

A MAGAZINE FOR FERTILITY AND ADOPTION

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PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

Understanding
– the Cost of –
INFERTILITY
TREATMENTS
– and –
ADOPTION
SERVICES
.....

NEW LIFE:
Born from Loss
.....
– The –
CONSEQUENCES
– of –
OPENNESS



WINTER / SPRING 2016

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 nightlight®

PATHWAY2 FAMILY

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Have you heard?

Embryo donation and adoption has allowed more than 6,000 babies to find loving homes. It may be the solution you have been searching for. Learn more in this issue of Pathway2Family.



**Additional Copies
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Pathway2Family.org**

For more information about embryo donation and adoption, you can watch videos and webinars at www.EmbryoAdoption.org

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OUT-OF-STYLE

BABY NAMES

Most people who dream of adding children to their family also give careful consideration to the name they will give their child. Will you go with a popular name, a unique name, or a family name?

Naming trends frequently change and the popular Mary and John are replaced with Jessica and Jason. Some monikers withstand the test of time and others fade out altogether. Recently, some "classic" names like Noah and Amelia have regained popularity, while other "classics" have nearly become extinct. Here are 5 boy names and 5 girl names that are unlikely to be choices for new babies in 2016.

B

O

Y

Carl

Ranked 22nd in 1915
Ranked 613th in 2014

Eugene

Ranked 20th in 1929
Ranked 790th in 2014

Harold

Ranked 12th in 1921
Ranked 828th in 2014

Howard

Ranked 24th in 1920
Ranked 987th in 2014

Wayne

Ranked 29th in 1946
Ranked 789th in 2014

G

I

R

L

!

Barbara

Ranked 2nd in 1944
Ranked 863rd in 2014

Cheryl

Ranked 13th in 1958
Ranked 990th in 1997

Gladys

Ranked 11th in 1901
Ranked 967th in 1997

Pamela

Ranked 10th in 1953
Ranked 959th in 1999

Paula

Ranked 38th in 1954
Ranked 990th in 2014

New Life

Born from Loss

By Erica Corbett

How two families faced their losses and helped create one incredible life.

Several years after the birth of their first child, Justin and Amanda Fletcher were encouraged to pursue in vitro fertilization after a diagnosed infertility issue. After their first IVF treatment resulted in twins, the couple completed several additional IVF cycles but were unsuccessful in becoming pregnant. Eventually, the emotional and physical toll of failed IVF cycles became overwhelming for Justin to watch and they decided to take a break from treatment.

"We'd always said that we'd keep any remaining embryos until I was 40," Amanda said. "But I came to a point when I had a hard time knowing they [the embryos] were sitting there and we weren't doing anything with them."

For Amanda, who was adopted herself, the open adoption option was appealing. She grew up not knowing her biological family and didn't want the same thing to happen to her biological child.

"Not having that knowledge (especially medical) and connection has been an empty hole in my life. I would not have been okay with an anonymous placement," she said. The Fletchers chose to work with the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program and started the process of selecting a family for their remaining embryos. They ended up choosing the family in the first profile they reviewed.

Amanda said, "We were worried about the process, because how do you pick someone else to raise your child? We felt connected to their profile...we had a lot of similarities in background and education. We wanted a family that was active and involved in their church and had a close family. I honestly didn't know we'd find a couple who had everything that we were looking for."

But they did – Ryan and April Cannon agreed to a match with the Fletcher family and adopted their embryos.



When Ryan and April's second daughter was just six days old, she was diagnosed with a genetic disorder that would end up taking her life just a few short months later.

"Because it was a genetic disorder, we had ourselves tested and discovered we were both carriers," explained April, "which meant all of our children had a 25% chance of having this terrible disease. We decided not to have any more biological children, but we didn't feel that our family was complete."

"These remaining embryos are lives that need a chance to be loved"

April and Ryan looked into different options, but when they heard about embryo adoption, they knew it was the right choice for them. April liked the fact that she could carry the child herself – something she knew her body was capable of doing. The Cannons also liked the idea of having some control over the timing of adding more children to their family.

Their son, Corinth, was born from the embryos placed into their family by the Fletchers. "We were apprehensive about the aspect of openness when we first started considering embryo adoption. Now, I am so grateful that Corinth will grow up knowing his genetic roots," said April.

Amanda is candid when she speaks about her experience and admits that giving up her remaining embryos is not always an easy decision to live with.

"The thought of having a child out there that I am not raising is really hard," she said. "But Corinth is lucky enough to have two families who wanted him and love him. I will always pray for him and his family. It is not easy for me, but I know what an amazing gift we have given this beautiful family. There are days that I have to go back to that feeling and am grateful that we were able to provide this amazing blessing to the Cannons!"

Ryan and April acknowledge their own loss of not having any more of their own biological children but would recommend embryo adoption to anyone looking for alternative methods to grow their family.

"Thirty years ago, we wouldn't have had genetic testing. Now, because we know what our genetic makeup is, we couldn't bring ourselves to take the risk [of having more biological children]. That would have been a risk we were taking with someone else's life," Ryan said. "Being where we are medically, and being denied our freedom to have more children in ignorance, that same medical technology brought us the opportunity to have Corinth."

"These remaining embryos are lives that need a chance to be loved," April said. "I would never minimize a couple's desire to have their 'own' children, but if your situation prevents you from that, embryo adoption is a miraculous process that allows you to give birth to your adopted child."

Today, the relationship between the Fletcher and Cannon families has evolved into a friendship. Amanda and April are connected through Facebook and Amanda is able to see pictures of Corinth every day.

"The process of open adoption has helped heal my heart," Amanda said. "April and I are able to talk easily back and forth and receive many updates about each other's families. We have formed a true friendship these past six months. We talk openly about our feelings and emotions – everything from the loss each of us has experienced, our insecurities about telling our story and trying to explain it to our kids, and our relationship and what is comfortable for each of us. I couldn't have asked for a more amazing family to raise Corinth. I look forward to the day that we are able to meet in person!"



Fletcher Family

Difficult Decisions

By Kris A. Probasco, LSCSW, LCSW

Many find the idea of donating their remaining embryos to another couple emotionally difficult. So how do those who choose embryo donation successfully overcome the emotional challenges?

Almost every clinic requires in vitro fertilization (IVF) patients to complete a document declaring their intended disposition choice for potential remaining embryos, which is done before the patients' embryos are created. Patients may choose to keep the remaining embryos frozen indefinitely, donate them for research, thaw and discard them, or donate them for reproduction.

In preparation for the development of the embryos, the family has gone through an emotional and physical process and are excited as they follow the growth of their embryos in a lab under the watchful eye of their embryologist. There may be added complexity when an egg or sperm donation has been used in the creation of the embryo.



Cannon Family



In vitro fertilization is never undertaken lightly, as the ultimate goal is the birth of a precious child to love and cherish. Each embryo created is a light of hope for the family.

Having remaining embryos is an outcome that many IVF patients simply don't believe will happen to them – they truly believe that they will give life to each embryo created. Naturally, they develop an attachment for all of them – especially when they have given birth to genetic siblings from the IVF set.

I have counseled many clients in the process of making a decision regarding their remaining embryos. Many are now parenting the number of children they feel is right for their family. For some, life's circumstances have changed, and now they must make a decision regarding the embryos that they originally chose to keep in storage. Often, remaining embryos have been frozen for three or more years as the family has used them for their own reproduction. But when the time comes to make a decision regarding disposition, how does the family select the option that's right for them?

The remaining frozen embryos once represented to them the future opportunity to bring an additional child into the family. From their perspective, the embryos were made to have parents. Being faced with the decision to donate them is a heartache, as well as a humbling experience. The strongest motivation for placing embryos with another family is that they were created to have life, and that the original family believes that life begins at conception.

wonderful home. Open placements are very helpful in the grieving process for the genetic family because they choose the couple who receives their embryos. The genetic family is able to monitor the journey of their embryos, hopefully through to the birth of children to the adoptive family. Meeting the children [genetic siblings] of the adoptive family is a way for the genetic family to confirm to themselves that they made the best choice for their remaining embryos.

"The strongest motivation for placing embryos with another family is that they were created to have life"

Genetic/donor parents also have a great deal of empathy for future adoptive parents because of their personal experiences.

The genetic family must learn to be at peace with the idea of an adoptive family raising their children's siblings. This realization results in the need to answer the question, "How am I able to face this reality?" Making an adoption choice for remaining embryos may cause grief due to the genetic family releasing their embryos to another family. Knowing their family is complete or that their circumstances have required them to make this decision is very difficult and emotional. In donating their embryos, they are trusting the adoptive family to raise them in a

Knowledge is very helpful in the grief process, but may also bring additional emotions to the surface. Open placements provide knowledge that is not only beneficial for genetic and adoptive parents, but ultimately for the children. Placing embryos anonymously can actually extend the grief process as parents wonder about what happened to their embryos. "Do I have other children out there?" "Will my children meet their siblings?" All of those 'what ifs' can be addressed by an open placement.

The length of time that it takes for the genetic family to make a decision for placement is evidence of the struggle experienced in making this emotional decision. They are fully attached to the embryos and the future they represent. Embryo placement is a selfless decision – it takes great strength and courage to focus on the needs of their remaining embryos and recognize the hope they can bring to another family.



EMBRYO ADOPTION

A LEGAL OVERVIEW

By Ronald L. Stoddart, Esq.

If life were simple, we could say that the transfer of ownership of human embryos is governed by property law and is typically accomplished by a contract signed by all parties. But we know that life is not simple and the courts have held that, although embryos are property, they are property deserving of special respect. Unlike other property, embryos which are transferred into a woman's body may result in the birth of a child or children. That means we also have to be aware of the parental rights involved, and the termination and creation of parental rights in an embryo adoption.

Very few states have laws regulating embryo donation or embryo adoption. Laws that could apply include those dealing with human tissue transfers, surrogacy, and various contract laws (only Georgia has a specific embryo adoption law which allows families the option of finalizing their adoption in court). Courts have become involved in disputes to determine the rights of the owners of embryos in connection with a death or divorce of one of the parties. Courts have also become involved in conflicts with embryos created with donor eggs or sperm. But as with any contract case, the key is a clear agreement demonstrating a mutual understanding of the present and future rights and responsibilities of the parties.

Adoption is a term typically used in the termination of parental rights of birth parents and the creation of parental rights in the adopting parents. Although this is normally done after a baby is born, the same social services approach can be used for the transfer of ownership/parental rights of embryos. Because the courts consider embryos "property," this process can be accomplished before the child is born and without any mandated court involvement. The embryos would normally be transferred into the adopting mother and, upon birth, the birth certificate would list her as the mother and her husband as the father. They would then be presumed to be the child's legal parents.

Problems occur when there is not a clear understanding of the intended consequences of the transfer of rights to the embryos and, ultimately, the children born from the transferred embryos. A common issue in all adoptions is the degree of openness between the placing parents and the adopting parents. Few states will enforce agreements for visits, exchange of information as the child grows up, or the ability of the child to contact the genetic parents. Trust is the foundation of any successful open adoption and this also applies to embryo adoption. In fact, it is probably even more critical in embryo adoption because the children born from adopted embryos will frequently have full genetic siblings being raised by their genetic parents.

Since the law of unintended consequences always applies, it is critical that families considering embryo adoption – either as donors or adopters – carefully consider the contract they use. They should also involve adoption professionals, who can bring decades of experience in the very personal issues involved.

– THE – CONSEQUENCES – OF – *Openness*

by Lori Holden, MA and Author of the Open-Hearted Way to Open Adoption

Consequences – the word sounds so ominous. You don't want to have to "face the consequences" or "pay the consequences" – especially if they are "dire consequences."

But at its essence, consequence (Old French "with" + "to follow") simply means "outcome" – no judgment on a good or bad outcome. Consequences are the outcomes that naturally follow from an approach you take.

All parents want the best outcomes for their children. So what are the outcomes of openness for those involved in embryo adoption?

Let's look first at the history of adoption. Why were adoptions, which had historically been open, closed from the post-war period of the mid-1940s until about the 1980s?

In the 1940s, "social pressures mandated that families preserve the myth that they were formed biologically." All directly involved – adopting parents, biological parents, the child –

marinated in the shame of their circumstance, and out of that shame came pretense. The infertile couple was to pretend the child was born to them. The biological parents were to pretend a pregnancy, birth, and placement had never happened. And the child – who may not have even been told of his/her origins – was to be raised in pretense, was never to wonder beyond the facts disclosed, and was expected never to compromise the loyalty for those who raised him/her.

The consequences of this shame and pretense weren't always pretty. Minds and hearts were expected to close down to what had actually happened. Records were sealed to hide all that shame, to tuck it away never to see the light of day.

Being in denial about such pretty significant facts and events took a lot of energy from those who navigated the closed adoption era. Some of the consequences included loss of medical history, difficulty forming an integrated identity, heightened challenges with trust and intimacy, and even substance abuse and suicide attempts, which may happen when repressed issues can no longer be numbed.

It's no wonder that people began to want to do things in a more honest and functional way. Over the last several decades, adoptive and biological families have been pursuing openness. We've seen trends of people accepting adoption more

openly and not acting "as if" it hadn't happened. We're seeing ongoing contact between adoptive and biological families, which can enable the child to claim and be claimed by both of his/her clans. The children in these open adoptions are growing up with access to their dynamic medical histories rather than a static report at one point in time.

The outcomes we're seeing are significant. Adopted people are growing up better able to integrate their biology – the DNA we're born with – and their biography – the life that's written by those we call family. During those very difficult identity-forming teen years, they are better able to answer the question,

"Who am I?" They and their parents are dealing with what actually is. When doing so, the son or daughter is better able to trust the parent for being honest and forthcoming. Trust and intimacy in future relationships are more likely to flourish when rooted in openness.

It won't be long before we begin hearing from adults who started life adopted as embryos. It's wise to plan now for the outcomes you desire and design a roadmap for how you will get there. If our forerunners in adoption offer any advance clues, openness will offer the consequences we desire most for our children.



Consequences of Closedness

Live in denial of what is.

Lack of dynamic medical history.

Difficulty pulling together all the pieces to form an integrated identity.

Unanswered questions about my roots.

If my origins are so bad that we can't even talk about them, what does that say about me?

I'm walking this tough journey alone. I'm afraid to let my parents in – they can't handle it.

Unacknowledged and unaddressed pain can lead to efforts to numb that pain.

Lack of connection to biological sibling(s).

I have questions that will remain unanswered forever.

Consequences of Openness

Live in acceptance of what is.

Able to access current medical records over the years, as conditions develop.

All puzzle pieces are available for identity formation.

Claimed by and able to claim both clans.

My parents and I can talk about the hard topics.

My parents are here to support me on my journey, wherever it may lead.

Issues may be discussed openly, allowing us to deal with them.

Connection with biological sibling(s) can be uniquely fulfilling.

If I have questions for my biological parents, I can ask them.

(n.d.). Retrieved October 22, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_adoption, which sources Yngvesson, Barbara (Spring 2003), "Going 'Home': Adoption, Loss of Bearings, and the Mythology of Roots", *Social Text* - 74 (Duke University Press) 21 (1): 7-27

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Understanding the Cost of Infertility Treatments and Adoption Services

When it comes to having children, the costs can really add up – especially if you are using assisted reproductive technologies (ART). There are many ways to build a family, with a wide variety of costs. Take a look at the numbers.

SPERM DONATION

\$250-\$1,000

EGG DONATION

Fresh Eggs (Never Frozen)

\$20,000-\$45,000

Frozen Eggs

\$16,000-\$20,000

SURROGATE

\$70,000-\$150,000

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

\$25,000-\$35,000

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

\$25,000-\$50,000

FROZEN EMBRYO ADOPTION (Agency)

\$12,000-\$15,000

FROZEN EMBRYO DONATION (Clinic)

\$4,000-\$8,000

US FOSTER ADOPTION

\$1,500-\$3,000



Where Does Our Money Go?

SPERM DONATION

- Donor compensation
- Clinic fees
- Sperm donor quality testing
- Disease screening
- Demand for donor's sperm, the more desirable the donor, the higher the cost
- Storage
- Shipping

EGG DONATION

- Donor compensation
- Administrative fees
- Donor evaluations
- Legal fees
- Storage
- Shipping

SURROGATE

- Surrogate compensation
- Birthing
- Administrative fees
- Legal fees
- Fees for screenings & procedures
- Stipends for expenses
- Support group meetings for surrogates

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

- Birthmother expenses (hospital, housing, food)
- Government & legal fees
- Counseling for potential birth mothers
- Agency administrative services
- Advertising on your behalf
- Home Study fees
- Travel expenses

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

- Donations to support foreign orphanage
- Liability insurance & compliance
- Agency administrative services
- Foreign legal & facilitator fees
- Foreign government fees
- US government fees (application, visa, document authentication)
- Home Study fees
- Travel expenses to foreign country

FROZEN EMBRYO ADOPTION (Agency)

- Agency administrative services
- Legal contracts
- Embryo shipment
- Lab tests for donating parents
- Home Study fees
- Matching Services
- Frozen Embryo Transfer fees
- Laboratory/embryology fees
- Cycle preparation/monitoring fees

FROZEN EMBRYO DONATION (Clinic)

- Clinic Administrative Services
- Legal contracts
- Frozen Embryo Transfer fees
- Laboratory/embryology fees
- Cycle preparation/monitoring fees

US FOSTER ADOPTION

- Home Study fees
- Medical/psychological evaluations
- Agency administrative services
- Legal fees
- Travel expenses



Steps to with Your C

By Katie Monroe, MSW

5 Steps to Success with Your Open Adoption

Have you ever been on a blind date? I haven't, but I have on occasion wondered, "What would I do if someone ever tried to set me up on a blind date?" I've pictured myself feeling awkward and uncomfortable; fumbling through my words to make conversation, sitting in silence hoping he would 'say something funny' to get the conversation going, and being afraid of saying too much for fear of saying the 'wrong thing.'

As an experienced social worker, I see these thoughts, feelings, and experiences are very similar to the beginning relationship between embryo donor and adoptive families. Both sides are nervous, want the other to accept them for who they are, and are worried about being able to fully trust the other. Just as it is with any type of relationship, no two embryo adoption experiences will be the same because of the vast diversity between personalities and temperaments among the individuals in the relationship. What worked for one embryo adoption may not work for another. In my experience working with adoptive and placing families, I have found healthy open relationships often have similar foundational characteristics.



BE YOURSELF.

This is the most important foundational element for a successful

relationship. It seems so simple and yet, too many times, individuals attempt to be someone they're not. Placing families want to see that the people the adoptive parents presented themselves as in their family profile are truly who they are in 'real life.'

INITIATE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT EXPECTATIONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP.

This is the 'elephant in the room' – no one wants to talk about it, but everyone is thinking about it. Take the risk and share from your heart what you hope to create with the placing family. Ask them to openly and honestly share what they hope to have. Placing families are often scared to completely share their hopes because they are afraid of turning off the adoptive family and being rejected. They often default to the wishes of the adoptive family, even when they secretly and silently hope for a little more interaction. If the placing family shares a request that is more than you are initially comfortable with, don't become defensive or afraid. Take time to reflect on their request and where it may be coming from with regard to their grief and loss.



SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION FOR THE PLACING FAMILY.

Try to imagine what it may be like for the placing family to make the most difficult decision of their lives regarding the future of their embryos. To them, those embryos are their potential living, breathing children. To let them go and allow someone else to parent them is a significant loss in their lives. Your recognition of this loss in their lives and empathy for what they may be experiencing will create a

lasting positive impact on your relationship. Having an attitude of compassion for the placing family will help keep your expectations in perspective. Some ways you might show appreciation could be occasionally sending them notes to let them know you're thinking about them and are available if they want some pictures or an update. Always send something on major holidays and birthdays – both the child's and the placing parents' birthdays – and on Mother's and Father's Day.

To Success

Open Adoption



HONOR YOUR COMMITMENTS.

The notion that placing families will eventually 'move on' and forget about the child or the promises made by the adoptive family is false.

Placing families never 'move on' from a decision of this magnitude. This doesn't mean that they are stuck in grief or loss forever, it merely means that the placing family has to find a way to incorporate their decision into their identity. They will always expect that the commitments agreed upon by the adoptive parents be honored. Each time an adoptive family keeps the commitments they made to the placing family, they are deepening the trust within the placing family and helping them reaffirm their decision to place.

KEEP INITIATING CONTACT WITH THE PLACING FAMILY.

Sometimes the placing family will start to distance themselves from the adoptive family. This is not them 'moving on.' It may be the result of something in their personal lives. They may create distance because it is too hard to stay in contact at that time of their lives. Often when this happens, adoptive families get offended and feel rejected. My advice in these cases is to continue to send what was initially promised, and if you, the adoptive family, don't receive an acknowledgment in return, to try and not be offended. Instead, put on an attitude of compassion and think the best of the placing family. Maybe something is going on in their lives that they just can't share with you at this time.



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