



## **Third Party Reproduction**

### **Emotional, Psychological, and Legal Resources**

Fertility therapy may seem complex and stressful. Reproduction involving the use of donor eggs, donor sperm, or a gestational carrier, adds intricacy to the path to building your family. Understanding what resources are available to you may ease your anxiety, and help you take control of the choices and opportunities available to you.

- A. **The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM)** recommends that all individuals or couples utilizing a gamete (egg or sperm) donor or carrier meet with a qualified mental health professional to explore the potential impact of the relationship between the donor or carrier and the recipient(s) or Intended Parent(s). In the past, our patients have found this meeting quite beneficial in helping them to understand questions to ask, how to involve family members, and whether, when, and how to deal with the issue of disclosure to children. Numerous resources are available in the form of books, children's books, and online support groups.

**At NRM, we have found value in having our patients meet with a counselor to explore their decisions and questions that may arise. Options include:**

- 1) Angela Paoli, MSW. Let our office know if you would like to schedule with her and we arrange this for you.
- 2) Marlene Maron, PhD. Clinical Psychologist. University of Vermont.  
  
Phone: (802) 847-3634
- 3) Judith Gerber, PhD. Clinical Psychologist in Family Medicine, Colchester, Vermont.  
  
Phone: (802) 847-2055



- 4) Jessica Clifton, Licensed Clinical Psychologist. Visits are remote, telehealth visits and you can schedule through the website provided below. If there are no times that work for you on the schedule, please reach out to your nurse or treatment coordinator for NRM to help facilitate a time that work for both you and Jessica.

[www.parheliawellness.com](http://www.parheliawellness.com)

- B. **The legal aspects of parenting** differ from state to state. At NRM, we strongly recommend you meet with an attorney anytime you are utilizing donor sperm, donor egg, or a gestational carrier (legal consultation is required in the case of use of gestational carrier), to understand the definition of Intended Parents and the option of Second Parent Adoption- which we recommend for all same-sex couples. This is the only way to ensure that the non-genetic parent has parental rights recognized anywhere in the country.

**We recommend contacting Kurt Hughes, J.D., and Michelle Tarnelli, J.D.,  
Specialists in Family Law**

Tarnelli and Hughes

431 Pine Street #301

Phone: (802) 540-0850

Website: [tarnellihugheslaw.com](http://tarnellihugheslaw.com)

- C. **Disclosure to children conceived by donor egg, donor sperm, or a gestational carrier:**

As you build your family you will need to make decisions on whether, when, and how to tell your children about their conception. This is a very personal decision that can only



be made by you, the child's parents. Here we have information that may help you make your choice.

### Speaking with Children about 3<sup>rd</sup>-Party Reproduction

The Mental Health Professionals Group of ASRM has been studying this issue for many years. Based on their experience, these experienced professionals have taken a strong stance in support of openly disclosing the use of donors and carriers to children, based on the following:

Disclosure fosters open and honest communication.

- o The use of donor sperm or egg, or a gestational carrier is not a bad or shameful thing, but secrets are generally considered bad or shameful. The opportunity to build your family by these means is something to be embraced and celebrated.
- o The pressure to keep a secret can be stressful and have negative impacts on family members.
- o Children are very perceptive and can often pick up on dishonesty.
- o Building a family based on a foundation of truth and honesty is important for emotionally healthy relationships.

Disclosure to children prior to adolescence promotes a healthy self-image

- o Young children who have "always known" have this knowledge as a part of their identity and do not know any differently. This becomes their "normal" and they are not likely to place any judgments on their method of conception.
- o Children from donor conception know that they were intensely wanted and deeply loved.



- o Waiting until adolescence or later to disclose can be devastating to a child. Adolescence is a turbulent time and disclosure at this time could add issues about the child's identity, can often lead to a child feeling as though they have been lied to, and can result in feelings of mistrust and frustration toward their parents.

Children have a right and fundamental interest in knowing their biological origins. Research and trends in third party reproduction are following this approach.

Telling children about the use of donor gametes will protect them from finding out from someone else. They could otherwise find out from medical histories, genetic testing or DNA samples, health issues that arise, or other family or friends that might know.

Internationally, some countries feel so strongly about a child's right to know, they have made anonymous donation illegal.

### **Recommended reading**

**There are so many great books out there! These are just a few to get you started.**

#### **For Parents:**

Helping the stork: Choices and challenges of donor insemination. Vercollone and moss (1997)

Assisted reproduction: The complete guide to having a baby with the help of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. Erickson, T.M. (2005).

Having your baby through egg donation. Glazer and Sterling (2005).

Mommies, Daddies, Donors, Surrogates. Answering tough questions and building strong families. Ehrensaft D. (2005).



### **For Young Children:**

Sometimes it takes three to make a baby: Explaining egg donor conception to young children. Bourne (2002).

What makes a Baby. Parr, T. (2013)

My Beginnings: A Very Special Story. Appleton (2005).

One dad, two dads, brown dads, blue dads. Valentine, J. (2004)

Hope and Will have a baby. Celcer (2007). Series includes "The Gift of Egg Donation", "The Gift of Sperm Donation" and "The Gift of Surrogacy".

Before you were born: our wish for a child. Grimes (2004/2005 Series).

Mommy, Did I grow in your Tummy? Where Some Babies Come From. Gordon (1992).

### **Online Resources:**

- 1) 1. Reproductive Facts.org:

<https://www.reproductivefacts.org/news-and-publications/patient-fact-sheets-and-booklets/documents/new-factsheets-and-booklets/>

- 2) 2. Resolve.org Under the RESOURCES tab: Books, Podcasts, Fact Sheets.

- 3) 3. Creating a Family:

<https://creatingafamily.org/infertility/suggested-books-for-adults-and-kids/books-children-conceived-sperm-donation/>

4. Books! DonorConception.com: <https://donorconception.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Annotated-Bibliography-for-Children-and-Parents-of-Third-Party-Reproduction1.pdf>



**Amazing Podcast:** Fertility Docs Uncensored. Check out episodes 11, 21, 71, 74, 75, 135 among others