



CASE STUDY

Corin: 12 years of wisdom

Corin was conceived using identity release sperm through a Melbourne fertility clinic. He has been raised by two mums in a family that has always been very out and open. He goes to the local state school in an inner suburb. He loves reading, Minecraft and Lego and is highly indifferent to all types of sport.

In the following interview, Corin talks about school, friends and bullying. He also offers some advice to other kids being raised in a rainbow family, and provides some pointers for their parents, too.

Can you describe your family and school?

I have two younger sisters and two mums. My school is very multicultural; we have lots of people from all over the world. There are very nice teachers – they are kind and if you need

help you can ask. If you are hurt they have an excellent sick bay. If you have any medical issues you can tell the office and they can make special arrangements.

Have you ever been teased at school?

Yes. In grade four I had really long hair and people said I looked like a girl. Lots of people called me *Rapunzel* and I just said, 'Look at the people who go surfing!' And that shut them up.



What about other kids, do they get teased?

People do get teased at school. I mean, we don't have a lot of racism or sexism, which is good. It's mainly about ... well, we have lots of footy fans and people say, 'Oh my God, you're so dumb because you barrack for Collingwood'.

But what about having two mums?

One person tried to tease me. I just looked at them straight in the eyes without smiling and said, 'If you have nothing better to do than tease me about having two mums, that is just sad – that is really sad', and they just walked off. I made them see sense because, honestly, kids won't really get teased about having two mums – it's about football, soccer, competitive stuff.

What do other kids think?

Well, my friends think it's great because they like my mums and they're fine with it. People in my class, when they found out, nobody went, 'That's weird'. They all said, 'Oh, hmm, good'. Nobody has teased me. Some of them didn't even care and I'd rather that. Like, I was happy that some people actually thought it was pretty cool, but I don't really care.

What advice would you give to other kids?

I would suggest to other kids not to tease anybody because they will tease you back. Tell this to your kids – trust me, it will help them. If it turns out that these kids tease people behind their backs, don't become friends with them.

I would try to make good friends. Don't become friends with someone just because you like the same footy team as them, become friends because you actually really like them.

You don't have to share the same interests. Like Jack – he is my best friend – he loves

baseball, but I don't. But I've been to watch his team and I'm really supportive of him. I think you should do what you love. So I'm friends with him because, even though we don't share the same interests, we acknowledge that and we learn about each other's interests.

If you are being teased at school, always tell your parents. This is how I dealt with it: if it goes on for a day, tell your parents, but tell them not to tell the teacher. If it goes on for a week, tell your parents to tell the teacher. If it goes on longer than that, keep telling your teacher every time it happens. If it still goes on, then it can become bullying and that will get the principal involved, so hopefully you can stop it before then.

I knew a situation like that, where someone got teased so much it eventually went to the principal. It wasn't because of gay mums and dads, it was something else, but I'm not going to say. I swore not to tell because it makes the person feel really uncomfortable and they probably don't want it to be public.

And what advice would you have for parents?

Don't get too involved with the child. I know some kids – and I'm not mentioning any names here – their parents have too much to do with their kid's life and it's just really not good because they are too protective. I honestly think that's a really bad thing because if the parents are too protective, the child gets no opportunity to explore. If they get no opportunity to explore, their lives are not going to be amazing like other people's who do get to explore. And kids need that little freedom; it's really handy for them and it will help them develop social skills.

I would also say to the parents, *Try to talk to the teacher*. That always helps. My parents did that just to make sure there was no teasing going on. If your child comes home looking really sad or looking like something has happened, ask them what's wrong. It can really help. My parents ask

me if I come home looking sad and I tell them if something bad has happened.

Does it come up in any other context at school, the having two mums thing?

I'm going to explain about *That's so gay*. This is very handy for parents. At school, kids probably will experience a lot of this. They say, 'Oh my God, that's so gay!' And most times people don't know what it means. In prep it never happened, but in grade three I heard it and it's just stupid. They use it to mean bad and that can really hurt someone's feelings.

It's hard. There were kids saying it at school, so I challenged them and said, 'Do you even know what it means?' And they said, 'Of course we do, we're not idiots. It's two people who love each other of the same sex.' And I'm like, 'Yes, so why are you using it in that context? You say "That's so gay", but not in the right context and that's pretty offensive. Actually, no, that is really offensive. It is offensive to every gay mum and dad out there. Saying "That's so gay" is like teasing all gay people. It's super offensive'.

How did that play out?

I ran off and I told my teacher. She's a really nice person – she helps me whenever I'm stuck. She dealt with them and said thank you for telling her and that I did the right thing standing up for my parents.

And last year I had a severe case of *That's so gay*. I took a week of it and then told my teacher, because it was really hurting my feelings and I spent a whole lunch time crying. It can make people ... you can really hurt someone's feelings. I honestly think everyone should respect everyone else's family.

What did your teacher do?

She spoke to the kids at circle time and she said it was like saying 'Oh my God, that's so Greek', and I thought that was a great example.

Anything else you would like to add?

Yes, this is for the kids. If someone asks you about how you were born – if you don't have a dad – just say, 'I'm not telling you. That's private'. If they ask for the details, say, 'I'm not revealing the details. Your parents will tell you when you are old enough to understand'. I only tell my closest friends and I trust them because I know they will not go around saying, 'Oh my God, blah blah blah'. I tell them how I was born, but I don't really want to reveal that too often because it's private; it's my secret.

I just want to tell kids about one thing – parents and kids, actually. My mums have some friends and they have the same donor as us, so I have a half-sister and half-brother. We are half-siblings and we're fine with that. We get along really well. It's cool. So kids, if you meet someone and they have the same donor, it's okay.



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Researched and written by Jacqui Tomlins.

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