

A MAGAZINE FOR FERTILITY AND ADOPTION

Read ONLINE

on your computer or mobile device at
Pathway2Family.org

PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

OPEN
ADOPTION:
RADICAL or
COMMON SENSE?

10 URBAN
LEGENDS
for PREDICTING
BABY'S
GENDER



SUMMER / FALL 2016

A PUBLICATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY
 nightlight®

PATHWAY2FAMILY

CONTRIBUTORS

Erica Corbett

Wade Corliss

Dawn Davenport

Gretchen Gaede

Heather Haaland

Lori Holden

Ronald L. Stoddart

Madison Tingey

Kimberly Tyson

Have you heard?

Embryo donation and adoption have allowed more than 6,000 babies to be born into loving families. It may be the solution you have been searching for.

Learn more in this issue of

Pathway2Family or at

www.EmbryoAdoption.org



**Additional Copies
Available at
Pathway2Family.org**

Funding support from grant # EAAPA151027 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Contents

- 3 | What is Infertility?
- 4 | 10 Urban Legends for Predicting Baby's Gender
- 6 | 7 Questions Adopted Children Ask
- 8 | It's a Life-Giving Option and We're on the Receiving End
- 10 | Open Embryo Adoption: Radical or Common Sense?
- 12 | Are Donor-Conceived Children "Normal?"

Check out our NEW website for more information, videos, and webinars about embryo donation and adoption at www.EmbryoAdoption.org.

What is Infertility?



Infertility is most frequently defined as
**THE INABILITY OF A COUPLE TO GET PREGNANT AFTER
ACTIVELY TRYING TO CONCEIVE FOR ONE YEAR**

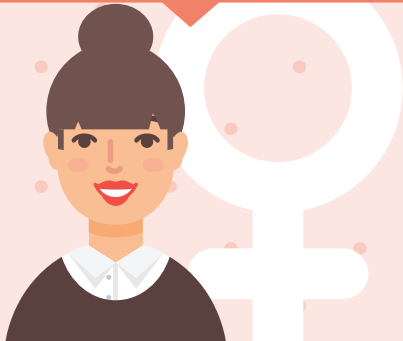
INFERTILITY AFFECTS
1 OUT OF 8 COUPLES
& IS OFTEN VIEWED AS

the woman's problem

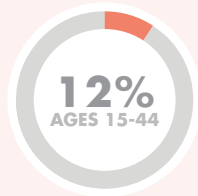
.... BUT **MEN ALSO**
EXPERIENCE INFERTILITY

Let's take a look at some infertility facts:

Women



Roughly **12%** of women
..... **AGES 15-44**
in the US will have difficulty
GETTING PREGNANT
..... or
CARRYING A PREGNANCY TO TERM



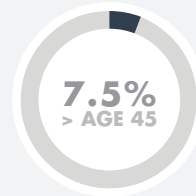
INFERTILITY CAN BE AFFECTED BY:

AGE	EXTREME WEIGHT GAIN OR LOSS
SMOKING	EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL OR
EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE	EMOTIONAL STRESS
MEDICAL CONDITIONS	

Men



7.5% of men
YOUNGER THAN 45
WILL SEE A FERTILITY DOCTOR
..... FOR
INFERTILITY PROBLEMS



INFERTILITY CAN BE AFFECTED BY:

EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE	DRUG USE
TESTOSTERONE	EXPOSURE TO ENVIRONMENTAL
SUPPLEMENTATION	TOXINS
SMOKING	MEDICAL CONDITIONS



1/3 of the time infertility is attributed to the woman, 1/3 of the time infertility is attributed to the man,
1/3 of the time the cause of infertility is unknown

..... WHILE **MILLIONS**
**OF AMERICANS ARE AFFECTED
BY INFERTILITY EACH YEAR**
building a family is still possible

INSTEAD OF PURSUING **EXPENSIVE MEDICAL TREATMENTS**

MANY FAMILIES HAVE CHOSEN

..... which allows them to

EXPERIENCE PREGNANCY & GIVE BIRTH

..... to the child they desire

embryo adoption

Sources:

- <http://www.reproductivefacts.org/topics/detail.aspx?id=36>
- <http://www.webmd.com/infertility-and-reproduction/features/male-infertility-facts>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/Infertility/index.htm>

- <http://www.asrm.org/detail.aspx?id=2322>
- <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/infertility.html>

LEARN MORE AT WWW.EMBRYOADOPTION.ORG

Once you have achieved your long-awaited pregnancy, everyone will be guessing if it's a boy or girl.

Here are 10 fun ways to help the guessing games begin!

1 Fetal heart rate predictor

Will it work? Probably not.

Generations of women swear that a quick fetal heart rate — about 140 beats per minute or above — definitely signals a girl, while a lower heart rate means the baby is a boy. Why? One theory is that baby girls are supposedly smaller, thus their hearts beat faster. Most doctors will be quick to debunk this test since a fetal heart rate is variable and can change day to day or even beat to beat. As for the theory that girls weigh less than boys — there have been plenty of girls born at 10 pounds and boys born at 4 pounds.

2 The height of your bump

Will it work? Probably not (but that won't stop strangers from guessing anyway).

Pregnancy is filled with old wives' tales of unknown origins, and those gossipy ladies of yesteryear seemed especially focused on predicting the sex of that tantalizing baby bump. Case in point? Generations of women (and men, too!) swear that moms-to-be who are carrying high will pop out a girl, while carrying low means the baby will be a boy.

3 The wedding ring on a string trick

Will it work? Probably not (but fun to try).

This test requires you to slip off your wedding ring — a needle would work too — and slip it on a string. Lie down and hold the string over your belly. If the object swings in a circular motion, it's a girl; a pendulum-like motion indicates that it's a boy. Don't get up too fast when it's over — you might be dizzy!

10

4 Morning sickness madness

Will it work? Probably not.

Were you unable to keep anything down during your first trimester? According to lore, you can break out the princess gear. An easy bout of morning sickness means you can expect a little dude. Unsurprisingly, science is not on this legend's side. Some women have an easy time with morning sickness during their first pregnancy and a terrible time during the next pregnancy. It wouldn't be unlikely for these women to give birth to girls both times.

5 The key test

Will it work? Probably not (but an easy one to try for fun).

This test claims a pregnant woman can determine the gender of her baby by picking up a single key. Don't give the mom-to-be forewarning; if mom grabs for the big round part at the top of the key, it's a girl. If she grabs the narrow part, this signals that it's a boy. What if mom grabs the key in the middle? Twins, of course! (Warning: Do not try this test while driving!)

7 The pimple test

Will it work? Probably not.

Pregnancy or not, acne is no fun, but some say those annoying red marks could unlock the gender mystery. What does your skin look like during pregnancy? If you have maintained a clear-faced glow, then bring on the blue. But, a lot of blemishes could mean you're welcoming a girl.

8 The way you snooze

Will it work? Probably not (so enjoy a stress-free sleep).

Next time you wake up in the morning, remember to check which way you're resting — and yes, we do realize the simple act of sleeping during pregnancy is no easy task. As the myth goes, if you sleep on your left side, it's a boy. If you sleep on your right side, it's a girl. So write a big note on your alarm clock as a reminder to check, or better yet, ask your partner to check for you while you snooze a little longer.

9 The shape of your bump

Will it work? Probably not.

Feel like you're carrying somewhere in the middle, so the height of your bump is no help? Then perhaps this slightly different old wives' tale is for you. Lore suggests that a round, ball-like baby bump means there's a baby boy in your future, while a wider bump that looks like you're carrying all over is a surefire sign that it's a girl.

10 Sweet vs. savory

Will it work? Probably not (so indulge your cravings).

Girls are supposed to be sugar and spice and everything nice, which is probably why it's believed that mamas-to-be who are indulging in sweets are thought to be having a girl. Are you dying for French fries and a hearty steak dinner? It's a boy. If neither seems appetizing, congrats: you're carrying a picky eater!

Did we leave any good ones off the list?
Share your funny gender predictors with us at
facebook.com/EmbryoAdoptionAwareness

6 Look at your hands

Will it work? Probably not (but may reveal that you need a good hand lotion).

Some folks say determining your baby's gender is as simple as glancing at your hands. Dry, cracked hands mean there's a boy on the way, while soft hands signal a little girl. Although this method is certainly easy, we tend to think it's an indicator of something else — the need to invest in a good moisturizer!

Urban Legends for Predicting Baby's Gender



7 Questions Adopted Children Ask

By Lori Holden, MA and Author of The Open-Hearted Way to Open Adoption

After experiencing infertility, bringing home baby may be the end of one journey, but it's the beginning of another. Parenting opens up a whole new world of growth and challenges. When baby arrives through embryo adoption, extra growth and challenges may await.

Deborah Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan explain seven core issues in adoption, which are also insightful for those navigating embryo adoption. You may see these core issues arise as baby becomes a toddler, a school-age child, a tween, a teen, and ultimately an adult, through the questions he asks.

Why don't I look like anyone in my family? A young child notices that other children often look like their parents and their siblings. If you haven't already begun to tell your child the story of his beginnings, this is a good time. Your response might be as simple as, "People look like the genes they inherit from their biological parents. Yours gave you those big brown eyes." **Core issues: Identity, Guilt/Shame** (see sidebar)

Do I have brothers and sisters somewhere? Your child sees that other children have brothers and sisters who look like one another. Since he has biological parents out there, he may wonder if those parents have other children – children who look like him. Your response should be a truthful one – give the information you know. If you don't know, say, "It's very possible you do. What would you think of that?" Seek opportunities to open a conversation. **Core issue: Identity**

Why didn't they keep me? The notion eventually emerges that for your child to join your family, he first had to leave another. Though you cannot protect him from feeling loss (nor should you; it's part of life), you can support him while he processes his grief. **Core issues: Loss, Rejection, Grief**

What would my life be like if I weren't adopted? As the child enters middle school, he begins to see that he might have had an alternate reality. Rather than suppress these wonderings, therapists advise parents to encourage such thoughts so they can be resolved. **Core issue: Control/Gains**

I feel so different, like an Ugly Duckling.

Not a question, but an indication of your teen's growing understanding of his sense of Otherness. This sense, which may exist even in the absence of his truth (we know this can be frustrating), demonstrates why it is important to share age-appropriate information with your child regarding his origins. If your child is able to talk with you about his feelings of Otherness, he's more likely to be able to work through them. **Core issues: Guilt/Shame, Identity**

Do they think about me? If your tween is thinking about his biological parents and siblings, he may also wonder if they are thinking about him. While you may not know the answer for sure, you can nourish your child's sense of worth by saying something like, "I bet they are. I also think they would be very proud to know the person you have become." **Core issues: Rejection, Loss**

Am I bad for thinking about them? Support your tween/teen by assuring him that thinking about his origins and biological family is completely normal. This way, he will feel closer to you and be in a better position to integrate his identity. **Core issues: Intimacy & Relationships, Identity**

The question for parents isn't whether or not your child will have issues to work through related to his adoptedness. The question is: will he feel comfortable sharing his innermost thoughts with you? To allow for such intimacy between you and your child, let your guiding principle for responding to these questions be openness. With that, you're in position to walk alongside your child each step of the way.

Learn to communicate openly and address difficult questions as they arise by viewing our webinars at www.embryoadooption.org/webinar-library



7 Core Issues in Adoption for the Adopted Person

Loss

- Fears abandonment
- Loss of biological, genetic, and cultural history
- Issues of holding on and letting go

Rejection

- Views placement for adoption as a personal rejection
- Can only be "chosen" if first rejected
- Issues of self-esteem

Guilt/Shame

- Ashamed of being different
- May take defensive stance
- Anger

Grief

- Grief overlooked in childhood or blocked by adult, leading to depression and acting out
- May grieve lack of "fit" in adoptive family

Identity

- Deficits in information about birth parents, birthplace, etc. may impede integration of identity
- In order to create a sense of belonging, may act out with extreme behaviors while seeking identity

Intimacy & Relationships

- Fears getting close and risking reenactment of earlier losses
- Fears about becoming intimately involved with a biological sibling they don't know about
- Bonding issues may lower capacity for intimacy

Control/Gains

- Adoption alters life course
- Aware of not being a party to initial adoption decisions, in which adults made life-altering choices

Lifelong Issues in Adoption, Silverstein and Kaplan, 1982
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/intro/issues/>

It's a Life-Giving Option & We're on the Receiving End

By Erica Corbett

Meet two families who are building a story about life, sacrifice, and one very loved little girl.

When Cecile and Michael DeMartini wanted to expand their family after having their first child, Natalia, they turned to in vitro fertilization. They joyfully welcomed their son as a result, then another daughter was conceived naturally. Feeling that their family was complete, they wondered what they should do with the embryos they had remaining in frozen storage.

"It wasn't an instant choice," Cecile said. "It took us three years to decide to donate. We wondered if it was okay to give away our embryos. What kind of family would we be exposing them to?"

When thinking back on this decision, Michael recalls some of the questions he asked himself. "What does it mean to me to have a biological child somewhere else? How am I going to feel about it?" Michael then arrived at the realization that life was more precious than his personal feelings.

So, the couple agreed to donate their embryos through the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program, where they were matched with the Rea family.



DeMartini Family



"They made an amazing, loving choice to donate those embryos. We had this miracle, Vivienne, who has blessed our lives more than we could ever imagine."

Joanna and David Rea had one son and were eager to have more children. After several miscarriages, they tried a number of fertility treatments. They explored the option of embryo adoption and determined it was the right fit for their family. Joanna could carry the child and experience pregnancy – an experience that would allow the entire family to bond before their new baby, Vivienne, arrived.

"We knew there were families who had remaining embryos and that those families might be struggling to decide what to do with them. We felt like we could alleviate some of that burden and grow our family," said David.

Like many adopting families who participate in the Snowflakes program, they were initially a little hesitant about an open adoption. But as time went on, they became much more comfortable getting to know their donating family.

"Snowflakes had been our mediator of handwritten letters and emails," Joanna said. "We felt more comfortable with that. It gave us some limits, some guards in the beginning."

"Anyone with a new baby knows that the rest of the family needs some time to acclimate to the changes. Those changes can be difficult, and a little distance was good at the time," David said. "As Vivienne grows and becomes more aware, that's when we'll start to introduce the idea and the explanations [of where she came from] at whatever level is appropriate. That's when the contact will become more open and direct...it's ultimately about what our daughter is most comfortable with. It's her story and we want to be sensitive to that."

Cecile DeMartini agrees. "I don't want to confuse Vivienne. Life is confusing enough as it is. I'm following David and Joanna's lead as far as they want to take it."

The Reas are grateful to the DeMartinis for their gift.

"They made an amazing, loving choice to donate those embryos. We had this miracle, Vivienne, who has blessed our lives more than we could ever imagine," Joanna said. "We're so thankful for that opportunity. It's a life-giving option and we're on the receiving end of it."

"It's an incredible testament to the power of life," said David. "If you go through this process, you are saying that this life matters. [The embryo] is not just a couple of cells to be kept in cold storage or discarded. It becomes a person. Ultimately, this is Vivienne's story and part of who she is. She's going to direct that story. She's got a lot of people who love her for various reasons."

"She's lucky," Joanna adds.

Natalia meets the Rea family





Family Update

The Rea and DeMartini families had their first in-person meeting over the Thanksgiving holiday last year! The DeMartini's oldest daughter, Natalia, joined the Reas and biological sister, Vivienne, for Thanksgiving while on a break from her college classes. Here is what she had to say about the experience of meeting her biological sister for the first time:

"Experiencing Thanksgiving with my biological little sister was nothing short of incredible."

"It was like I was looking into myself as a little kid. Vivienne is an energetic, loving princess (a lot like myself at that age) who enjoyed my company. I got to do Elsa hair for her and explore the Lincoln Museum in Springfield. It's an emotional experience, like reuniting with a long lost sister. Her family was super inviting and made sure I was comfortable at all times. This past Thanksgiving is definitely a time I will never forget. I enjoyed every second I had with them, and I hope next year to do the same."

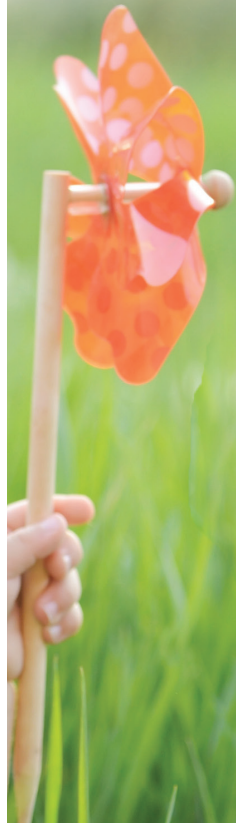
Open Adoption



Embryo Adoption

Radical or Common Sense?

By Ronald L. Stoddart, Esq.



Everyone loves a good secret; but no one likes to be surprised when that secret is about them. Over the past 50 years, there have been many changes in adoption procedures. The attitude that a closed (or secret) adoption was best for the child and helped the birthmother forget and get on with her life has been widely discredited. The concept of “open” adoption has taken its place, and birthmothers, adopting parents, and the child have greatly benefitted from the change.

What is open adoption? In its most basic form, open adoption is where the birthmother and adopting parents know the identities of the other parties. The resulting relationship ranges from no post-birth contact, to exchanging photos and letters through an intermediary, to sharing visits. It is not “co-parenting” because an adoption terminates one set of parental rights and responsibilities for one party while it creates a new set of rights and responsibilities for another party. The lack of secrecy helps instill a confidence in all parties – especially in the adopted child – and reinforces that adoption is good for all involved. It is unnecessary to keep it a secret.

Since an embryo adoption occurs before a child is born, and the adopting mother also gives birth to the child, why is openness important in this type of adoption? The argument could be made that openness in embryo adoption is even more important than in traditional domestic adoption. The adopted child will typically be a full genetic sibling to a child or children being parented by

the donor family. Although the parties may not have an interest in building a relationship, the “availability” of the information could be very valuable to all parties. Secrets generally promote fear, while the availability of information will lessen the obsession with uncovering the secret. We have all experienced the situation where a child becomes most interested in knowing what they are told they should not or cannot know; another example of the attraction to the “forbidden fruit.”

Trust plays a critical role in any open adoption, including an open embryo adoption. Under the law, embryo transfers are governed by contract law, since the courts view embryos as “property,” albeit property worthy of special consideration. By properly screening and educating the adopting parents, the commitment of future communication or contact should be governed by realistic expectations from all parties. The courts’ ability, let alone their willingness, to enforce an agreement specifying the level of contact between parties to any adoption should never be considered a guarantee of future performance. But, for the best interest of the child, the donor and adopting families should seriously consider keeping their commitments, as failure to do so will eventually be known to the child. Before the embryos are even thawed, the rights and responsibilities of parenthood that have been legally transferred are enforceable, but the post-adoption contact is largely based on TRUST – a very good trait to pass on.



Begin your
journey to
parenthood
with
world-class
fertility care.

With superior
success rates, the
latest advances
and compassionate
doctors and staff,
it is easy to see
why patients choose
HRC Fertility for their
fertility treatment.

Pasadena Office

333 S. Arroyo Parkway, 3rd Floor
Pasadena, CA 91105

877.577.5070

hrcpasadena.com

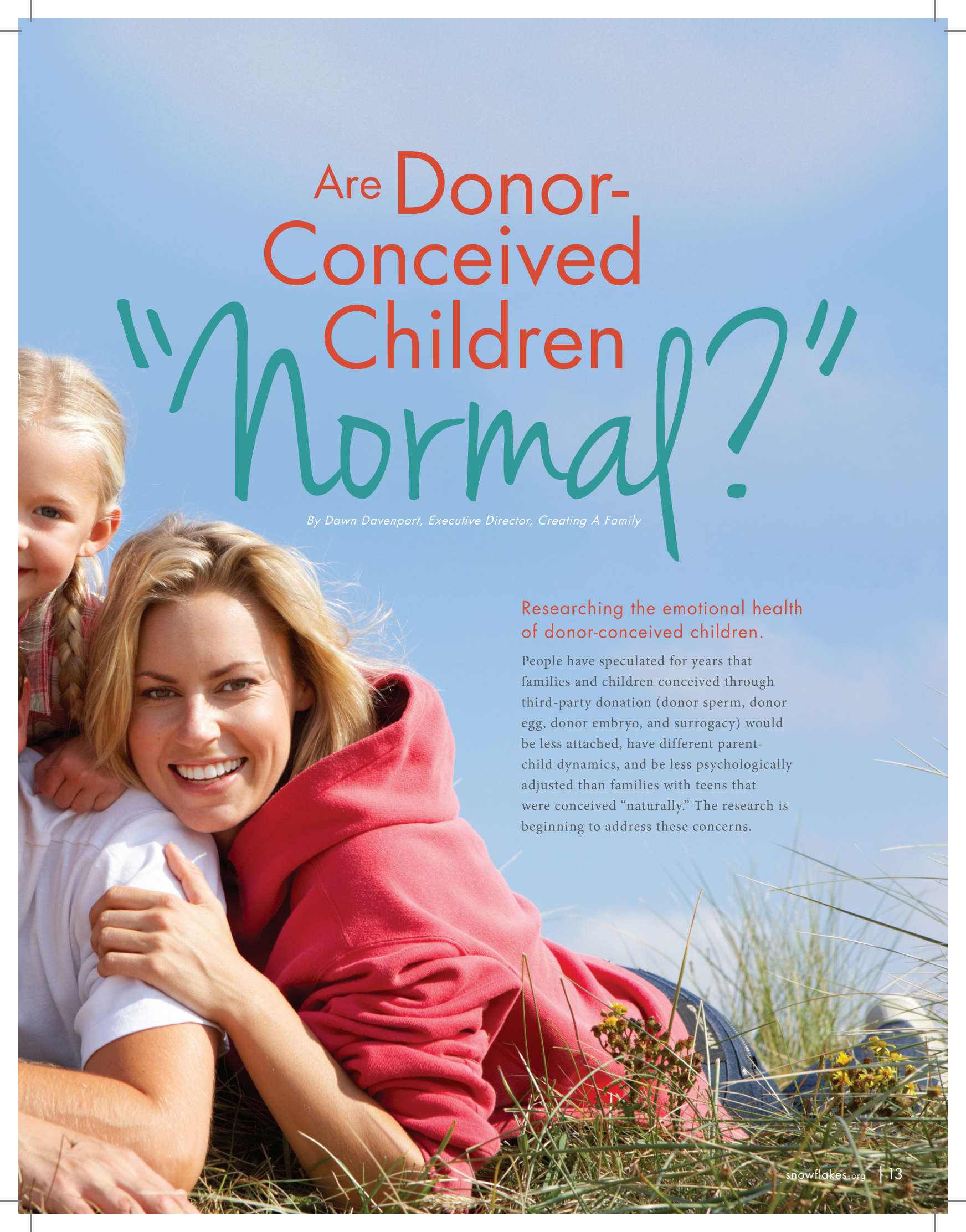
Rancho Cucamonga Office

8112 Milliken Ave., Suite 101
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

909.941.1120

hrcranhocucamonga.com





Are Donor-Conceived Children "Normal?"

By Dawn Davenport, Executive Director, Creating A Family

Researching the emotional health of donor-conceived children.

People have speculated for years that families and children conceived through third-party donation (donor sperm, donor egg, donor embryo, and surrogacy) would be less attached, have different parent-child dynamics, and be less psychologically adjusted than families with teens that were conceived "naturally." The research is beginning to address these concerns.



As the mom of teens and adults, I'm wary of research on "how the kids are doing" that looks only at young and elementary school-aged children. If we want to really assess the impact of third-party reproduction on kids and families, we need to follow these children and their families into the teen years and beyond.

Adolescence is where kids start wrestling with their identity and the bloom is off the parenting rose, so to speak. If we are going to see differences, it is more likely that these will appear during adolescence. Fortunately for us, some of the research regarding this topic is now being published.

One study presented at the 2015 American Society of Reproductive Medicine's national conference has been following 88 families formed by third-party reproduction in comparison to 57 families formed through natural conception over the course of 14 years. Of the 88 families formed by third-party reproduction, 31 used donor sperm, 28 used donor eggs, and 29 used a surrogate. Both the mother and the adolescent of these families were interviewed and asked to fill out questionnaires.

Adolescents who were aware of their third-party conception showed a clear understanding of it, with the majority expressing a neutral or indifferent attitude.

The researchers of this well-designed study used standard measurement tools to assess:

- parent psychological well-being
- parenting and family functioning
- adolescent psychological adjustment

The data showed that no significant differences were found between families who conceived through donor insemination (sperm donation), egg donation, and surrogacy compared to those families who conceived naturally.

Some have expressed concern that families formed via third-party reproduction would differ in parenting quality, attachment, and psychological adjustment. The results of this study and others indicate that these families are highly functioning in relation to parent psychological well-being, and the quality of adolescents' relationships with their parents. Parents who used donor sperm, donor eggs, or surrogacy are not more likely to reject their child or have increased strain in parent-child relationships during adolescence. The teens did not differ from naturally-conceived teens, regardless of whether they knew how they were conceived or not.

Did we need to tell the kids?

The researchers also wanted to know how the teens who had been told of their conception were doing and if they differed from the teens that didn't know.

Some of the third-party reproduction parents in the study had disclosed to their children how they were conceived: 39% of donor insemination families, 64% of egg donation families, and 86% of surrogacy families. Some were told as young children and a few were told over the age of 10 (3 donor insemination families, 5 egg donation families, and 1 surrogacy family told their children how they were conceived when they were 10 or older).

Adolescents who were aware of their third-party conception showed a clear understanding of it, with **the majority expressing a neutral or indifferent attitude**. They did not differ in their psychological adjustment from those teens conceived via third-party reproduction who had not been told, or those teens conceived naturally.

This, my friends, is what we've been saying all along. It is not a big deal to children whether their parents used donor egg, donor sperm, or a surrogate. The big deal is



not knowing the truth of how they were conceived. It's important to disclose this information to children of third-party reproduction so they know the full impact of their medical history as they enter into adulthood, but I doubt it will affect their psychological adjustment or relationship with their parents.

For more information on this and other important adoption topics, visit www.CreatingAFamily.org

Dreaming about building a family?



a lifetime of memories are WAITING FOR YOU

- Embryo adoption is an exciting new source of hope.
- Our caring, hands-on staff guides you through the process.
- Embryos are available now - no long wait lists.



EMBRYO ADOPTION
AWARENESS CENTER

970-663-6799 • www.EmbryoAdoption.org • info@embryoadoption.org

Embryo Adoption may be the right choice for you.
Learn more today!

Could embryo adoption or donation be the right choice for you?



If you are struggling with infertility or you are unsure of what to do with your remaining embryos, learn more about Snowflakes Embryo Adoption and Donation.

- Through embryo adoption, you are able to give birth to your adopted child.
- You can avoid the high cost of donor eggs with embryo adoption.
- Do you know about embryo donation and adoption? Better understand your embryo disposition choices.

Over 6,000 babies have been born as a result of embryo adoption & donation.

Contact us to learn more.

970-663-6799

www.Snowflakes.org | info@snowflakes.org



snowflakes®
embryo adoption program