

I would also like to remind members of this registry that it is not just the parents of donor-inseminated offspring that are here. There are also adult donor-conceived people present. Some of us are also actively looking for biological relatives.

I am 53 years old, and don't really consider myself to be a child anymore!

I think that the two groups have a lot to offer each other. But before getting into that, I'd like to write about my story.

Early last year, a few days before my father's death, my father told me that he was not my biological father. He had issues with infertility, and my parents decided to use an anonymous sperm donor. He and my mother had planned to tell me about this when I turned 15, but my mother died when I was 14. So he decided that it would be better not to tell, since he was afraid that I would think that I was an orphan. He also told me that he had always thought of me as his son.

He had many opportunities to tell me about it since I was 15, but he waited until almost the last minute. My father was a good man and a kind man. His kindness and fear of hurting me made him hold onto a secret for many, many years. He had told absolutely no one else about any of this (not his siblings, not his second wife) until the very end.

But I think his secret ate away at him. When he told me about all this, he started off by saying that he had done something very terrible and it was too late and he couldn't tell anyone. I was with him at a cancer treatment center when we were talking. I urged him to talk, and then he came out with it.

My initial reaction was one of exhilaration - finally everything made sense. My second reaction was that nothing made sense - the bottom was dropping out of my life.

The very day before his death, he wanted to talk more about it. I told him that I was fine with what he told me. I told him that I was glad he chose to use a sperm donor - otherwise I wouldn't have been born and my children (his grandchildren) wouldn't have been born. I told him that I understood why he didn't tell me when I was 15. I told him that I was glad to be told now.

But after hearing what I had to say, my father didn't want to say anything more. He was very brave, but also very sick. I took him to the cancer treatment center later that day, and his bloodwork was terrible. We both knew that he would die soon. He told me that I had been a wonderful son.

Then he died the next day.

I didn't get a chance to talk about any of this with my father or my mother, and I really wished that I had a chance to. I have absolutely no anger about this towards either of them, but I have lots of questions I wish I could have asked.

They absolutely were my family. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized how different I was from my father. Trying to be like my father had been a struggle throughout my life, starting at a young age. If I had known that we were not biologically related, but we were still a family and loved each other, it all would have been much easier. I think our relationship would have been stronger if I had known. I think I would have felt freer to pursue what I wanted to pursue if I had known of our biological differences.

I also think if my father wasn't holding onto a secret, he would have been happier. Some people believe that allergies are caused by holding secrets - he was racked with allergies for much of his life. He also had a hard time expressing himself - maybe without the secret, he would have felt freer.

Anyway, since then, I have tried to do everything possible to find out who my biological father was. I've registered here. No luck so far. I've supplied my DNA to both [familytreedna.com](http://familytreedna.com) and [23andme.com](http://23andme.com). From this, I learned that my biological father must have been Jewish (confirming the belief of dozens of people who thought that I was Jewish), but otherwise, no luck. I've looked in

medical school yearbooks. I wrote to a couple of people I found who looked like me, but they didn't reply to my letters.

OK, so that's my story.

So what do the two groups of people here have to offer each other?

Some of the donor-conceived adults (like me) know what it is like to be raised with secrets. We know what it's like to be told that things aren't what we thought they were. We know what it's like to find out that we don't have a biological connection to a parent.

And I guess I'm anxious to ask the questions that I wasn't able to pose to my parents. What's it like to decide to have a child that's not biologically related to you? What's it like to raise such a child? What do you think when your child doesn't look like you and when your child doesn't act like you? What do you think when your child's interests are very different than your own?

I'm not really interested in platitudes - yes, I know your child is a member of your family, just as my father and I were in the same family. And yes, I know you love your child, just as my father and I loved each other. But I'm really interested in those other questions.

I know what it's like to have one's own biological children - I have two daughters in their 20's. But, unlike my father, I don't know what it's like to have children from birth that are not related to me.

I hope this makes sense. And I do want to add, in case I offended anyone, that I do not have a political or any other kind of axe to grind, and I hope that I have not given the impression that I do. I am very liberal politically and fully support GLBT rights, including marriage. I am not opposed to the use of reproductive technologies, but I do believe that secrets are almost never a good thing.

John