



VARTA

Victorian Assisted Reproductive
Treatment Authority

VARTA's Twilight Seminar "How are you going? - Experiences of donor-conception", held April 2013

When is the right time?

At the seminar Louise shared her experiences of being donor conceived. Louise heard through a non-family member that she was conceived using donor sperm. At the time, Louise was 27 years old.

Hear Louise talk about the importance of talking to donor-conceived children about their conception.

Transcript: Louise, donor-conceived person

OK, so I am Louise and I am 30 years of age and I grew up in a normal nuclear family and had my mum and my dad and my sister, she is two years younger than I am. And I guess you know I never thought anything to be different from that. Like every other child that I went to school with and played with at Brownies and so forth.

But I guess a couple of years ago now when I was 27 I found out that I was donor-conceived. So my dad wasn't able to conceive children and he found that out before my parents got married. So at that time, that revelation was a fairly significant period in our lives and for my sister and I. I found out first and I found out by a non-family member which was fairly challenging and I rang my mum and I said, look, you really need to, we need to sit down tonight and you need to tell my sister. You know, I couldn't carry that news on my own. So that conversation was pretty hard and I guess from that, sort of, the ripple effect I guess, you know, a fairly significant period of conflict and I think it was just really hard to understand, you know, the withholding of a secret that was, you know, a part of the way in which we could come into the world which I don't think anyone should be ashamed of.

You know, so I think it took quite a bit of time for my sister and I to come to a point where we could even talk about it ourselves. I guess it is sort of like grief, you know, if something happens in your family or something is not the way you envisaged it to be, that takes time to understand and be able to talk about that.

I guess another added layer for me was that when I was 16 my dad passed away, so I guess in thinking about what this has meant to me, not having my dad to talk to about this has been fairly significant, I guess, you know, there are a lot of unanswered questions and things that I would just like to be able to tell him that it is OK, that I am really, despite the croak in my voice, I feel, you know, so blessed that they had this procedure to have me and to have my sister.

So I think, you know, it is a shock and a challenge to your personal identify and yeah, it is the way you have always perceived yourself to be and the way that you will be in the future.

I guess another sort of complicating factor, if we needed anymore, was the fact that my sister and I are not from the same donor, and that was something that was taken out of the hands of my parents. So they didn't have a

choice in that and so I think, you know that brought up another lot of stuff I guess for my sister and I. But thinking back over all of this and having some time to reflect I guess about three years on now. Like I said I am eternally grateful for what they went through and know that it was really hard.

I think, you know, the secret is something that, you know like Ross described, it is a really, I can't imagine how challenging that was for the me to hold onto that but I think there are many challenging conversations and I work with families and talk to them about many challenging conversations that you have with your kids over time, you know, in puberty and you have to talk about sex and all these things. And I think it is one of those conversations, maybe not everyone has to have it but if that is a part of your life and you are proud, you know, be proud of the way that your kids have come into the world and be able to share that with them. And do that at a time perhaps that, perhaps is not going to be a perfect time but just let it go, like you do with many other things.

You know, my mum kept saying, oh I meant to tell you and I thought about telling you at this time and then I thought about it another year later and I searched for information and I really just wanted to have the answers and maybe there are not the answers. You know there are still no answers today, as many of us sit here. But I guess at the moment, I am not actually sure, I sit in an uncertainty at the moment, I am not sure if I want to know who my donor is. You know I had a beautiful dad and cherished every day, the relationship we shared. So I think, you know, mum didn't need to come to me with an answer, I just wanted to know and yeah I wanted to have an open conversation with her and for her to share what this has meant to her.

So I think, you know, maybe, you know, I could suggest that maybe having done that a little bit earlier in my life, maybe things, the relationship would have been a bit better and perhaps, you know, the longer that the secret is held, maybe the more awkward that conversation becomes, you know. I guess just seeing it from my perspective.

And I guess the other thing to is, it is hard, given and I know an uncertainty, or sitting in uncertainty at the moment not knowing whether I want to find out who my donor is or not, I guess we, given that we are born before a certain time, don't have a lot of choices either, so that is something that we have to live with and hopefully young people of the future won't have to, but, you know that is I guess a challenge and a talk for another day but, yeah, thanks for hearing me.

The End.

For more information about donor-conception contact Kate Bourne on 03 8601 5250 or email kbourne@varta.org.au