

## **Lotty's talk at Nottingham national meeting October 2010**

My name is Lotty. I was conceived in 1987 after years of my parents' trying to conceive naturally. I would like to say a few words on my perspective as DI-conceived young person.

I have not been very involved with the DI Network in my lifetime, and my reason for being here today might seem somewhat contradictory: that the fact that I was conceived artificially has not played a big part in my life or had a big impact on my lifestyle and personality.

I suppose I want to show the end of the spectrum of those conceived by DI who feel somewhat detached from it. This is by no means my taking DI for granted as I hope I will show later on: I just want to show you that its impact can be very varied on different people.

I am wary of saying that I feel detached from it. Because I can see that, as a parent or a child who has a different view point of DI, you can be anything but detached from DI. But this is how I feel towards it and this is what I want to tell you today.

In this short speech, I want to talk a bit about my story to set the context, and look at ways that DI has affected me and my family – and how it hasn't. I use the word "I" a lot in this speech but I hope you will not think me self-obsessed and draw what meanings you want from it!

### **My Story**

I was conceived in London, 1987. My parents were founding members of the DI network and this is how they came to be good friends of Walter and Olivia. I remember conferences – and an interview with Esther Rantzen – as a little girl.

My father – and by father I mean the one who raised me – was the most generous person I know. Not only did he allow another man to conceive his child, he "shared" me with another male figure, that being the first husband of my mother. This marriage ended a few years before my mother met my father, and produced no children. I will refer to the first husband of my mother as my godfather.

After their divorce, my mother and my godfather continued their relationship as good friends and my father, newly married to my mother, allowed him to be part of our family. When I was born, my father shared me with my godfather.

This situation seems odd, but my father's generosity still amazes me when I think of what he shared – especially as the alpha male of the household!

I refer to my father in the past tense because he died suddenly in a motorbike accident just under 2 years ago. My godfather died – also suddenly, of a pulmonary embolism – 5 years ago. So I find myself in an odd position of having had 2 fathers, and a biological one – to having no fathers, and yet still a mystery father figure somewhere out there. My mum, equally, finds herself in an odd and tragic position of not having been able to create a family, then having a family – and then having had a lot of it taken away from her.

So in this odd position, my perspective towards DI has been tainted by what has happened to my family in the last 5 years. I will talk about this a bit but I want to concentrate first on how DI doesn't impact me.

### **How DI doesn't impact me**

DI has been completely normalised since I was very young. My parents gave me books to read that were designed for young children. It became part of my life.

When I read about people who have discovered that they are DI conceived at a later age, I cannot imagine how this must feel, or how it must impact. For, The lack of the biological element in the father-daughter relationship meant nothing to me. In reverse, if I had discovered that the biological element between my father and I was not what I had thought, it could have meant everything to me.

The biology of the parent-child relationship is, from my perspective, completely neutral. But it is context and culture and upbringing that can plug emotions and politics into this biology, and how 'emotional' or 'political' that biology is is something that varies in a thousand ways in a thousand different situations.

### **How DI does impact me**

I am very grateful to my donor father and to DI itself for existing. It ended years of hardship and sadness for my parents when they could not have children.

I wonder who my biological father is. I feel no emotional contact with him – I only view my relationship with him on a biological level.

I think about him sometimes. Or, rather, I wonder about him – I wonder who he is, and what he is doing now, I wonder why he decided to donate.

My father was keen on retaining the anonymity of donors.

I have not had an urge to contact him – perhaps because my father and my godfather were, thankfully, such great people. The whole experience has – from

my perspective – made me realise that it is about the love and quality foundations of parents – not the biological foundations.

Nevertheless, I have drafted letters to my biological father over the years, all of which remain in their envelopes in a box in my bedroom . They always pan out being thank you letters.

I also don't want to suddenly decide to find my biological father because of losing two fathers because I worry there might be subconscious ulterior motives. I didn't want to find my biological father before my father died because it would have implied an inadequacy on my father's part. I also had no urge or need to find my biological father.

I owe my biological father a lot; for that I feel indebted and grateful and I would like him to know how much happiness and possibility he has brought to peoples' lives. It almost seems sad that he does not know how much wonderful life he has created.

At the same time, I almost don't want to contact him because on a personal level I don't want to search for another father figure (but this is an unusual case).

I also get worried sometimes that he carries some kind of hereditary disease like madness that would scare me!

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, I truly believe that relationships surrounding DI and parents and children is not to do with flesh and blood and biology, but how DI is treated as an emotional topic – how it is introduced to the child and how the parents feel about it, both as an issue between them and between the child.

I have been so very lucky – I have had three parents (!) – who have given me love and support. I think it is largely (but not wholly) because of this that DI has not caused me problems or pushed questions into my head.

Whilst being thankful for DI, I want to show that DI can sit at the background of a lovely family. If anything, DI has served as a embellishment on the fabric that has formed our interesting family life.