

**I HAVE MY
ANSWER, NOW
WHAT?**

**Best Practices For
Beginning Your
Journey**

November 2021

PREPARED BY: DNANGELS.



DNAngels

ABOUT DNANGELS

DNAngels is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people solve the mystery of their DNA at no cost. We are staffed by volunteer genetic genealogists who are passionate about reuniting people with their parents. We believe that everybody deserves to know who and where they came from.

Our Vision

To ensure every person has access to information about their individual genetic genealogy.

Our Mission

To provide no-cost genetic answers to adoptees, donor conceived, or any person who has been impacted by a non-paternal event (NPE) following a DNA test and wishing to explore biological connections. We understand the unique emotional impact felt by those struggling with biological questions or unexpected DNA test results and offer a beneficial online support system to our clients.

Who We Are

Almost all DNAngels volunteers have been impacted either personally, or through a loved one, by an unexpected DNA result. The organization is composed of skilled genetic genealogy experts - Search Angels - along with other dedicated volunteers who offer support and advocacy for our clients. Since our inception in February 2019, we have solved over 90% of the cases that we have accepted.

In 2021 DNAngels has solved over 1000 cases!

How You Can Help Further Our Mission

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely entirely on fundraising and in-kind donations from foundations, corporations and individuals. Currently, our entire staff of Search Angels and operations team is volunteer, but we have administrative expenses that include providing DNA tests for clients, mailing and postage, website, and rent for our corporate office.

DNAngels is in need of your support to continue our efforts to provide no-costs answers to each of our clients with the mapping and interpretation services we provide.



If you are adopted and seeking your birth parents, or if you have taken a DNA test and are surprised at the results, DNAngels is here to help you find your truth.

Everyone deserves to know where they came from, and the opportunity to explore their biological family medical history at the very least. We see to connect a client's DNA with the people who contributed to it, so they have the knowledge necessary to understand their genetic heritage.

[Donate](#)

WHAT IS A MPE?

A Misattributed Parentage Experience (MPE) is the discovery of a change in a person's perceived genealogy from a:

- Non-Paternal Event (NPE): an Extramarital Affair, Tryst, Rape, or Assault;
- Assisted Conception: Gamete Provider - (Sperm or Egg), Embryo Provision, or Surrogacy;
- Adoption: Hidden, Orphan, Foster Care, Late Discovery Adoptees (LDA), or Stepchild; or
- Any other event which resulted in a change in or understanding of your genealogy.



DNAngels

BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY

I HAVE MY ANSWERS, NOW WHAT?

Each year, DNAngels solves hundreds of cases for clients (example MPE, Non-Paternal Event or NPE, Donor Conceived, Adoptions and Late Discovery Adoptions) who are searching for their biological mothers and fathers.

With the invention of at home direct to consumer DNA test, genetic genealogists are uncovering family secrets at a record pace. In the year 2021 DNAngels solved over 1000 cases!

Over the course of solving these cases, we have developed some basic tips on how to navigate a client's next steps to give them a fighting chance to develop lasting relationships with their new biological families.



DNAngels

BREATHE

First, take a moment to breathe. Your world has just been turned upside down and you need some time to process. Yes, you have answers, which ultimately will lead to more questions. Will he/she accept me? What does he/she look like? Do I have siblings? Are my grandparents alive? What is my story, my truth?



UNDERSTAND

In the beginning, you are going to feel overwhelmed. You may be apprehensive or you may be giddy with joy at finally having your answers. It could feel like someone ran you over with a truck and you're not sure how to think, feel or act. Take a day or so to just look at your tree and ask some questions of your research team while it's fresh in their minds. Don't be afraid to ask how we reached our conclusion; we love to explain. Refer back to the icons we provided you with at the beginning of our research:



This image is used when we identify your most recent common ancestor (MRCA) that links you to your DNA match together.

This connection image leads from a DNA match to your MRCA. Each ancestor in between the DNA match and the MRCA will have this image.

This DNA image is used for your Ancestry DNA match. This match will be in your tree like this:

980 cM Jane Doe

A connection image will be placed for their direct line to the MRCA

CONTACT

You might still feel conflicted about the results, especially if the name we have provided is not the name you have heard all of your life. Your team will have provided you with as much public background information as they can on your new family, i.e. address, phone, Facebook, etc.

Decide how you want to proceed. For some clients a name is all that is important. For others, this isn't enough. They want to contact the family and have more questions answered. But how do you contact the family and what do you say?

At this point, you have several options for contact: phone, email, social media or good old-fashioned letter writing. You have to decide what method best suits your and your circumstances.

We have found that most of our clients want to call versus writing a letter and having it possibly not reach the intended recipient.

We do have some sample scripts available for you to use when contacting your family, either by phone or letter. Here is an example script for contacting a birth father.

I'm sorry to call you out of the blue like this, and I'm sure this will come as quite a shock! I recently took an Ancestry DNA test, & I used the professional services of a team of genetic genealogists at DNAngels. They reached the conclusion that your parents are my biological grandparents.



DNAngels

My name is (XX), and my mother's name is (XX). From what I understand, (whatever you have been told about how they knew each other, when & where - enough for him to connect the dots himself). (Then a little about myself - where I grew up, graduated HS, college, etc, but nothing too heavy)

If you are open to it, I would love to know more about you & any additional family I might have. If nothing else, I would greatly appreciate any medical history you're able to provide. The last thing I want is to disrupt your life, and if you don't want me to contact you again, I will respect your decision. The only thing I'd ask of you is to please tell me this, as it has taken most of my life to gain the courage to find you & call.

PREPARE

You need to have some realistic expectations of what the news of your discovery may mean to the biological family. It's different for each client. You may be warmly embraced and accepted, or your new family may experience denial, shock, confusion, anger or resentment. Please understand that if your call is not well received, it is not personal. But that doesn't help because...

Rejection hurts!



DNAngels



DNAngels

We recommend you tread lightly and try to consider the big picture as you navigate the waters. Our staff will be with you through every step of this process. We want to know how your conversations go and how you feel.

Your biological father may have never known about your existence and he needs time to adjust to this news. Some dads are elated and immediately want to make up for all the lost years, but don't take into consideration that their enthusiasm could overwhelm their new-found child. In the same spirit, an overly enthusiastic child could overwhelm a newly discovered father and siblings.

If Dad is currently married and has children, the children or spouse may feel threatened by your very presence. Please try to include his spouse in some of the conversation and be respectful of their relationship. The more you consider the spouse and children in your father's life, the better the outcome.

You are entitled to your biological answers and entitled to know your true medical history and ancestors.



****WHAT YOU ARE NOT ENTITLED TO IS A RELATIONSHIP****

You have to consider there are other factors that determine if you will be able to have a healthy relationship with your newfound family. Does the spouse seem threatened or jealous of the time you spend calling, texting and emailing with your biological parent? Have you reached out to the spouse to try and get to know him/her? Try to consider the spouse as a bonus parent. We can never have too many parents to love or to love us! It only takes one parent to object and the whole relationship folds or is paused.

By going slow and creating safe boundaries for all parties, you may just come out ahead.

BREAK THE ICE

Now you have made contact and both parties have agreed to get to know each other better.

- Share about your life in a conversation:
- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite vacation spot?
- Have you ever met a celebrity?
- What's your favorite movie recently?
- What's your favorite author?
- Do either of you like sports? What teams are your favorite?
- How many pets do you have? What are their names?
- Share photos of you growing up, ask for the same in return.



BE PRESENT

Try to be present to what you are giving and receiving in return. We call that reading the room. Be aware of what sets you on edge, and be mindful of signals from others. After a few interactions, take a moment to evaluate how the relationship is going. Ask yourself: Has the relationship been one sided? Are you the one who always reaches out first? If so, you may want to slow down and give the other party a chance to initiate contact for a change. This is healthy and allows them to gain some control of the narrative.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a big consideration in all of this. Your own mental health may take a hit. You will probably experience all of the stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. Those who have gone through the discovery of finding out they have different biological parents than they were raised to believe also go through a 6th stage - Finding Meaning. We encourage you to take care of yourself and your mental health.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

We have worked to create partnerships in the community to provide resources that you can utilize when you need support and fellowship with others who have walked your path. Support is necessary for self-care and a sense of community and knowing that you are never alone!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



****Please note, most groups require you to answer membership questions prior to approval.**

MPE COUNSELING COLLECTIVE

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/297628778008805>

The MPE Counseling Collective exists to connect those who've had a DNA surprise with trained and licensed therapists that specialize in working with people who have had a Misattributed Parentage Experience - MPE (people with an NPE, adoptees, conceived by assisted conception). Visit their directory at www.mpecounseling.org

They also serve as a discussion group for the MPEs and mental health.

As a group, they seek to abide by confidentiality as much as is within our ability. Also facilitating as a partial process group, members may step out and speak about struggles concerning their MPE. As a group, they hope that discussion will lead to awareness and processing for those participating.

Please be respectful and offer compassion and empathy toward one another.

DNANGELS SEARCH & SUPPORT

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dnangelssupportgroup/>

We formed this group as a safe space for anyone in need of support after a DNA discovery, and/or assistance in their search for their biological family. We realize that surprise DNA test results impact more than just the person who tested, therefore we happily welcome both known and “found” relatives, as we believe that everyone benefits from the perspectives from “the other side”. It is a judgement free space where we can all support one another, share advice based on personal experience, and ensure that no one walks this path alone. Be mindful that no one’s story is exactly the same and we’re all in different stages of our journey.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



DNANGELS SEARCH & SUPPORT

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dnangelssupportgroup/>

We formed this group as a safe space for anyone in need of support after a DNA discovery, and/or assistance in their search for their biological family. We realize that surprise DNA test results impact more than just the person who tested, therefore we happily welcome both known and “found” relatives, as we believe that everyone benefits from the perspectives from “the other side”. It is a judgement free space where we can all support one another, share advice based on personal experience, and ensure that no one walks this path alone. Be mindful that no one’s story is exactly the same and we’re all in different stages of our journey.

ADOPTION SEARCH & SUPPORT BY DNANGELS

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dnangelssupportgroup/>

We formed this group as a safe space for anyone in need of support after a DNA discovery, and/or assistance in their search for their biological family. We realize that surprise DNA test results impact more than just the person who tested, therefore we happily welcome both known and “found” relatives, as we believe that everyone benefits from the perspectives from “the other side”. It is a judgement free space where we can all support one another, share advice based on personal experience, and ensure that no one walks this path alone. Be mindful that no one’s story is exactly the same and we’re all in different stages of our journey.

DNA SURPRISES SUPPORT GROUP

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1798909400175879/>

This group is a safe place to come and talk/discuss your surprise DNA results from Ancestry, 23andMe, and other services. Maybe you found out you are NPE or you have a sister or brother you never knew about! Some people even find out about an aunt or uncle or even a grandparent. It could have happened to you personally or to a loved one. For some of us it’s exciting news...but for others it’s confusing and devastating. Either way, let’s talk about it and try to heal.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



NPE ONLY: AFTER THE DISCOVERY

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NPEOnlyAftertheDiscovery/>

This group was formed with NPEs in mind. It is a safe place to share in confidence your thoughts and feelings with others that “get it”. Whatever stage of the journey you are in currently, all members are able to speak freely and without shame or judgement. In addition to online support, the group also offers private support meetings every Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon via zoom.

ADOPTEEES ONLY: FOUND/REUNION THE NEXT CHAPTER

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdopteesOnlyReunionGroup/>

This group was formed with the adoptees in mind. It is a safe place to share in confidence your thoughts and feelings with others that “get it”. Whatever stage of the journey you are in currently, all members are able to speak freely and without shame or judgement. In addition to online support, the group also offers private support meetings every Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon via zoom.

HIRAETH ONLY: LONGING FOR HOME

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HiraethOnlyLongingforHome/>

This group was formed for Adoptees, NPE's (Non Paternal Event), DC's (Donor Conceived), LDA's (Late Discovery Adoptees) as well as members of their families. It is a place to share in confidence your thoughts and feelings with others that “get it”. Whatever stage of the journey you are in currently, all members are able to speak freely and without shame or judgment. This group was designed for everyone to come together and learn about their similarities and differences. In addition to online support, the group also offers private support meetings every Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon via zoom.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



WE ARE DONOR CONCEIVED

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wearedonorconceived/>

Website: <https://www.wearedonorconceived.com/>

This group was launched in 2016 as a resource center for donor conceived people around the globe. It's also a place where donor-conceived people can share their stories with each other and the general public in order to inspire greater understanding about the unique challenges that they face. If you are a donor-conceived individual looking to connect with others in the same unique situation, please join their private Facebook group, exclusively for donor-conceived people.

NPE ALICIA GROUP

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/879235302445225/>

****We are proud to support one of our very own clients, who is writing a memoir about her personal NPE journey in hopes of one day helping others like herself.**

This group welcomes NPEs, as well as family members and friends of NPEs. They also welcome those who desire to learn more about the experience of the NPE individual and how this affects those closest to them. NPE Alicia has a dream that one day more NPEs will have a story of forgiveness, acceptance, healing and love. This will be made possible by allowing all individuals impacted by a non-paternal event (NPE) to share their side of the story honestly and come to a place of freedom in sharing their truth.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



THIS MPE LIFE

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/553843178676902>

This MPE Life is an inclusive support group for individuals with a Misattributed Parental Experience (MPE) geared towards building friendships and encouraging lighthearted banter around our new Life with an MPE. The group offers a safe space to connect, share, meet up, and discuss the full range of experiences, challenges, and emotions of MPEs.

MPE CROSS CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/463672101233690>

Cross-Cultural Connections (CCC) is an inclusive, intersectional support group for people with a misattributed parentage experience (MPE) - adoptees, conceived through assisted conception, non-paternal event (NPE), offering a safe space to share, process, give and receive feedback, pool resources, and have discussions about the experiences, challenges, emotions and highlighting changes in ethnicity surrounding MPEs.

MPE JEWISH SURPRISE

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/237537157293366>

MPE Jewish Surprise is an inclusive support group for individuals who through DNA testing have discovered Jewish heritage and in some cases lost it due to a DNA test. This group is welcoming to all. It is a safe space to share, process, give and receive feedback, pool resources, and have discussions about the full range of experiences, challenges, and emotions of the MPE journey.

ADVOCACY GROUPS



RIGHT TO KNOW

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/RighttoKnowUS/>

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/righttoknowus/home>

Right to Know helps to educate the public and professionals on the complex intersection of genetic information, identity, and family dynamics. They advocate for people whose genetic parent(s) is not their supportive parent(s) [the person(s) who raised them] or legal parent(s). Their advocacy includes promoting access to trained mental health professionals and changes in the law to reflect our right to know our genetic identity.

SEVERANCE MAGAZINE

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/severancemag/>

Website: <https://severancemag.com>

DN Angels Interview: <https://severancemag.com/a-qa-with-dnangels-laura-leslie/>

Severance is a magazine and community for people who've been separated from their biological family. It's for conversations about what it feels like to have no genetic connection to the families we grew up with, whether due to situations such as adoption, abandonment, donor conception, or an NPE (non-paternal event, or not parent expected). It's about adjusting to shifting realities or living with the unknown.

ADVOCACY GROUPS



COALITION FOR GENETIC TRUTH

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/genetictruth/>

Public Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/genetictruth/>

SEVERANCE MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

<https://severancemag.com/adoptee-npe-and-donor-conceived-communities-come-together-to-form-the-coalition-for-genetic-truth-an-organization-dedicated-to-advocacy-and-education/>

Recent attention has been placed on educating the public after a podcast was published that perpetuated the shame, stigma and birth trauma associated with misattributed parentage and adoption. Their mission is to bring awareness to the cause and advocate for the acquisition of your genetic truth, and to remove the shame and stigma associated with “illegitimacy” that is often placed on us. They want to educate those who would respond to us by telling us “it doesn’t matter” that it absolutely matters, those who tell us “nothing has changed,” EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED. Our trauma is real, our feelings are valid, and we cannot begin to heal without understanding.

REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

DNANGELS AND THE ENTIRE MPE COMMUNITY IS HERE TO HELP