

## Annie and Tara's Story



My wife Tara and I met in 2013 through mutual friends. My friend was in Baltimore visiting her girlfriend and suggested I come up from to see them because her girlfriend had a cute friend. I did, and through some gentle nudging by both of our friends we started talking. We dated long distance for a year before Tara moved to Richmond and we moved in together.

While we always knew we wanted to have kids, I never really had the desire to carry one myself. I also work in a job that would have been impossible to be pregnant and remain in my regular role, and I wasn't super psyched about that option. Luckily Tara was willing to carry so we decided to go the donor/insemination route with her carrying the baby.

We really didn't have any idea what we were doing. Luckily my boss at the time had recently had a child with her wife and pretty much held our hand through the whole process. She gave us the information for the website they used to find their donor, names of doctors and other providers we would need, and any other related information that could be passed along.

We were so lucky; conception could literally not have been easier for Tara. She took a couple ovulation tests and when that smiley face showed up we headed over to the doctor's office for the insemination. On the way home from the procedure Tara confidently told me she knew she was pregnant; I told her she was being ridiculous. Two weeks later we took the tests and sure enough... she was pregnant.

I guess her pregnancy was fairly average. She didn't have any real complications outside some first trimester nausea and a crippling ice cream addiction. Fresh off her correct pregnancy prediction she spent 20 weeks telling me to prepare for a girl

because “it’s a girl, I just know it”. I however placed my bet on a boy. At the 20 week ultrasound she told the technician to “check again” when they told us we were indeed having a boy. Vindication.

The pregnancy progressed fairly normally until the last couple weeks. Tara started developing high blood pressure and had to get checked for preeclampsia.... all good, they said. When Tara started having contractions for a couple days about two weeks before the due date they sent us to the hospital to see if we would deliver. Many laps walking around the hospital later we left empty handed. A week later Tara called me after her doctor’s appointment to let me know that we were going to have a baby that day. Because of her continued high blood pressure they decided the best plan was to induce her. She picked me up from work and we headed to the hospital. After 11 hours and a lot of hard work on everyone’s part except mine, we had a perfect little boy..... Charlie. Two very sleepless days and nights later we were able to take him home, almost sure that we had no idea what we were doing.

We were pretty lucky to be supported by just about everybody. Our families were generally supportive and happy for us. Our friends were crazy excited since we were the first ones in our friend group to be having a baby. All our providers were excellent and could not have treated us better. We felt really lucky to be so universally accepted by everyone we came in contact with. Very. Some even went out of their way to talk to us about how much they enjoy working with LGBTQIA couples.

Being a mom to our little boy has been the single most exhausting but amazing thing I’ve ever done with my life. We got lucky to have such an easy, healthy, happy little boy. He really is the coolest little dude. I feel like Tara and I have worked extremely well together as a team. She’s been an absolute rockstar the entire time. I work 24 hour shifts so for 10 days a month she’s

completely on her own. The only thing that I haven't loved is we don't have a lot of friends with kids, especially ones in the LGBTQIA community. Charlie's only real social interaction with other kids comes from the two days a week he spends at daycare. I'd love to be able to take him on playdates, or hang out with other parents but we just don't have that many friends with kids. Sometimes it feels like we're hanging out on mommy island by ourselves.

Luckily everyone in our lives has been super supportive. My family lives in RVA so we see them frequently, and Tara's visit from out of town regularly. They're all a part of Charlie's life. Our friends treat us no different than they would anyone else (I guess if they did we probably wouldn't be friends with them right?). Anybody we've ever had to work with from doctor's office to Charlie's daycare have all been really great to us. Some have even gone out of their way to ask us what we have been teaching Charlie to call each of us (mama/mommy) so that they refer to us the same way when he's around.

Something we wish we would have known or done: **START SAVING MONEY FOR DAYCARE NOW BECAUSE IT'S CRAZY EXPENSIVE!** :) Other messages for queer people wanting to have kids: Talk to other people who have been on the same journey as you. Not just other parents, but parents who followed the same path you're on. They can provide invaluable information, resources and support. You don't have to figure out any of this on your own. Reach out, even if you don't know someone. I'm sure any one of us would be happy to share our stories and advice.