

Why I Was A Surrogate Mother

5 women share their stories

By Amy Levin Epstein | September 8, 2011

Would you carry a stranger's baby? How about your sister's? Over the last few years, surrogacy has entered our pop culture zeitgeist, with stars like Nicole Kidman and Sarah Jessica Parker using surrogates to complete their families. But surrogacy remains one of the least talked about tools in the fight against infertility. Why do surrogates do what they do? What do they get out of it? And how hard is it to give a child to its parents after having it in your womb for 9 months? Here are five women's stories about their experience with surrogacy.



“We’re not rich people ... but it’s one way our family can give back in a really big way.”
— Rayven Perkins, 32, Austin, Texas, married, mother to a 10-year-old girl and 11-year-old boy

I have been a surrogate mother three times (twins in February 2007 and a little boy in June 2008), and I'm about to give birth this month to my fourth surrogate baby. The best part is knowing you did this for the right reasons when you deliver the baby and the parents finally see him or her. But there are a lot of sacrifices a surrogate makes. There are hormone shots that my husband had to help me take for three months, prior to the transfer and then almost through the first trimester. With varying state laws on surrogacy, you may have to stay in state. My husband had to turn down a promotion in another state, and I missed Christmas with my in-laws during my 3rd trimester with twins because my doctor said I couldn't travel.

I'm one of the fortunate people that is “good” at being a surrogate mother. Every embryo that doctors have transferred has ended with a full-term healthy baby. That's rare. After my first time as a surrogate, I waited three years and worked on [my surrogacy website](#) and wanted to do it one more time. *Addicting* is not the right word, but the ability to help someone else is a very good feeling.

[As for handing the baby off] I knew instinctually that I'm not an attached type of person. I always viewed surrogacy as a long babysitting project. I'm going to give birth any day now and I'm excited that the parents will be there. It's not sad for me at all. I have no regrets whatsoever — I'm just glad I was able to participate. We're not rich people. We'll never donate a wing of a hospital, but it's one way our family can give back to our world in a really

big way. Without our assistance, there would be four less children in the world. We are showing our own children how to be generous and how to sacrifice for others.



“The hardest part was when they took the baby from me.” — Robin Kaufer, 50, Seattle, Washington, divorced, 9-year-old girl and 7-year-old boy

I was a gestational carrier for a friend whose child is now three. I had gone through fertility treatments on my own as a single mom. At 40, I turned to in vitro to have my kids. [A friend and I were talking] and she said her sister couldn't carry a pregnancy, and I said I'd do it.

It took me four tries, and I was surprised they wanted to try the fourth time. Losing three pregnancies was hard on me. But the toughest part was when they took the baby from me. I was cavalier through the whole process ... until they physically left, and hormonally I went nuts for a week and a half. It really ripped me apart, which took me by surprise.

My kids seemed to understand that this was Karen and Larry's baby, and they seemed to be fine with it. Our family was also created from different means and they understood that families come to be in many different ways. I would do it again if I weren't so old. I think because I had had my own fertility problems, it made me feel very good to do it.



“The hardest part was shouldering the burden of infertility.” — [Kymberli](#) Barney, 33, Hinesville, Georgia, married with girl/boy twins, 10, an 8-year-old boy and a 4-year-old daughter

My husband and I initially had trouble conceiving. Once the problem was figured out I got pregnant easily — and surrogacy was a way of paying it forward because as far as infertility we got off easy. Even as a child, I was fascinated by childbirth and thought about being an obstetrician. I always wanted to be pregnant, and it hurt when it didn't come easily for me.

When I delivered the baby by surrogate [in 2007], that was magical. But it wasn't just one moment. There was the first time my intended mom put her hand on my belly and felt her son

move and that look in her eyes. And then the moment of the delivery, when the intended father laid eyes on his son for the first time. I felt like I had really done something that mattered for someone else.

Since then I have been [actively involved](#) and matched four times, but it never worked out again. We've had several cycles with both couples that resulted in miscarriages due to poor egg quality. By last August I was physically and mentally exhausted, so I decided to "retire," and I'm there now to help others. The hardest part for me was shouldering a lot of the burden of infertility for the sake of the parent. You have to consider what they've already been through and how it has affected them. I appreciated the fact that they entrusted me to have their children. It is hard when it doesn't work. I was able to compartmentalize my feelings very well, yet every time there was an early miscarriage or a failed transfer I felt sad — but not for myself. Sure, the process is happening to my body but having to watch my friends take in another dose of bad news was what really hurt.



“Some people do it for the money...but for me it’s also about the activism.” — [Kelly Rummelhart](#), 36, Gridley, California, married, 9-year-old girl and 7 and 4-year-old boys

I remember in high school I had a friend that was gay and I wondered how he would have a baby. At the same time, a straight couple on *Days of Our Lives* had a baby by surrogate. I thought that was amazing, and I wanted to do that for someone. Then once I had my own kids, I thought how happy I was having my kids and couldn't imagine what it would be like for someone who couldn't have babies.

I knew I wanted to work with a gay couple and [I found] Growing Generations. They were known for [helping] gay couples. Some people do it for the money, or they always wanted to do it, but for me it's also about the activism. I think it's ridiculous that gay men can't get married and in some states can't adopt. I don't have a million dollars to donate to these causes, but I do have a working uterus. I've delivered two sets of twins for two gay couples. When others have found out that my couples were gay they haven't really said anything to my face, but I'm sure there is talk behind my back.

[My first couple] lived only three hours away and wanted me to be a part of their lives, so we see the girls every 8-12 weeks. I remember when I was in the delivery room the first time, and the twins met their Grandma, and she was bawling and hugging me ... I was like *omigosh*. It is so utterly amazing and life altering. It is like being on a drug. Who wouldn't want to do that again? When Growing Generations asked me if I would do this again I said yes. I asked my husband and he said do whatever you want to do. You need [your family's] support.

The way that I explain it to people is for nine months I'm babysitting. I wouldn't rub my baby and talk to it the same way. So with my second couple, who didn't live as close, I would play belly buds and put them on my belly. I had the guys record their favorite songs and play it for their babies. For me, I don't think there are any worst parts. I had really easy pregnancies. If people hate pregnancy, they're probably not going to do this for anyone else.



“Giving something is as important as receiving something.” — Natasha Skinner, 37, Annapolis, Maryland, married, 14-year-old son and 11-, 8-, 5- and 2-year-old daughters

I was a surrogate for my sister-in-law, my husband's brother's wife. She has cystic fibrosis so she could not carry a child, but they could genetically create a healthy baby with her egg and his sperm.

It was important for my husband that we had family support, especially if I wasn't feeling well. We already had five kids so if that meant making a meal or driving a kid somewhere, other family members stepped in. My mother-in-law helped tremendously. And my sister-in-law's family helped, mostly by providing meals or by watching the kids when I went to the grocery store to get food.

The hardest part was the shots. Nobody ever really talks about that. That was a daily thing, twice a day, and they were painful. Also, just not feeling great was hard. With my own pregnancies I felt fine after 13 weeks, but for this one, it was 19 weeks. However, I would do it again if I were younger. But I probably wouldn't do it for someone who wasn't a family member. Fortunately for me, it's my nephew — I can see him and I know how he is doing.

Really the best part was at the end when they received their baby, just to see the joy and happiness. When John and Kelly came in, I thought she was going to faint. You could just see that they were elated. It was very special, and it absolutely brought us closer. Giving something is as important as receiving something.

About the Author



Amy Levin-Epstein is a freelance writer who has been published in magazines like *Glamour*, *Self* and *Prevention*, on websites like WomansDay.com, AOL.com and Details.com and in newspapers like *The New York Post* and *the Boston Globe*. She blogs about career/work topics for [CBS Moneywatch](http://CBSMoneywatch.com). You can read more of her writing at AmyLevinEpstein.com.

The Rise of U.S. Surrogacy

Posted by [heatherturgeon](#) on May 6th, 2011 at 2:46 pm



The expanding world of baby-making

When I think of international surrogates, I think of U.S. couples paying a woman abroad to carry a baby (my limited perspective). But as Carolyn reported last week, [international surrogacy](#) is increasingly going the other way. More and more people in European and Latin American countries are using surrogates in the U.S. to host their babies.

An estimated 1,400 babies are born to surrogates in the U.S. every year — here's the proportion that are thought to be the babies of international couples:

There's not official tracking of the trend, but one major agency, the Center for Surrogate Parenting, says they estimate that half of the agency's births to U.S. surrogates are for international parents.

Surrogacy has been around forever (the more traditional form, of course), but gestational surrogacy — in which biological mom is different from carrier mom has been with us since the late 1970's.

Since then, it's been gaining momentum, and along with other advancements like [egg-freezing to preserve fertility](#), the possibilities available for making a baby are expanding at lightening speed.

I personally know two couples whose lives have been transformed through surrogacy. Ironically, one is a same-sex couple who will be married in Spain (where it's legal), but will have to use a surrogate in the U.S. (because surrogacy is not legal in Spain). They'll be piecing it together and taking advantage of the freedoms afforded to them across both countries.

Of course, we know [celebrities who have famously used surrogates](#). Do you know anyone personally? How do you see the world of surrogate parents growing and changing in the near future?

Image: flickr