



Becoming a Dad

Written by Tom Weaver

Last Updated: June 2009

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) (<http://www.cdss.ca>)

Congratulations on Becoming a Dad

My name is Tom, very proud dad of Tommy. Tommy is eight-months-old and he is the light of my life. We have a blast when we are together and I cannot for a minute imagine my life without him.

I was blessed with the opportunity to assist with his birth and to cut the cord. I was the first one to hold him and from the moment he looked into my eyes he stole my heart.

Seeing his face light up when he sees me, hearing him babble, or watching his expressions when we play are memories that will stay etched in my mind forever. Spending time with Tommy is one of the most important parts of my day.

Holding, cuddling, feeding, changing, bathing or comforting him are now a major part of my day.

Tommy is mastering rolling over, holding his head up, sitting up and grabbing everything as all children do. He is curious about his world and fascinated by light and musical toys. He is a real daddy's boy and knows how to manipulate his daddy.

He is happy, fussy, adorable, cranky, funny and at times frustrating. He needs to be loved, nurtured and cared for, not unlike any child.

We had some very scary moments when he was hospitalized shortly after birth, mainly because of an uncertain outcome. Thankfully all was and is well. We have been lucky that we have not had any major health issues.

We know along the way there will be challenges. What they will be is anyone's guess. We have no crystal ball. We do know that we will deal with anything that comes up, and we will always do what is best for Tommy.

Tommy has taught me a lot about myself. He has helped me to become a kinder, patient, loving, and understanding person. He helps me to see life through his eyes with wonder and awe. He has helped me realize what being a husband and father truly is.

Tommy is my son and I love him all my heart. There is nothing I would not do for him.

Just one more thing. Did I mention Tommy has Down syndrome?

You do not need to apologize for the way you feel. I know you are filled with conflicting feelings and emotions. That is ok, it really is. I can say this because last February I was standing in those shoes you are wearing.

We found out through a maternal serum triple screening and confirmation by amniocentesis that Tommy had Trisomy 21, the most common form of Down syndrome. My world was turned upside down and inside out. I felt winded and unable to catch my breath.

My first thought was - no they made a mistake. I was filled with self-doubt, anger, confusion, sorrow, and sadness. How could this happen, why did it happen to ME! Did we do something to cause it? What does this mean for my child's future? Does he have a future? Do I even want this child!

I remember thinking what will people say. What does this say about me? How will I be judged? Will there be fake greetings and silent whispers. Does having this child make me less



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of a man?

I was shocked and unsettled to think that I could think that way. I was taught that as a man you must be the strong silent type. Raise and protect your kids, provide for your family, support your wife. How could I be thinking about ending this pregnancy? I felt like a failure? What kind of man thinks that way about his unborn child?

Before this news I was on cloud nine. I had seen him move during the ultrasound and had felt him kick. I can remember wiping the tears from my eyes as I stared in amazement at his tiny heart beating. I know what I feel is wrong but I can't help it. I was confused and unsure. I felt lost and alone.

My wife April and I did not talk to each other for three days. Every time I tried to talk to her, she would cry. Her tears were not because our child has Down syndrome. She was devastated at the thought of terminating our pregnancy. I also shed my share of tears. This usually happened in my car or during those uneasy, restless early morning hours when I found myself alone, unsure and afraid.

Not knowing where to turn I searched the Internet. I needed answers, I needed information, and I needed to talk to someone who might understand. I found many sites all helpful in some way. I read many personal stories but it was not until I posted a message asking for information on the CDSS website that started me on my way. I received many replies, all heartfelt and honest. This was what I needed. I was also invited to join this site. This site was a wonderful source of information, compassion, acceptance and caring. They are truly an extraordinary group of people.

This started my journey of understanding and acceptance. It was not easy, and I still had doubts. Suddenly I did not feel so alone. There were others who have experienced some of the same thoughts and emotions I was feeling. There was hope for us.

April and I finally started talking. I shared with her what I had found, and the stories and replies I received. We spoke openly and honestly from our hearts, expressing our fears and sharing our tears. We asked more questions, and gained new hope and strength with each reply we received.

We knew that the future may not be easy, but we were willing to make a leap of faith. There were further tests and possible challenges, but were willing to meet them. We gained strength from friends, family and each other.

Tommy was born at 8:33 p.m. on July 11, 2005. We do not regret our decision. The joy he has brought us is immeasurable.

You may be feeling overwhelmed. Please remember that you are not alone. It may not seem like it, but it does and will get better. If you feel up to it you can contact me at tweaver@rogers.com (<mailto:tweaver@rogers.com>).

Best wishes to you.
Take Care,
Tom Weaver
Tommy's Daddy