

Makda Ghebreslassie is a *CBC* Toronto reporter and video-journalist.

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Co-parents, but not romantic partners

Transcript:

Male voice: An attractive woman meets a handsome man. Two years later, a beautiful baby boy. The epitome¹ of a traditional family.

Female voice: Think again. This is a modern relationship.

Brendan Schulz: We met online on a co-parenting website. It feels very much like dating, you know. It
5 feels very much like dating with a different intention. We met at a café the first time and hit it off and we went for a walk afterwards. It was a nice fall day. I mean, it was a bit picture-perfect kind of thing.

Tatiana Busic: I had butterflies in my stomach, and I knew right away that we were going to have a good time. And I also thought that he was just gorgeous and lovely. So that was great. But after several months we decided that this was... this was the right thing, that we wanted to do this together.

10 **Makda Ghebreslassie:** Why co-parenting and not another way of having a child?

Brendan Schulz: At 40 I found myself single and realized that the dream to be a dad was still there for me. Regardless of being single or partnered, as a gay man the route to having a child was always going to be something of an adventure.

15 **Tatiana Busic:** When I was 35 years old, I separated from a relationship and I have a daughter from that marriage. And I've always known that I wanted two kids. I also didn't want to do it alone, and I think that, you know, we need to raise children in communities and families, like, it's really tough stuff doing it fully on your own.

20 **Makda Ghebreslassie:** Brendan and Tatiana are not alone in this. There are two thousand Canadians registered on *Modamily*. That's the co-parenting website that they met on and one quick search shows you that there are several more sites including *Family by Design*, *PollenTree*, and *Pride Angel*.

Tatiana Busic: I didn't, I was, I was a little unprepared for how novel of an idea this seems to everybody. Some responses took me off-guard² a little bit like "what are you doing", "you know this is crazy" like "are you giving up on love" because, you know, I'm a straight person having a baby with a gay person.

¹ indbegrebet

² took me off-guard: (her) kom bag på mig

25 **Brendan Schulz:** A lot of people are saying like “wow, isn’t that a big risk” and, I mean, any two people who’re deciding to have a child together, whether through sort of a marriage and heterosexual relations, or any kind of scenario, they’re committed to each other for life through this child.

Makda Ghebreslassie: *The Centre for Family Research* in the UK is just starting to look at this. In an online survey of more than 100 people seeking a co-parenting arrangement, they found that most are
30 single, well educated, and financially secure. And on average they’re in their 30s.

Andrea O’Reilly teaches Women’s Studies and family courses and she says this is one more example of the changing definition of family, which started going through a drastic evolution with women having children on their own in the 80s and 90s.

Andrea O’Reilly: This is the next step; single parents by choice. It’s recognizing that they want to have
35 a child but don’t necessarily want or perhaps having secured love or marriage.

Makda Ghebreslassie: She says delayed adulthood has a lot to do with that. Where once it was common to be married and have a career in your early 20s, now...

Andrea O’Reilly: But their energy has been elsewhere, their energy has been, you know, getting their education, their career established and then, as I said, they wake up maybe at 35 and go “oh
40 shoot³, I forgot that I should have been looking for a guy or a girl, because I want to have kids”.

Makda Ghebreslassie: Many in Toronto have been looking but the surge in online dating apps we have actually complicated matters.

Charlotte Osler: We don’t have to be committed, but now we’re allowed to be more sexually free, and you’ll just swipe swipe swipe swipe and it’s a game.

45 **Makda Ghebreslassie:** Charlotte Osler is 36 and looking at co-parenting or having a baby on her own. Her nursing career has taken her to different parts of the country. She’s had relationships, but nothing that’s gone the distance.

Where did you want to be at this stage in your life?

Charlotte Osler: With children. Married with children.

50 **Makda Ghebreslassie:** Charlotte went through testing at a fertility clinic and discovered her ovarian reserve⁴ was low. She was told she needs to get pregnant within the year.

Charlotte Osler: I really had to grieve like the loss, like deciding to have a baby on my own is grieving that loss of a nuclear family⁵, or how I wanted that to happen. Shouldn’t I love a father-child relationship and I want that for my child. At the moment I would prefer that I know who it is and I’m

³ (her) pokkers

⁴ *ovarian reserve*: mængden af æg i æggestokkene

⁵ *nuclear family*: kernefamilie

55 going to try that route first, until I've exhausted it. But I obviously can't take too long because I have a little timeline. But, so I've asked some friends.

Makda Ghebresslassie: Sandra Alsaffawi specializes in family law. She says, "Figure out the legalities before the child is conceived⁶."

Should each parent in this sort of situation get their own lawyer?

60 **Sandra Alsaffawi:** Absolutely, because as relationships deteriorate and circumstances change, there can be a power differential, so you want to have an agreement in place that you've negotiated with the assistance of a lawyer to make sure that your rights as parents are protected. But, also that the child is protected.

65 **Makda Ghebresslassie:** Tatyana and Brendan did not go through a lawyer, but they say they did come up with their own contract.

Tatiana Basic: We quite literally talked about every possible angle of parenting: finances, health choices, education choices, everything. Even, how we would handle conflict between the two of us, we talked about.

Makda Ghebresslassie: For them this arrangement, they say, has been picture-perfect.

70 **Brendan Schulz:** So, we're operating from two households, but we still call ourselves one family, two households-sort-of-thing. That very much feels that way. We get time together, we get time on our own, so it's... it's... it's a really great balance. You know, we're both single, just saying, so, you know...

[Laughter]

Makda Ghebresslassie: Makda Ghebresslassie, *CBC News*, Toronto.

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⁶ undfanget