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Health



Alison Beder-Solway and Kenny Solway and their family appearing on Canada AM on Wednesday Sept. 19, 2007.

Couple's family dreams fulfilled by surrogacy

Updated Wed. Sep. 19 2007 11:16 AM ET

Canada AM

A couple's decision to turn to surrogacy to fulfill their dreams of having a large family proved successful after enduring many disappointments.

Kenny Solway and Alison Beder-Solway found out they were about to become parents three years after marrying in 1996. But there were serious difficulties in Beder-

Solway's pregnancy. Seven months into the pregnancy she had heart failure.

Eventually, the couple's first child Hannah was born prematurely. But a month after the birth, Beder-Solway was diagnosed with Hereditary Hemorrhagic Telangiectasia (HHT) and was advised not to have any more children.

"Essentially, part of me died that day because something was taken from me that I could never get back," Beder-Solway told CTV's Canada AM.

The couple decided they would pursue the route of surrogacy to expand their family, but after attempting seven IVF cycles with two different potential surrogate mothers, they were still unsuccessful.

"It was very, very heart-wrenching because we were back again at square one," said Beder-Solway.

But the couple met Michele from Pennsylvania after she responded to an agency ad in a local newspaper and they struck up a bond. Michelle became a gestational carrier for the couple, which means she has no genetic link to the fetus she was carrying. Beder-Solway's eggs were fertilized with her husband's sperm



Alison Beder-Solway appearing on Canada AM on Wednesday Sept. 19, 2007.



Lawyer Sherry Levitan appearing on Canada AM on Wednesday Sept. 19, 2007.




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VIDEO

Canada AM: Alison and Kenny Solway, Sherry Levitan 7:23

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and the resulting embryos were transferred to Michele's uterus.

Michele said she enjoyed being pregnant and that the arrangement was suitable for her, despite having two children of her own.

"I thought helping another family and the joy of me being pregnant -- it just all came together," said Michele.

Michele gave birth to a boy named Aidan in March 2003.

"It has to be one of the most emotional days of my life. I was an absolute wreck. I just couldn't believe we had gotten to that point," said Beder-Solway.

For Michele, the experience was so favourable that she underwent the process for the couple again. Eighteen months later, Michele gave birth to twins Rowan and Caleb.

"The look on their faces, you just can't explain it," Michele said. "Knowing that you gave somebody something that they had longed for. It's unbelievable. Still, to this day, I enjoy every moment of it."

Legal issues

Couples who are considering surrogacy as a way to have children must make sure that they have a legal agreement and are not violating any laws, according to a lawyer specializing in reproductive technology.

"It's vital to have a pre-conception surrogacy agreement covering a multitude of issues, but it's best to have that done before anybody gets pregnant," lawyer Sherry Levitan told CTV's Canada AM.

As well as ensuring there is a legal agreement, Levitan also stressed that couples should be knowledgeable about how Canadian law views surrogacy as an option for parenthood. While surrogacy is legal in Canada, since 2004, it has been illegal to pay a surrogate or gestational carrier a fee beyond the expenses directly related to carrying a baby.

Health Canada is currently conducting a public consultation on the matter of fees paid to surrogate mothers.

"Right now we're in a completely grey zone," Levitan said. "As long as the expenses are related to the surrogacy, as long as they're reasonable, as long as they're receipted, we're okay."

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