

# What it feels like... ...to have a baby with your gay best friends

AGED 39, AND WITH THE WRONG MAN, **ABI HERCULES** DECIDED TO TAKE UP THE OFFER OF HAVING A CHILD WITH TWO OF HER OLDEST FRIENDS

**M**y choice in men has always left much to be desired. Three years ago, aged 39, I was considering trying for a child with my last boyfriend, although I realised that he wasn't right for me. Some women engineer scenarios to get pregnant, but I never wanted to be a single mum.

I've known John and Tony for 20 years, and they've been together for about 12. We were all actors, but Tony, 39, is now a drugs counsellor and John, 41, is an actors' agent; I'm a singer-songwriter. They wanted a child, and were looking into fostering, but they knew it wasn't going well with this man, and that I wanted a baby too. One day, they said, "We'd love to have a baby with you." I didn't feel desperate, I just wanted a child when the circumstances felt right — now they did.

We chatted about what we wanted. We all agreed that it should be equal; we'd be three parents, equally responsible for creating a baby and bringing it up. I didn't have a preference as to who would be the biological father, and neither did John or Tony. So we started trying.

We all had tests for STIs, though I wasn't worried about my fertility — I'm a positive person. We didn't do IVF, just at-home insemination, alternating their sperm each month. (I'd got some tips from websites and friends.)

When we started trying, the boys would come round for supper, then disappear together and return with a little offering. Then I'd do my bit. We'd make a whole evening of it. After a few months, though, it wasn't practical. I started using ovulation tests and, each month, whoever was donating would deliver his little warm Tupperware package before work. The support

from John and Tony was instant. I thought, "Oh my God, I've been getting it wrong all these years."

After eight months, I fell pregnant, and it was then that we started really planning the birth and how to raise our baby. We decided to buy a house together and get a larger space so we could live as a family. It just felt like the right thing at that time; if that changes, so be it. Buying this house has helped the energy of what we're doing. Importantly, it also gives John and Tony space to be a couple. I was always sure of the stability of their relationship. (They got married just before Eloise was born.) It might sound idealistic, but I didn't feel worried about doing this — I felt really excited.

We didn't draw up a contract, but we did endlessly discuss possible scenarios. For instance, what if I met somebody? I guess he would have to be supportive, and if not, he wouldn't be the right person. We will, however, draw up something giving us all equal guardianship, and we have a shared bank account, but our own private ones, too.

I had Eloise at home through hypnobirthing, and she swam out at midday on Father's Day. Or Fathers' Day. Although we all know who the father is, we don't broadcast it; the birth certificate just features me, Eloise and the biological father.

The childcare has slipped into place remarkably well. Because she's so young, I'm currently the main carer, so she sleeps in my room and I do all the night care. John and Tony get to sleep through, but, after I've done the night shift, they give Eloise her breakfast so I can have an extra kip. When she moves to her own room, we'll split the night care. Every week, one or

two of us can go out in the evening. John and Tony are attentive dads and return from work as early as possible, because they want to spend time with her. I'm told by deeply envious girlfriends that I am much more free.

If there's a difference of opinion, there are three angles, so you can have more of a discussion. Like any first-time parents, we're always learning, but we're good at sharing and listening. We don't argue, but we're not shy about giving our views, so sometimes we agree to disagree. It's hard, but we don't feel we have more challenges than a conventional setup.

Maybe removing the element of being in love makes things less complicated, less emotional. A baby can come between lovers and change a relationship. Yet I love John and Tony like family. It never feels awkward, probably because we've known each other for so long. A baby in any relationship is going to turn things on its head, but we are successfully cohabiting so far — we all share, cook and get on with things that need doing, and we're always singing and dancing for Eloise. We'll definitely try for another.

My mum adores John and Tony, and was always enthused by the idea. (My dad died in 2007.) In fact, she didn't bat an eyelid, but then I come from an open-minded family. Eloise also has three sets of dotting grandparents, which is lovely. I've only once had somebody react negatively — a woman who'd overheard the setup in the pub and thought it was completely wrong.

Some people make the assumption that I'm also gay. When I had an internal examination while pregnant, the consultant asked if I'd had sex in the past 24 hours, as it would affect the tests. When I told her I hadn't had sex for years, she replied, "Well, we both know that's not true." And I said, "Right, do you want to sit down? I'd better explain."

Telling people my baby has two dads is another issue. Lots of people respond, "Well, she's obviously only got one *real* dad." And I'll say, "No, Eloise has two dads." People want to know who the biological father is, but I feel it's for Eloise to use that information in her own way.

We do anticipate prejudice — I guess you can never fully prepare for the hurt. But I'm sure this kind of setup will happen more. We already have some friends doing it. Family dynamics are so nebulous now — a man and a woman who make a baby and live together is becoming less the norm. It's that cliché: as long as there's love...

The situation I'm in is wonderful, and I'm so happy, but I don't pretend that, ideally, it wouldn't be lovely to fall in love with somebody and make a baby that way. As for now, I might be a single person who's a mother, but at least I'm not doing it on my own. ☉

Abi's music can be heard at [abigailhercules.com](http://abigailhercules.com)

My two dads  
From left John,  
Tony, Eloise and Abi