



FAMILY BUILDING LANGUAGE

Children will choose different terms at different times to refer to gamete providers (egg, sperm or embryo donors) and whatever terms they are using should always be respected and reflected back to them.

Kids use terms to try to understand the relationships. At times that may mean the child might say “REAL MOTHER” to refer to an egg “donor”. But just a week later, the child may refer to her by her name or simply as “the donor”. A gamete donor can also be referred to as genetic father or mother, which they are, technically. Sometimes sperm donors are referred to as “dad.”

It can be painful for everyday parenting parents to hear a donor conceived child/adolescent/adult refer to a donor as a parent. Parenting parents, everyday parents can feel very threatened by this and think: “They just provided the cell; I’m the parent.” But DNA-related family is family, too, even if you or your children have never met them. And kids may be thinking about people they don’t even know as a part of their family. And they are part of their family, and therefore, your family, too, even if you don’t know them.

There are many kinds of parents—genetic parents; mom or papa everyday parents; surrogate parents; fostering parents...and they are all entitled to the title our kids want to give them. They should not have to choose. Our kids can have a dad and a genetic father (sperm donor). They can have a single parent and choose to call the sperm donor or egg donor “mom” or “dad” even though those people are not doing the parenting. Reflecting your child’s own family building language can help children feel loved and accepted and validated and, most importantly, that they don’t have to be careful about our feelings while they figure out who they are in the world.

DNA+love=family.

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