

Perspective

Category: Getting the News

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“Your ovaries never developed.”

I am trying—and failing—to wrap my mind around those four words, to grasp the weight of their meaning, but every time I try to speak or swallow, the sharpness of the word “never” lodges in my throat. Never, meaning never counting the number of fingers on an ultrasound, never feeling the flutter of little toes against your abdomen, never arguing about whether you prefer the name Sophie or Sophia, never wondering if your baby girl will recognize your voice when you get to hold her for the first time.

There are other options. Other options, meaning you can still have children, and you can still have all of these moments, but not with a child that shares your genetic makeup. Not with a child that shares your messy hair and ocean blue eyes. Not with a child that looks up at you with a wide-mouthed grin that is a reflection of your own. You can still have all of these moments, but your friends will never come up to you at holiday parties declaring that your daughter is your spitting image. People will never tell her that she is growing up to look just like her mother.

“Your ovaries never developed.” I am trying—and failing—to wrap my mind around these four words, to grasp the weight of their meaning for the teenage girl who sits before me, sharing her story with me.

“Your ovaries never developed. That’s what the doctor told me,” she says, and I am struck by the acceptance in her voice, by the stoicism that blankets her face. I, the medical student, struggle to come to terms with the realization of what she already knows at such a young age. Yet, she has already moved on to talk about her dream of becoming an orthopedic surgeon and traveling to other countries to treat patients. I marvel at her resilience as I continue listening to her story, to the wisdom woven through her words, to the determination embedded in her voice.

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