

We know that many dads are not adequately counseled or educated before donor conception. I feel very strongly that unless men deal with the shame of infertility, and are educated all about donor conception and the needs and issues a donor child might have, there will be a good chance that they will pass this shame along to their children, and feel threatened by their child having any type of curiosity about their biological family. And worse, when mom and dad families don't properly deal with the shame of infertility or using donor conception, too often the dad feels very strongly about never telling the children about their origins, and we have learned that this can have very serious ramifications within a family and for the donor offspring.

In our research of 759 offspring we found more than a few adult donor offspring who had found out that they were donor conceived but felt afraid to tell their dads that they knew for fear of hurting them. So then you had the children themselves also struggling to keep the "secret".

The fear of a child connecting with genetic relatives also comes from the no-bio moms. I hear all too often that the non-bio mom in a family is afraid of a child reaching out to half siblings and/or their donors, saying "biology doesn't make a family". Again, I think it should be up to the child to define their own sense of family. What may be just a "donated cell" to the parent, often means a lot more to a donor conceived person.

If a child grows up in a family where half of their genetic, ancestral and medical backgrounds are minimized, or negated, they can feel a lot of guilt if and when they become curious about this invisible side of themselves. We as parents need to be very careful not to put our own biases onto our children and allow them to process for themselves as they mature.

Proper counseling, education, openness and honesty would save a lot of donor families from heartache.

Wendy