

People use donors to build their families for many reasons. For some, it is the first step, and for some, it is a last resort. Whatever brought you to consider a donor to help build your family, you will have many choices. A better choice is one made before the fact versus finding out later that you didn't consider something.

Using a donor will include medical, financial, social, emotional and religious considerations. Chances are you have some non-negotiables, some negotiables, and some things you didn't even think to consider. The lists below will bring attention to your options and support your process of due diligence.

The objective of the lists is not to answer the questions, but to raise them. In fact, there is a good chance that after reading this, you might find yourself looking up answers. You may need to learn a few terms, research agencies or options, or seek advice. This is a good response and will build a strong framework to support whatever decisions you make. There is a list of reliable website at the end for you to use too.

1. First let's check in to see what you know now, what you might want to know, or what is helpful to consider. **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE USING DONATION:**

#### Personal

- How will I know if this is right for me?
- How will I make the decision to do this?
- Will I feel like the child's parent?
- Will I always think about this?
- What if I regret this decision?
- Should I get counseling?
- Is there anyone I have to tell?
- What if I am still considering trying without a donor?
- What if I end up with a biological child too?
- How can I care for myself and manage these thoughts and feelings during this?
- Does it matter that I am still sad about not having a biological child?

#### Financial/Legal

- How much will it cost?
- How can I plan for the number of kids I want?

- Should I be planning now for if I want more than one child?
- What are the legal issues?
- Is a lawyer required?
- What is involved in the process of using a donor?

## Familial/Social

- What about diblings (donor siblings)?
- Should I tell my family? Friends? When?
- My community doesn't talk about this. How do I deal with this taboo?
- Will I tell my child? When?
- What language do I use to describe this?
- What if (family member/community/someone) doesn't approve?

## Medical

- What is involved in the process of using a donor?
- Is this safe?
- What type of medical information will I know about the donor?

## Jewish

- What if any Jewish considerations are there for using a donor?
- Does the donor(s) have to be Jewish?
- Would using a donor affect the status of my child as a Jew?
- Would the child need to be converted?
- Who is considered the parent (Jewishly)?
- How do we name the child?
- If one of us is a Kohane, is my child one too?

## 2. If your answers to those questions lead you to take the donor route, here are **QUESTIONS FOR SELECTING A DONOR:**

- Could you ask a family member? Friend?
- Known, open, anonymous, direct or non-direct (banked), private, clinic, agency?
- How do you determine the quality of bank or agency or wherever you are getting the donated material?
- What amount of donor information is available? How is it verified?
- Future communication/involvement?
- Fresh or frozen?

- How do you decide what to look for?
- You have criteria and someone is really close to matching. Do you hold out for a complete match?
- What must you know about the donor: (medical history, medical testing - fertility, health, STDs etc. - psychologically tested, family history, donation history, etc.)
- What do you want to look for when choosing: (age, weight, good health, race/ethnicity, non smoker, activities/interests, physical attributes, personality, psychologically sound, drug free, medically approved, etc.)
- Like me, not like me, better than me?
- Is it normal to want a donor who reminds you of you? (Yes)
- Does the donor get counseling?
- Does the donor get paid?
- What if they have donated or will donate to another family too?
- Batches/vials? Are you banking?
- What legal securities will you have with this donor?

### 3. You made it. Here are considerations for **AFTER BABY ARRIVES**:

- What if your still sad about no biological connection?
- What type of language do you use about the donation?
- Do you say anything at the baby naming/covenant/bris ceremony?
- When do you start telling your child?
- What do you say to your child?
- What do you not say to your child?
- Reminder: who do you need to tell?
- How will you deal with the comments about how your child looks or doesn't look?
- What does it mean that sometimes you don't feel like your child's parent?
- Turns out your child has (x, y or z) from the donor. How do you deal with that?
- You're a little jealous of your partner who has a biological connection. What do you do?
- You didn't tell your family before, but it is coming up about how the baby looks. Now what?
- How will you deal with the family tree?
- You're out and about and people ask if you looked like that when you were a kid or say they look like you. What do you say?
- What if your child wants to meet the donor?

#### 4. STRAIGHT UP ADVICE so you can't say nobody told you:

- Psychologists recommend being open with your children about their biological background. Start before they even understand so it is normal for you.
- Even if you didn't use a donor, doubts are normal. Remind yourself that.
- Even if you didn't use a donor, your child may not look a lot like you.
- Conception or gestation does not make a parent. Protecting and caring, developing their mind, body and soul, taking responsibility for their wellbeing, and loving them unconditionally, makes a parent.
- Even if your donation was unknown, third-party or anonymous, know that in today's genetic testing world, assume your child will be able to find out if they want to later in life.
- You don't have to answer every question just because it was asked.
- You get what you focus on. Make this a positive and your child will more likely see it as a positive. (e.g. what will your child think about this?)
- Your fear and doubts are yours - not your child's. Their identity foundation is based on consistent, loving, and honest care from a parent. That is what they want.
- This is your first task of Jewish parenting. Judaism can guide your decision to have a child and to become a parent. Put your values out there before having a child and think about who you want your child to be!

#### 5. Mindfulness and spiritual care advice:

- Set boundaries on what you want, what you will do, and how you will be.
- Focus on the meaning of this process: parenting as a spiritual practice.
- Recognize that you are in choice about the process.
- Pay attention to your own thoughts and feelings about the process and the choices you make.
- Stay connected to yourself, others, and the Source of Life.

#### Resources:

- [American Society for Reproductive Medicine](#) (Now Reproductive Facts)
- [Parents Via Egg Donation](#)
- [US Donor Conceived Counsel](#)
- [Reproductive Facts.ORG](#) - donor guidelines
- [FertilityIQ](#)