

## **Talking to Your Child About Their Donor Origins**

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### **4 Key Parental Steps to prepare for talking to children about their donor origins:**

- Make the decision to be open with your child before they are born and while they are young; as you get comfortable with the idea, the telling will be more natural and less of a "news flash."
- Think carefully about who should have this pertinent information about your son or daughter. Separate the telling of your child from the telling of the rest of the world. Your child deserves to know the truth about his or her genetic origins, but family and friends are not automatically entitled to the information unless you want them to know.
- Acknowledge the loss issues associated with donor conception and take time to deal with unresolved feelings about your choices. You may have been ambivalent or disappointed about using a donor, feel discouraged that you have not found a partner and are a single parent, or have reservations about raising a child as a same sex couple. As you accept these realities, you'll be able to embrace your child as the son or daughter you were meant to have.
- Start developing the language you'll feel comfortable with when talking about the donor. Some experts suggest refraining from using the words "mother or father," as in "biological mother," or "real father." Using words like "helper," "nice lady," or "donor" will honor this person as an important contributor to the creation of your child while not elevating them to the status of parent.

### **5 Key tools for parents to use when talking to children about donor conception:**

- Experts recommend starting the disclosure process in early childhood, even before the child is verbal, using simple language.
- However, there is not one age, one day, one time or one way that is "perfect" to tell this family story. Look for openings and quiet moments to start the dialogue. If this is a 2-parent family, both parents should be engaged in the disclosure process.
- Kids take their cues from their parents; if you present the donor story in an unapologetic, loving, and straight forward manner, your child will bring the same positive attitude toward the information.
- At the same time, allow room for negative emotions. At some point your child may have feelings of sadness, anger or confusion and will need your support. These are normal feelings and should not be interpreted as a rejection of the nongenetic parent.
- The information you share will change and evolve over time as your child develops and can process more complex family themes. Be prepared to tell and retell, and be open to discussion (even at inopportune times!).

Remember, every child has a family story no matter how they came into the world. Talking to your son or daughter about their origins is a way to forge strong family bonds and facilitate a positive self concept.

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