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### Should I Use a Donor?

When faced with the end of biological options in building a family, one may consider the use of donor eggs or sperm (collectively called gametes). Several factors may motivate potential patients to consider gamete donation as an attractive option. The first is the opportunity to experience a pregnancy and delivery. The second is the child's genetic connection to one parent, which provides continuity of lineage as well as knowledge of the genetic inheritance one partner. Third is the high success rate and the speed with which one can obtain results. And finally, the cost, particularly of sperm donation, can have a winning appeal. Ovum donation can prove much more costly and can rival or exceed adoption expenses.

There is some ground to cover prior to plunging into ovum or sperm donation. The recipients first need to fully grieve the loss of their joint biological child and put to rest the fantasy of perfection of the genetic offspring. This leads to the issue of bonding with the non-genetic child. The recipients should reflect on the strength of attachments in his or her family of origin. If relationships with both parents were strong, bonding may be a non-issue. If, however, the link to one or both parents was weak or conflictual, this person will need to examine the impact of these difficult relationships upon parenting a child conceived with donor gametes.

The final issue of significance and complexity is that of disclosure. Will I or won't I tell the child and others about its genetic origins? This is a highly personal question and there are no ready answers. One important area to be investigated is the management of secrets or private information in the family of origin. If one is from a family where secrecy abounded, one might either want to follow suit or rebel against these constraints. Two rules of thumb: 1) if for non-disclosure, tell NO ONE. 2) if for disclosure, early sharing with the child makes for easier adjustment.

When one is mired in indecision as to the rightness of gamete donation as an appropriate treatment choice, or conflicted about

bonding or disclosure concerns, treatment with a mental health professional can help sort out these issues.