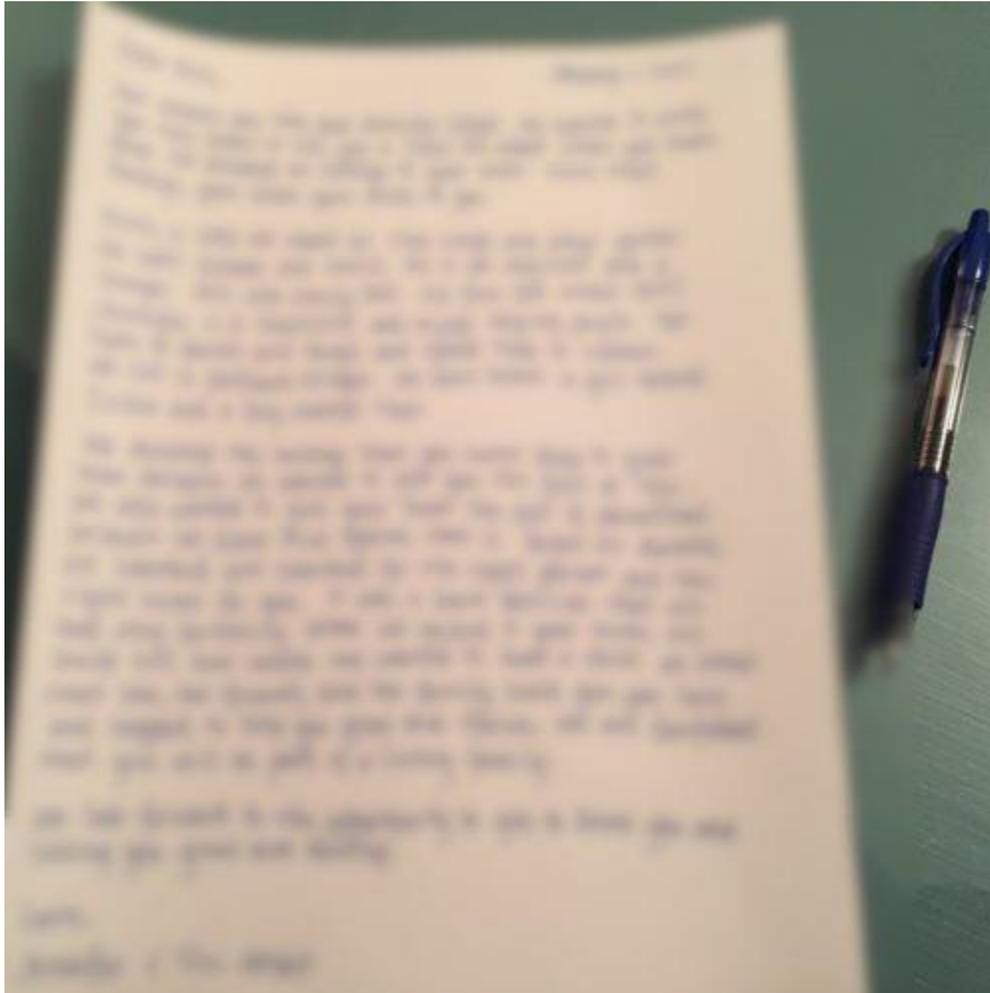


THE MOST DIFFICULT LETTER I'VE EVER WRITTEN

written by *Jennifer* July 18, 2017



Our embryo recipient asked me to write a letter to her soon to be born son. She wanted it handwritten and planned to have it printed in a book she was creating for him about where he came from. It was the most difficult letter I have ever written.

Here are some of the challenges I faced:

- This letter would be in print. Forever! For him to read and reread as many times as he wanted to. That was intimidating.
- He would be exposed to the letter at a young age, so it needed to be simple and I needed to use plain language that a child could understand.
- How could I possibly say everything I wanted to say to him in one letter?
- How could I convey the difficulty of the decision I made (make sure he knew that he wasn't unwanted) while also getting across the confidence I had in his chosen mother?

I sat alone in a park and wrote my first draft. I let the words flow freely. I left nothing out. I wrote and I wrote (and I cried and I cried). I knew that no one else would ever read that letter. I included everything: My fears, my wishes, my sadness, my joy. All that I hoped he would one day know. It was exhausting, and therapeutic.

On the second draft, I wrote something I might actually send. After reading it, however, I realized it was too clinical and cerebral for a child to understand.

My husband and I were originally going to write separate letters, but once we collaborated ideas everything came together. We sat down and made a list of what we wanted to convey in the letter:

- We wanted him to know a little bit about us.
- We wanted him to know that we wanted to give him the gift of life.
- We wanted him to know that we wanted to give his mom the gift of parenthood.
- We wanted him to know that we loved him, and that we hoped to watch him grow and become a part of his life.

Once we had that foundation set, the words came quickly.

Here is the final draft:

Dear _____,

Our names are Jennifer and Tom. We wanted to write you this letter to tell you a little bit about where you come from. We donated an embryo to your mom. From that embryo, your mom gave birth to you.

First, a little bit about us. Tom sings and plays guitar. He loves science and music. He is an engineer and a lawyer. He's also really tall – six feet five inches tall! Jennifer is a counselor and enjoys helping people. She loves to dance and laugh and spend time in nature. We live in Portland, Oregon. We have twins: a girl named _____ and a boy named _____.

We donated the embryo that you came from to your mom because we wanted to give you the gift of life. We also wanted to give your mom the gift of parenthood because we know how special that is. Before we donated, we searched and searched for the right parent and the right home for you. It was a hard decision that we took very seriously. When we talked to your mom, we could tell how much she wanted to have a child. We knew that she, her friends, and her family could give you care and support to help you grow and thrive. We are confident that you will be part of a loving family.

We look forward to the opportunity to get to know you and seeing you grow and develop.

**Love,
Jennifer & Tom**