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Ask Ariel: Not the Real Dad



by Ariel Frager

Dear Ariel,

I want to get your advice on the right time to tell my daughter that my boyfriend is not her real dad. He is the father of my youngest and he adores them both but she is getting to the age when she will soon realize that she doesn't have the same last name as my boyfriend. Her real dad is not around, has never been around, and at this date I don't know where he is. I am glad he is not in the picture because it would

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break my heart for her to find out that he never wanted to be part of her beautiful life.

Signed,
Needs Guidance

Dear NG,

It sounds like you have a bright daughter and she may already know something is up with the father figure in your household. My advice is very simple: tell her the truth, and tell her as soon as possible. Say that she has a biological father who is a different person than her dad, your boyfriend. Explain to her that anyone can be a father but it takes someone special to be a dad and that the person she knows as her dad doesn't change just because he isn't also biologically related to her. When you sit down to have this conversation, enlist the help of your boyfriend so he can help reassure her that he has always loved her for who she is and that will never change, even if she knows the truth of her parentage.

I really believe it is best to tell her as soon as possible. Kids know when things are wrong or weird and if you continue to lie by omission you may jeopardize your relationship with your daughter. I know this might be a long and possibly painful conversation but it will be much better if the truth comes from you, rather than from some other source.

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SHARES

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Ariel Frager

Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that specializes in treating children, adolescents and families. She lives in Portland with her husband, son, dog and kitty cat.



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