

A MAGAZINE FOR FERTILITY AND ADOPTION

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Pathway2Family.org

# PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

UNEXPECTED  
FAMILY

*through Embryo Adoption*



How to Raise Truly  
Thankful Kids

9 PREGNANCY  
*na-nas*

Adoption and the  
Search for Identity

A PUBLICATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY



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# PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

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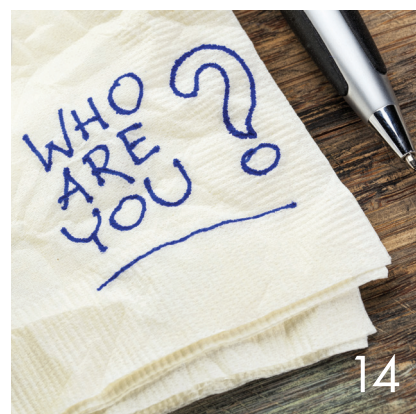
## Have you heard?

.....  
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](http://www.EmbryoAdoption.org)



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Check out our website for more information, videos, and webinars about embryo donation and adoption at [www.EmbryoAdoption.org](http://www.EmbryoAdoption.org).



# Coffee & pregnancy

## What You Need to Know about Your Cup of Joe

Ah, coffee! The day doesn't officially begin until you've had your first cup, right? The smell is invigorating, it tastes delicious (especially with that yummy vanilla creamer), and the energy boost gets you ready to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

But what if you're pregnant? Does the caffeine in coffee pose any danger to the unborn child? Is it OK to drink decaf? According to the Mayo Clinic, the effects of caffeine on a fetus are unclear, so your doctor may encourage you to keep your daily caffeine intake below 200 milligrams. With an 8-ounce cup of brewed coffee containing approximately 95 milligrams of caffeine, you would be cleared for a little over two cups a day. That said, you should ask your healthcare provider about what's right in your specific situation.

As for decaf coffee, most experts say it's fine to drink it during pregnancy. However, be aware that it isn't actually 100 percent caffeine free. An 8-ounce cup of decaf has between 2 and 12 milligrams of caffeine.


### Remember to Cut Back Cautiously

As anyone who has ever tried to give up regular coffee "cold turkey" can attest, doing so can result in some unpleasant side effects, most notably the dreaded "caffeine headache." So, if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and want to eliminate caffeine from your diet, just be sure you wean yourself from it gradually.

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/pregnancy-nutrition/art-20043844?pg=2>







You are hoping and wishing to become pregnant one day. Besides the obvious (drinking, smoking), what are some other things to avoid?

**1 Do not get a new pet.**

You're pregnant. Are puppies so very, very cute? Of course! But by the end of nine months, you're going to have your hands full trying to figure out how to take care of a brand spankin' new human being. Why put up with the challenge of dividing your attention between your baby and a pet? Potty training a puppy should not be a high priority.

**2 Do not move furniture.**

You're nesting. We understand that. But confine the majority of your redecorating activities to those that do not require heavy lifting. Asking your partner to do so can help him feel involved in the process of nesting, earning important significant-other points and saving you from bodily harm.

**3 Do not stress over stretch marks.**

Almost everyone will get them. Fortunately, they can disappear over time. Your body, is growing to accommodate another human! Give yourself, and your body, some grace. Plus, there are all sorts of lotions and potions touting the elimination of stretch marks.

**4 Do not skimp on the pillows.**

Have you seen those funny u-shaped maternity pillows? They may be worth the investment. Pillows, pillows, and more pillows will help you get the sleep you need as your baby grows and grows.



PREGN  
na-





## 5 Do not travel.

Will your doctor approve traveling during pregnancy? Most likely, yes. But think about it. Do you really want to pack, and then repack, and pack some more, then scramble around gathering the stuff you forgot to pack? Let's not forget about the hours spent sitting in a car or a squishy airplane seat – with frequent urges to visit the 'facilities.' Just stay home in your own safe pillow nest.

## 6 Do not hesitate to play the “I’m pregnant” card.

You're growing a human being! This is a physically taxing endeavor. Don't be a whiner, but don't be shy saying 'no' to things that you normally would have said 'yes' to. You don't have to be Wonder Woman while you're pregnant.

## 7 Do not go to the big box baby store alone.

The big box baby store can scare just about anyone, raising the FUD factor (fear, uncertainty, and doubt). How can one little baby need all of this stuff? Babies don't need stuff, they need you – well, and maybe a very good supply of disposable diapers. Don't be fooled into thinking you need it all.

## 8 Do not shun an offer to be the center of attention at a baby shower.

Let your friends shop at the big box baby store after you've wandered around with your spouse or friend and made your 'list.' You may be surprised by their generosity. You can also suggest that your friends host a diaper shower – you'll be surprised at how many you will use.

## 9 Do not over commit to a specific birth plan.

It's great to think through how you want the birth day to go. Hospital or home? Midwife or doctor? Natural or medicated? But really, the bottom line is to give birth to a healthy baby with a minimal number of complications. Be flexible.



# Unexpected Family!

Embracing a Greater Joy.

Countless fertility treatments, failed IVF, a failed frozen embryo transfer, a devastating stillbirth, and an interrupted adoption... year after year, the Holzapfels longed for children without success. In their wildest dreams, James and Monica Holzapfel never thought they would be faced with deciding what to do with remaining frozen embryos later on down the road.









Seven years and four children later, they realized their family was complete. Yet 14 embryos remained in frozen storage. They struggled with the decision of what to do with them. James explained,

*"Destroying the embryos was not an option. Monica and I wanted to be confident that any babies born from these embryos would live in a safe family where they would be loved."*

Their clinic was familiar with the Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption program. After contacting Snowflakes, the Holzapfels learned they could choose the family who would receive their remaining embryos. That felt like the right option for them.

James and Monica weren't 100% sure what sort of communication they should have in the future with the family who adopted their embryos. They knew they wanted to be told if children were born. They knew they would like to see some photographs and receive annual updates. Perhaps 'someday' they would eventually meet this family. But 'someday' arrived much sooner than expected and delivered more than they could have hoped for or imagined.

Blake and Stacy Parsons were certain they wanted more children after successfully giving birth to their first son. After three miscarriages (caused by a genetic incompatibility factor), they decided to discontinue attempts to conceive another genetic child. Their first domestic infant adoption attempt ended in additional heartbreak, unfortunately.

They were determined to bring another child into their family – they had so much love to give! One day, Stacy was sitting at her computer and decided to type, 'I want to have a baby' into the search bar. The Snowflakes Embryo Adoption program was the first item to appear in the list of search results. Like many people, the Parsons had never heard of embryo adoption before. Despite this being such a foreign concept, the more they learned, the more they knew that this was their solution.

After Blake and Stacy completed their home study, they waited as patiently as possible for a family match. The first match attempt didn't work out. They were upset but were encouraged by the Snowflakes team to remain optimistic. Very quickly, the Parsons were selected by another donor family, the Holzapfels, who had four children of their own through IVF. This adoption match was successful. The families began having limited communications with one another, their messages delivered through the agency. The Holzapfels sent the Parsons a photograph of their family to encourage them prior to their first frozen embryo transfer.

The Parsons followed through with the frozen embryo transfer and learned they were pregnant. Joy! Happiness! Apprehension. Would the pregnancy stick? It did, and the entire pregnancy was incredibly smooth—absolutely perfect, according to Stacy. Blake and Stacy decided to reach out to the Holzapfels and see if they would like to exchange email addresses. This led to an exchange of phone numbers. After texting, talking, and emailing, they established a wonderful, personal relationship.



Stacy & Vance  
Parsons

PATHWAY 2 FAMILY SUMMER / FALL 2017



Clay & Vance  
Parsons



After the Parsons' son, Vance, was born in October 2016, James and Monica received pictures within minutes. Communication continued almost daily with wonderful images showing how much baby Vance was changing. The idea of meeting face-to-face was presented. Both families were excited, but also a bit nervous about taking this next step. In December 2016, when Vance was just a couple months old, the Holzapfels took an 8-hour road trip with their 4 children to meet the Parsons. The families agreed to meet at a hotel. Stacy recalls,

*"As the family who gifted us with embryos came into the hotel lobby, I felt an instant connection."*

She continued, "I was holding the baby they created; the baby they blessed us with. It is extraordinary to think that before any of us knew each other, or even were born ourselves, God had a plan. God knew this baby, and He knew Vance would be a part of our family."



For both families, it was an amazing and incredible experience. And, for the Holzapfels, it was confirmation that they had made the right decision in placing their remaining embryos with the Parsons family. What an amazing experience! Baby Vance was cuddled and loved by everyone. Spending time together simply confirmed that meeting one another was nothing to be afraid of. Now, they really were an extended family.

The Holzapfels and Parsons continue to communicate with one another regularly and have summer 2017 plans to visit each other. They know the joy and happiness they have experienced in their journey as 'extended family' has only just begun.

## Considering Embryo Adoption?



- Couples, once in your shoes, now have embryos remaining from IVF
- Some of those families have chosen to donate those embryos to adopting families like yours

*Your bundle of joy is waiting for you!*  
**CONTACT US TODAY TO LEARN MORE.**



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# Want to hear what others are saying about embryo adoption and donation?

“

## *Embryo Adoption*

“Embryo adoption gave me the opportunity to become pregnant, something I didn’t think was going to happen. It has also given us such a beautiful opportunity to start a family.”

-Tracey

“After having our baby girl, we are absolutely certain that this was the right path to build our family. We will be forever grateful to the donating couple, and hope that other couples who have completed their families will also consider donating their embryos to change the life of those struggling with infertility.”

-Keith and Renee

“Embryo adoption was a great experience for us. It was a miraculous way to have adoption and pregnancy combined. We had biological and adopted children already, and embryo adoption was the best of both worlds for us.”

-Kevin and Dara

## *Embryo Donation*

“We could not have asked for a more loving and caring adopting family and know that any children resulting from our adoption will be cherished and loved beyond what we could have ever hoped or imagined. That brings us a sense of peace that we know we can live with for the rest of our lives.”

-Sheila

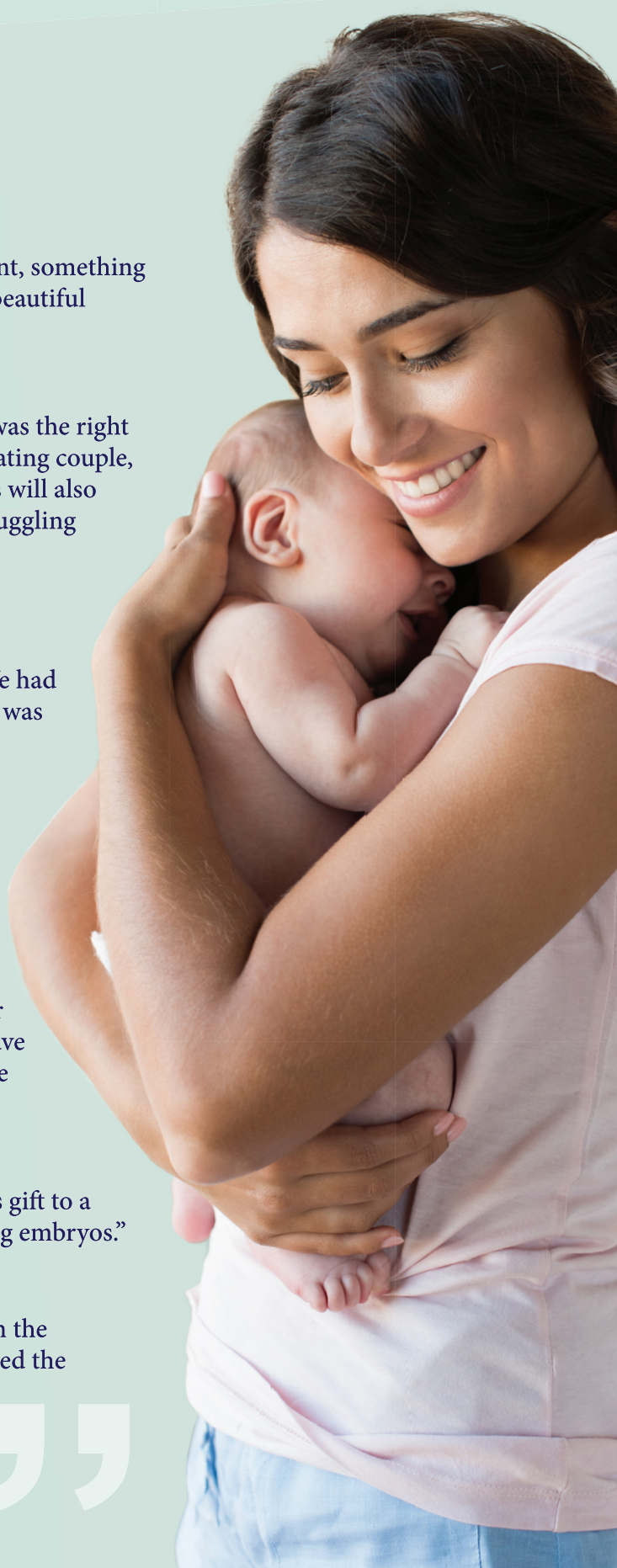
“For our family, embryo donation allowed us to give a precious gift to a family in need and also give the chance for life to our remaining embryos.”

-Jennene

“Donating our embryos was a decision that, for us, was years in the making. Looking at our son, we knew that our embryos deserved the same opportunity of life and love that he enjoys.”

-Jeff and Laurel

”





# The Process of Embryo Adoption

A helpful step-by-step guide

## Step One: Research and Education

It's important to find the right embryo adoption program to help you build your family. When researching programs and organizations, you may want to consider asking the following questions:

1. How many embryos will I receive?
2. What information will I be given about the genetic parents that I can later share with my child?
3. How is the adoptive family matched with embryos?

## Step Two: Application Process

After deciding on an embryo adoption agency that best works for you, you'll need to apply for the program and start the initial paperwork. This phase may also include:

1. A home study or psychological consultation, in which you will work with a mental health professional for initial screening and education about the impact that embryo adoption will have on your life moving forward
2. A physical screening, in which you'll work with a doctor to confirm that you, as the adopting mother, will be able to carry a pregnancy with donor embryos

## Step Four: Placement

In this phase, you'll work with your embryo adoption agency to secure a match with a donor family.

*Placement processes vary by agency.*

## Step Three: Create a Family Profile

Many (but not all) embryo adoption programs will work with you to create a family profile to introduce yourself to families who would like to donate their remaining embryos.

## Step Five: Contracts

Legal documentation of the transfer of ownership of the embryos from donor family to adopting family.

## Step Six: Embryo Shipment

If you are planning to have the embryos shipped to a fertility clinic that is closer to your home, the Medical Director and Embryologist will need to review and approve the embryology report first.

## Step Eight: Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET)

Your RE will thaw and transfer an agreed upon number of embryos into your womb. It is common for REs to transfer two embryos per FET.

## Step Seven: Medical Preparation

The Reproductive Endocrinologist (or RE) will prescribe medication needed for the frozen embryo transfer (FET) and give instructions for how to best prepare your body.

## Step Nine: Pregnancy

Two weeks following your FET, you will find out if you have successfully achieved pregnancy with your adopted embryos.

Now that you know the process of embryo adoption, we hope you will consider this unique family building option.

*It could be the answer you've been searching for!*

For additional information, webinars and more, visit [www.EmbryoAdoption.org](http://www.EmbryoAdoption.org).

# How to Raise Truly Thankful Kids

Jeannie Cunnion  
Author of Parenting the Wholehearted Child

When our kids were itty-bitty, we were told to teach them a few basic words in sign language, as this helps eliminate frustration and whining in kids who desire to communicate their needs but haven't developed the language skills to do so. The four words that were recommended to us were "please," "thank you," "all done," and "more." And I can assuredly say, we found those four signs to be very helpful in the early days.

Looking back however, I do find it comical that "more" was one of the first four words we taught our kids... because then we spend the rest of our days trying to teach our kids to be thankful for what they have rather than always wanting "more, more, more."

Our children are learning what it looks like to live a life of thankfulness, or a lack thereof, through us. In a world of so much selfishness and entitlement, I long to raise thankful children, ones who live in awareness of the basics they take for granted, the wonderful opportunities they are given, and the experiences they enjoy. But even more than that, I want to raise children who recognize that

everything they are and everything they have is a gift from God. Because it is this kind of thankfulness that breeds humility, generosity, and happiness. God exhorts us to give thanks in all circumstances, not because He needs to hear, "thank you," but because He knows that thankfulness changes the trajectory of our hearts.

However, the human tendency is to look at everything we don't have and demand "more" to be happy. Ironically, happiness is not found in acquiring "more," but in being more thankful for what we've already been given.

For example, I recall an afternoon when my husband and I were driving our three boys to the beach and we were passing by beautiful homes that sit right on the water's edge with glorious views of the sound. Without realizing it, I found myself thinking out loud, "Look at that one, honey. Could you imagine how amazing it would be to wake up to that view every day? That is my dream house." And immediately, my eight year old chimed in. "Yeah, why can't we live there, Daddy? That one is so much bigger and better than ours!"

*"I just allowed myself to believe that what we have isn't enough and that happiness can be found in having more. Please forgive me."*



Ouch. I knew what I'd just done and conviction hit me to the core. "Hey boys," I replied. "Mommy needs to apologize. I'm lacking thankfulness right now. God has given us a beautiful home. We are unimaginably blessed. But I just allowed myself to believe that what we have isn't enough and that happiness can be found in having more. Please forgive me."

I don't believe it's wrong to dream or admire. However, there is a fine line between admiring and worshipping. And I don't believe it's wrong to have an abundance, especially when we live in gratitude for and in generosity with that abundance.

But let us not forget, as demonstrated by my eight-year-old son, that our children are learning what it looks like to live a life of thankfulness through us.

## Therefore, if our goal is to raise kids who are truly thankful, we have to ask ourselves:

- Do our kids see us worshiping the gifts or the Giver of the gifts?
- Do they see us being greedy or generous with our gifts?
- Do we lead our kids in living out grateful and generous lives?

Discouraging ingratitude in our kids begins with them seeing tangible gratitude in us. And fostering gratitude in our kids only happens when we lead them in experiencing - actually living out - in word and deed, a life of giving thanks and giving back.

Jeannie Cunnion is the author of "Parenting the Wholehearted Child," and a blogger at [www.jeanniecunnion.com](http://www.jeanniecunnion.com). She has a Master's degree in Social Work, and her background combines counseling, writing, and speaking about parenting and adoption issues. Jeannie and her husband, Mike, are the proud parents of four wild and awesome boys.







# The Search for *identity*



# Future Questions Can Be Answered Today

By: Rhonda Jarema, MA Psychology

At least once a week, I receive a call from an adult adoptee wanting answers about their past and requesting information about original birth records. Some are interested in identifying the birth family, some want to know about medical information, and others just want to find the original paperwork that their adoptive parents 'lost.'

*Each call is a bit different, but all of them carry pain with each query.*

The interest in genetic origins can be a fascination or even an obsession. Developmentally, late adolescence or early adulthood is a time of separation from the family and increasing independence. It is not unusual as adoptees go through adolescence that they wonder about their family of origin. For example, one adoptee I spoke with wanted to know why her biological parents made the decision to place her. Another adoptee wanted to know why she was so outgoing, a characteristic she definitely didn't get from her librarian mother and accountant father. And, another adoptee was estranged from his adoptive parents and only had his US driver's license to prove his identity. Although the desire to find out more information about their origins may be similar, the reason behind that interest may be different.

Adoption was very secretive throughout the 1970s in the United States. Gradually, it became understood that it was important to at least offer open adoption. By the 1990s, open adoptions were more common than closed adoptions. However, the amount of information shared still varied from very limited communication through the agency to relationships among the adoption triad of biological and adoptive parents and adoptee. Even today, despite the known benefits of open adoptions, there are adopting parents who prefer a closed adoption.

With the Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption program, the placing and adoptive families are encouraged to share information and to develop an open relationship

with one another, dependent on their comfort level. Some families enjoy visiting with one another and have a very open relationship, and others limit communications to yearly letters and photos.

Other families just communicate through the agency as the intermediary. The placing and adoptive families are encouraged to share their child's unique adoption story with the child from the beginning, so it is not an issue of surprise or secrecy, but one of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment. If questions are answered and the discussion has been open, it will decrease the child's questions later on in adolescence or adulthood.

It is not unusual for an adoptee to have questions about their adoption and genetics. Tracking down their biological parents can help them answer some of those questions. With an open adoption, the adoptee and adoptive parents have access to the placing family and are able to ask questions as they arise. However, if they have inconsistent or non-existent communication, the adoptee may be more likely to have questions, as the information was not made accessible/permisible by the adopting parents.

If the adoption has not been open, the adoptee may have a desire to see and perhaps connect with his or her biological siblings. Often this curiosity can be resolved with a quick search on 'Facebook' or other social media. Social media makes contact much easier but still allows some degree of separation. It is fairly easy to put in a name and do a search, quickly finding photos of the person or family. Questions can be asked through private messages or email, opening the door for more communication if it is wished by all parties. However, as with anything, it is important to proceed with thoughtful caution.

I'd encourage any adoptee beginning a search to first determine what they want out of the search and discuss it with trusted family members or a therapist. It helps to have a goal. Understanding whether the adoptee wants contact or wants to clarify or learn more about their genetic history is important.

*Such a search can be a beginning step toward healing and finding answers to previously unanswered questions.*



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embryo adoption program

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- Our caring, hands-on staff guides you through the process

Embryo adoption may be the  
right choice for you.



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