right at this very moment. I know of several, personally. As all of us know, two women cannot make a baby without "help". So, these women make a decision about how to get this new family member here. This is the first decision in a long line of decisions that will impact the rest of our lives and certainly our children's entire lives - and yet, many people using donor sperm (not just lesbians, there is a heterosexual couple faction as well as single moms) don't think about the lifelong repercussions.

I'm going to pause right here and mention a few things.

1. These are my opinions, based on my experiences as the biological child of an adopted person, a lesbian, a soon-to-be-mama of a donor-conceived daughter and someone who has spoken to many others about donor sperm topics.
2. I am not a professional, but I do believe strongly in what I'm about to tell you.
3. Please feel free to discuss respectfully in the Comments section, as this is certainly a "hot topic" for some - however, if any rudeness occurs, I am the comment moderator and I have no qualms about not allowing inappropriate comments.

Now that's over with, let's talk it out! As I mentioned above, the first decision is what kind of sperm donor to use. That depends on your wishes and your family structure. Are you looking for a co-parent, who is responsible for some parenting duties? An "uncle" figure who is involved with the child but does not make parenting decisions? A man who donated his sperm to a bank for others to purchase? Do you want your child to have the option of learning this man's identity at some point? Do you want him to always and forever remain completely anonymous?

There are thousands of combinations of ways people have brought children into this world using a donor, and I don't feel the need to outline them all, but the point I want to get across is that there are many more decisions to make, and it can be a daunting task. I think some people just get overwhelmed with the sheer volume of information they're trying to process; some become lazy and don't want to do the research. Some don't even realize how important this all is.

As a woman who has experienced the full-blown insane desire to have a baby NOW, RIGHT THIS VERY MOMENT RIGHT NOW NOW NOW!, I completely understand why there is so much focus on the pregnancy and on the newborn baby. That's all I had in my mind's eye, for about a year of hormone-fueled craziness. I wasn't thinking about when that baby started asking questions about her origins, or when she had a genetics project in science class, or when she found a person to fall in love and have her own babies with. I certainly wasn't thinking about how much her life would be affected, knowing she's missing half her family medical history, half her DNA.

The "baby-craze" somewhat blew over, as we took foster children in and tentatively began planning trying to conceive our own baby. Life was big and hectic and busy and I didn't have a lot of available space in my brain for the politics of donor conception.

We decided to use a sperm donor from a bank, and we always knew we'd choose a Willing To Be Known Donor. This means that the donor has agreed to at least one contact between offspring and donor after the child turns 18. This is important to us because my mom was adopted as an infant, and we have only shreds of incomplete information about her family medical history. Not to mention the distinct lack of information about her biological father whatsoever. We don't even know his name, much less if he's still alive or what his traits are.

The issues surrounding donor conception have fascinated me from the start, and it was one of the reasons I attended the American Adoption Congress' conference a few weeks ago. I mentioned in my last blog that there were a few workshops and a meeting all centering around donor conception. Of course, I attended everything. One thing that came away that impacted me was one presenter, Kris, said several times that whenever a person is separated from their genetics, there will be adoption-type issues. Questioning, lack of

a full family medical history, and wondering what the missing biological parent is like, just to mention a few.

The most important thing I brought away from these meetings and workshops is that *honesty is always the best route to take.*

A friend of mine, one whom I made easily and quickly right then at the conference, is herself both a lesbian and an adoptee. Being both these things made her realize how important it is to provide her future children with answers about their biology (well, as much as is possible, considering she's adopted...) because she lacks it and sees its importance. I think that as far as openness and honesty goes, for the child, the combination in my new friend is the most ideal one for a child to be brought into. She's really got the right idea about things. Tell the kids the truth, keep the biological father involved in their lives from the start, and raise them to understand that there isn't shame in their family structure. Just like AAC's new slogan says, "No Secrets, No Fear". I'm so looking forward to bearing witness to she and her partner's journey into parenthood! And I'm so glad for them that they've got the perfect friend to help them make babies. Bravo, ladies!

We hope that as Ever grows older, she cannot remember the first time she was told about her conception. We hope to weave her beginning into her life story as simple truth. We hope we can be open enough and fearless enough to let her ask whatever questions she has, and tell her what we know. We hope that she never experiences a moment when she feels as if she's "finally told the truth". I realize this means we're likely going to be talking with our daughter about sperm and eggs and penises and vaginas and uteruses a bit earlier than most families, but I sense this child is going to be far too smart for us to ever even want to lie to or try to deceive. I suspect 'the stork' is simply not a good enough answer. I just hope the parents of her friends can manage to not hate us too much when Ev tells their sons and daughters what she knows about sperm and eggs. I'm sorry in advance, if your kid is ever friends with my kid.

For me, I don't hold any resentment or embarrassment within myself that we had to have the help of a man to get our daughter. I'm glad. I'm glad for that man, and for men who donate their sperm and enable women to have babies they couldn't have otherwise. That being said, I do know that there are many people, men and women alike, who are upset about having to use donor sperm. It's embarrassing, for some men, to have to impregnate their wives with another man's genes. It's angering to some lesbians that they HAVE to put sperm inside themselves to grow their families. Sometimes, I think the anger and resentment and sense of loss (of one's full biological child) is astronomical and these are the families who either lie entirely about the donor conception, choose anonymous donors so their kids can never threaten to leave them for their "real dad", and resist any line of questioning about the child's parentage*. This is ultimately the choice of each family, and it is not my place to tell another family how they should parent their children. Everyone does the very best they can.

*This is absolutely not to say that every single family who falls into the above categories will behave this way, and is more a generalization than accusation.

In my family, we place great importance on Everleigh knowing whatever she wants and whatever she can learn. We are committed to not only doing our best for her as an infant, a child, an adolescent, and a teenager... but also looking out for her best interests as an adult. And to us, that means as much information about the other half of her genetics as we can possibly give her.

I think our only regret is not having the right person in our lives right now who could be our donor and be involved in her life, someone she could know from the beginning and ask her questions to. We knew that asking someone to be a donor for us was an immense burden and potentially a lot of heartache, and we just didn't feel anybody like that was in our lives. I commend anybody who is fortunate enough to have that right person; I'm quite jealous.

We can each only do our best by our kids.

I hope that maybe my thoughts might help someone think about some issues they hadn't considered

before. I hope that everyone does think of their offspring not only as that deliriously desired pregnancy and brand new little squeezeable baby, but as their own person with their own rights to their own information.



My greatest hope is that one day, all donor-conceived individuals have access to their donors and their information. But things won't change until *we* change them. And here I am, asking you to help me fight for our kids' rights by demanding Willing To Be Known Donors from banks, and for not tolerating any banks dropping the ball in contacting the donors for our kids. This is the first step, until our kids all come of age and can really begin to affect change.

And one more thing: if it ever comes up, help other people to see why this is so important.