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“I’ve Always Known I Was Adopted”

By Stephanie Levich, April 14, 2010

I started my program that helps match intended parents with egg donors — with the firm belief that families can come in all shapes and sizes, that they can be created in any number of ways, that the way it usually works isn’t always the way it has to. I believe it’s love — not blood — that makes a family, a belief that is very personal to me and my story. Because 28 years ago, I was adopted.

Twenty-eight years ago, an 18-year old woman named Amy contacted an adoption agency. She found out she was pregnant and knew she couldn’t give her baby the life it deserved, no matter how much she wanted to. She decided very courageously to put me up for adoption. When she contacted the agency, they asked what kind of criteria she was looking for in an adoptive family. “I don’t have any criteria,” she said. “I only want my baby to go to the people who have been waiting the longest.”

Across town, another family was waiting for a call. My adoptive mom was 24 years old when she first met my dad. They fell madly in love. One day, my mom arrived home to find my dad there eagerly awaiting her arrival. Upon seeing her, he knelt down on one knee with a beautiful engagement ring in hand. But she had kept a secret from him, one that had haunted her, one that always tempered the excitement she felt about their future together.

When my mom was 13 years old, she had a severe infection that resulted in a hysterectomy. Before she ever had the chance to even think about it, she was robbed of the ability to have children of her own.

She hadn’t told my dad, out of fear that he would reject her. But on that fateful day, she had little choice. She told him the horrible truth she’d had to live with for so long. His response? “Sue, I love you. That is what matters. That’s the only thing that matters. And one day, we will adopt. We will have a family. And we will love our children as if they were our own. Because they will be.”

They got married and, four years later, they applied to adopt. After filling out all the paperwork, after providing photos and stories of themselves, they were told that it would only be a matter of time. And so they waited. And waited. And waited. Nearly a year went by, until the adoption agency they were waiting to hear from received that call from Amy, asking that the couple that waited the longest raise her child.

In that moment, with that call, before I was even born, I had a family.

I’m always asked how I found out that I was adopted. Especially working in donor egg field, future parents selecting an egg donor often ask me if they should tell their children that they were conceived by use of a donor.

I always advocate for full disclosure. My parents introduced me to the idea of adoption before I even understood what the word meant. They would say things like, “Mommy and Daddy wanted a baby so badly, and Mommy couldn’t have a baby, so a wonderful woman helped us have you.” As I grew older, it was easy to wrap my head around the concept, and to feel comfortable

with what it meant. When I'm asked the question, "When did you find out you were adopted?" my answer is always the same:

"I've always known."

There are few decisions more personal than the decision to tell your child that its story isn't the same as the other children. What my parents did for me may not have been the only right way, but it was unconditionally right.

And our relationship, all these years later, is as strong as it is because they have always been so honest and open with me, and because they've let me understand who I am and where I came from.

They made me who I am today. They made me family.

Families do come in all shapes and sizes. That I knew with certainty as a child. And as a fertility consultant, I know it with even more conviction today.

Love is not about how a family is created. It's about everything that comes after that.