

CAROLE ILENE LIEBERMAN, M.D., M.P.H.
A Professional Medical Corporation
PSYCHIATRIST/EXPERT WITNESS

*Diplomate, American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology
Clinical Faculty, UCLA Department of Psychiatry
Beverly Hills, CA 90212*

Department of Children and Family Services/Child Protective Services

February 12, 2009

Re: Nadya Suleman/Child Endangerment/Abuse

Dear DCFS/CPS,

As a psychiatrist in Beverly Hills, California, and thus a mandated reporter, I am filing this complaint against NADYA SULEMAN in regard to her inability to properly care for her 14 children, and therefore putting them in psychological and physical danger.

At this writing, her octuplets are still hospitalized and not yet under Ms. Suleman's direct care. However, it is crucial for DCFS/CPS to step in at this time, before they are allowed to be taken home and put in jeopardy, along with the other 6 children. As a psychiatrist, I have analyzed her media interviews and other reports. From what is already known, there is prima facie evidence of neglect and emotional abuse of her children, as will be delineated within this complaint:

1. Nadya Suleman, as indicated by psychiatric reports from her workers compensation case and her statements to the press, is not stable enough psychologically to be a mother to 6 children, no less 14. The psychiatric reports indicate that amongst other psychological problems, she was depressed and suicidal. This translates into her being vulnerable to decompensate under stress today. Though she does not have any realistic appreciation of the amount of stress she will be under when she brings her children home, she will get a rude awakening when they are all under one roof and in her care. Her statements to the press indicate obliviousness to reality, as well.
2. Ms. Suleman stated that she wanted to have many children because, as a child, when she was growing up, she did not receive a lot of affection from her mother, and did not feel a bond with her. So, she set about creating a large family where she could forge this bond with her many children to make up for what she lacked. Clearly, this is not a psychologically healthy

- reason to have one child, no less 14. Good parents are dedicated to fulfilling the needs of their children, not having their children fulfill their own needs. What will happen when Ms. Suleman's children are not giving her the affection that she needs from them? When they, in fact, have their own needs to be fed, changed, dressed, bathed, and so on?
3. Though I have not personally examined Ms. Suleman, she seems to fit the description of a severely narcissistic personality, with grandiosity, unrealistic fantasies, a belief that she is special, a need for excessive admiration, a disturbing sense of entitlement, a willingness to exploit other people, a lack of empathy, and arrogance. These personality characteristics do not bode well for healthy motherhood, no less the responsibility of caring for so many children.
 4. An example of Ms. Suleman's grandiosity, expecting to be recognized as superior without the prerequisite achievements, is her reported desire to get work in the media giving parental advice.
 5. She is preoccupied with fantasies of having unlimited power which will allow her to take care of all her children. And she believes that, though other mothers might not be up to this task, she is special – a supermom.
 6. Her need for excessive admiration is evident in her plastic surgery, in which (consciously or unconsciously) she had herself made to look like her idol Angelina Jolie – a woman who has managed to combine being a supermom with being named 'the sexiest woman alive'. (Of course, Angelina has the financial means and emotional support to care for her children, and did not have 8 babies at once.) Ms. Suleman's need for excessive admiration is also evident in her hiring a publicist, who is undoubtedly looking for as many media opportunities as he or she can find, including a reality show. This means that Ms. Suleman is already exploiting her 14 children, even before her babies leave the ICU. She seems to view these babies as her ticket to fame.
 7. Nadya feels entitled to have as many children as she wants, without having any means of taking care of them – from financial to day-to-day responsibilities.
 8. Ms. Suleman takes advantage of other people to achieve her own self-centered desires. Not only is she already exploiting her children; but, she has exploited her "friend" who gave her his sperm. Surely, he did not anticipate or agree to 'fathering' 14 babies. She has also exploited her mother, by forcing her into indentured servitude, having to take care of the first 6 children, and counting on her help with the additional children, that her mother was against even before Nadya became pregnant with them, and now calling it "unconscionable." Even her father has reportedly taken on the difficult and dangerous task of returning to work in Iraq to help support the children financially.
 9. Ms. Suleman lacks empathy and refuses to acknowledge the emotional distress she has inflicted upon those she has exploited. Indeed, Nadya seems to want to punish her mother for not giving her enough love, by

- forcing her mother to take care of her 14 children, and thereby trying to get her mother's love vicariously through her children.
10. Premature babies are known to be at higher risk of abuse. When there are 8 of them at once, this surely raises the risk.
 11. Premature babies also have a higher likelihood of physical and psychological problems, such as cerebral palsy, blindness, developmental delays, respiratory problems, and more. This would make their care even more complex, time-consuming and stressful.
 12. Ms. Suleman's poor relationship with her mother, whom she has described as not being affectionate and not showing love, will haunt her in her own mothering. Nadya has, admittedly, not grown up with a good role model of a mother. Though Nadya has reportedly taken courses in child development, she will still have to struggle within herself to not repeat the same dysfunctional words and behaviors that her mother showed to her when she was growing up.
 13. Nadya has been deceitful with her mother, on at least one occasion, not revealing that she was receiving money from workman's compensation, which will now strain their tenuous bond even further.
 14. It is an extremely difficult task to raise 6 children, aged 2 to 7, and provide them with enough love and attention, no less meeting all of their basic needs. Indeed, Ms. Suleman has relied upon her mother's help for this. The task is made even more difficult because one child is autistic, one has ADHD and one has a speech delay. Each of these 'special needs' children need special attention, attention that is hard to find when there are 5 other siblings – no less 8 more babies.
 15. At least two of her children, interviewed by the media, have expressed concern and displeasure about all the "crying babies" that would soon be brought home. And at least one of her children expressed concern that the stress would be too much for their mom.
 16. Ms. Suleman seems to have difficulty with relationships with men. On the one hand, she has spoken about not wanting or needing a husband. On the other hand, it seems as if she may be harboring the fantasy that the "friend" who donated the sperm to her might want to be "present in their life." One wonders whether this was a conscious or unconscious attempt to manipulate this man to become more than a platonic "friend."
 17. It has been reported that at least one of her children had "colic." Any parent who has had one, knows the stress that a colicky baby puts on the whole family, since their grating and relentless crying makes parents feel helpless and inept. What will happen if one or more of the 8 babies have colic? How is Nadya going to cope with this? Who is going to volunteer to stay with her throughout the night to help take care of the awakened brood?
 18. What about the normal childhood illnesses that even children who aren't premature or don't have special needs suffer from? If they are contagious diseases, all of the children will be at risk, especially living in such close quarters. The more children who are of school age, the more likely they

- will bring contagious diseases back to a home which will become a Petri dish for the growth of bacteria, viruses, lice and other dangerous organisms. Imagine simply a common cold making the round of 14 kids.
19. Who are the people who Ms. Suleman is counting on to help her take care of 14 children? What are their qualifications? Is Nadya really going to allow strangers to help her when she was terrified of going out in public with her children, for fear that someone would kidnap them? How will she know what the motives are of these volunteers? How much time will these volunteers be willing to give her? Will she have to have many different strangers coming in and out of the house? Will she do a background check of all of the volunteers to make sure not one of them is a pedophile?
 20. If Ms. Suleman's fertility doctor had taken the appropriate medical and ethical route, he would have sent her for a psychiatric evaluation before agreeing to implant more fertilized eggs inside of her. It is unlikely that any qualified psychiatrist would have given the greenlight to another pregnancy, given her history of psychiatric problems, which would make it difficult for her to be a good mother to the six children she already had. These psychological problems reportedly include: a dysfunctional childhood with lack of a maternal bond, an obsession with having a lot of babies that began in adolescence, depression, suicidal ideation, paranoia, post-traumatic stress disorder (presumably from the incident at work that caused her back injury), being out of touch with reality as to her ability to care for more children and her expectation that she will be able to go back to school and work to earn the money needed to raise them.
 21. Because of her underlying psychological instability, she is at greater risk for post-partum depression, which could be extremely dangerous for her children.
 22. Right now, Nadya is basking in the media spotlight, and nurturing hopes that the spotlight and payment for interviews, endorsements, and spokesperson-ships will continue, or begin to, come her way. If they don't, she may plunge quickly into depression, disillusionment and despondency – especially when she has to face the unglamorous reality of caring for 14 children on her own. If the spotlight continues, then she will have even less time to spend with her children.
 23. Animals have litters. They don't exert conscious control over the number of babies that they have. But human beings do have the capacity to think about whether or not to bring a baby into the world, and should base this decision first and foremost upon their ability to provide enough love and attention to all the babies they have. It is not psychologically, nor physically, possible to provide sufficient love and attention to the 'litter' that Ms. Suleman has chosen to deliver in addition to the 6 children she has.
 24. Already, Nadya has caused her 6 children to feel as though they are not enough – otherwise why would their mom have had 8 more? Indeed, a danger exists of there becoming 2 camps of children: the originals vs. the newborns. The original children may well band together against the onslaught of the 8 crying babies who are taking away their mother's love

and attention. Sibling rivalry occurs when even one newborn child is brought into a home, when there are 8 newborns it is overwhelming for the children who are already there.

In conclusion, it is apparent that all 14 children have been, or are at imminent risk of becoming, abused – emotionally and by neglect. I would urge you to begin a formal investigation immediately and to take the appropriate steps to remove at least some of them from her care. Ideally, it should be the 8 newborns who are removed, since she has not yet had the opportunity to form as strong a bond with them as with the others, and it would be better for them to go straight from the hospital to a loving home where they would be the focus of attention.

Thank you,

Carole Lieberman, M.D., M.P.H.

