

Best friend becomes surrogate mother

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Tamara, Logan, Brent and Nathan right after the baby was born.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Two friends, one shared pregnancy after one made the incredible offer to serve as a surrogate for the other
- Tamara was advised never to pursue another pregnancy after giving birth to a micro-preemie
- The labor was a bonding experience, four people got together and brought a child into this world

(Parenting.com) -- For Texas-based mom Tamara*, the journey to motherhood was anything but easy. In 2003, after developing severe preeclampsia and HELLP syndrome (a life-threatening complication of preeclampsia), doctors had to deliver her daughter via emergency cesarean section at just 25 weeks into her pregnancy. She was born a micro-preemie, weighing a mere 1 pound, 4 ounces; Tamara was advised never to pursue another pregnancy, as she was given a 60 percent chance of developing the same complications. For the first two years of her life, Tamara kept her daughter at home much of the time, due to a host of medical problems and issues with her feeding and growth. It was only as of her daughter's second birthday that Tamara finally started to venture out to meet other moms and give her daughter a chance to meet other kids.

It was at that point, in 2005, that Tamara and her daughter met another mom, Logan, at their local public library during story time. Logan was there with her 2-year-old as well as a

younger baby. The two women started to form a friendship. "We all just became very, very close," says Tamara. "It was a really special kind of relationship -- and it happened kind of randomly at the time."

As time went on and Tamara's daughter became healthier, she and her husband, Brent, longed for another child, but they knew that they couldn't risk a second pregnancy. After just a year into their friendship and hearing her friend talk about wanting to become a mother again, Logan made an offer that would ultimately change their friendship -- and both of their lives -- forever. She said, "I'm good at pregnancy; I carry to full-term and have healthy kids. I would love to be a surrogate for you." Although Tamara knew it was a genuine offer, she didn't know that she would ultimately take Logan up on it.

A few years passed and the families continued to grow closer; their kids became best friends, and Brent and Logan's husband, Nathan, became friends. Tamara eventually approached Logan to ask if she was still serious about her offer.

"I asked her if she had meant what she said. The thing I was most concerned about at the time was how her husband would feel about it. Logan's a special, giving person that genuinely wants to help people, and we had become best friends. I asked her about how Nathan felt many, many, many times -- I didn't want to create any problems in their marriage and I wouldn't have pursued it if I thought it would cause any problems for them," said Tamara. But Nathan was supportive of pursuing surrogacy, asking, "How often in life do you get to do something so big and so profound for someone else?"

When it seemed that both couples were onboard with the plan, Tamara, Brent, and Logan went to see a reproductive endocrinologist in January 2010. After months of fertility drugs for both women, they attempted their first embryo transfer (using Tamara's eggs and Brent's sperm). Although that initial attempt failed, their second transfer in late November of that year was a success. "Our bun, her oven," says Tamara, with a laugh.

Watching Logan go through a pregnancy with Tamara and Brent's baby inside of her felt, "Weird. Different," says Tamara. "Particularly for me because not only had I somewhat experienced pregnancy, but mine had been cut really short. In many ways, I was so excited and happy and joyful that we were expecting a child -- but on the flip side, I did sometimes feel a pang of -- not regret -- but just wishing that it could be me. I felt a little bit cheated out of the pregnancy experience. I know that some people may not understand that -- and I really am thankful, but I've also come to realize that it's normal to have these feelings."

By the time of the surrogacy, Logan had had a third child of her own, this time delivering at home, after two hospital births. Her homebirth experience had been so profound that it was actually a stipulation for her to do the surrogacy in the first place. Explains Tamara, "As you can imagine for my husband and me, getting on board with a homebirth was difficult because we had really needed the medical support of a hospital. But once I became educated about homebirth and the more the pregnancy progressed, the more we relaxed. We trusted Logan and Nathan, and that they knew what they were doing. I felt strongly that it was going to be OK."

The families used the same midwives that had attended Logan's previous homebirth, Gentle Beginnings Birth Center. Says Tamara, "They treated Logan and me as if we were both the clients."

Logan's labor was long and hard. She suffered through two days of labor, including painful prodromal labor. Of seeing her friend in labor, says Tamara, "It was just surreal... She got to a certain point, and then it just stopped progressing. Brent and I tried not to worry too much, but at some point the midwives decided to send us home, as they thought that our presence might be creating some anxiety for Logan."

Although the families had planned for a different scenario (Logan and Tamara took a doula class together so that Tamara could serve as Logan's doula), Nathan ended up serving as Logan's primary support during the long labor. Tamara and Brent remained in contact with the midwives throughout, though, and were called back to Logan and Nathan's home once Logan was dilated to 8 centimeters. "At that point, things progressed really quickly -- within an hour we had a baby," says Tamara.

During labor, "I was in complete awe and was so proud of her. She was so strong -- because she's someone who was going through a lot of physical pain for someone else. I was really in awe of her strength -- and of birth itself. I remember I had my hand on Logan's knee, helping her to keep her legs apart, when I saw the baby start to crown. I had known there was a baby in there, but to actually see the baby coming out -- well, all that emotion on my face in the pictures is real," says Tamara.

"The labor was a bonding experience for all of us. It's one thing to go through the pregnancy, but this experience of coming together -- four people got together and we brought a child into this world. Everyone had to agree and be supportive of one another, and here she is."

The surrogacy has only brought the two best friends even closer. Although Tamara is breastfeeding after re-lactating (with the help of supplements and a breast pump starting months before the birth), Logan is also pumping for baby Josie because Tamara doesn't have a full supply of milk.

"We see each other every day for a nursing session -- we're sort of co-nursing -- she helps the baby with her latch so that Josie wants to continue to breastfeed from me. That's one of the things that Logan treasures the most, I think, is that she's still in contact with the baby. She and my daughter have a special bond, and I like that. I really, really do."

**We've used first names only to protect the families' privacy.*