



Welcome

Each woman's journey through infertility is unique. There are many options that may help you fulfill your dream of becoming a parent. The key is to find the ones that feel right for you.

Your emotions

This journey—Is more like an emotional roller coaster ride than a smooth path to parenthood. As couples begin this journey, intense feelings surface. There are wide swings from joy and hope to despair and heartache. It's impossible to predict how long it will take; it could be months or years.

Working through infertility—May bring a couple closer or may separate them. It can magnify current issues and bring up ones you've forgotten. This is a difficult experience for each partner and an enormous stress on relationships.

Pressures

It helps to understand what you're feeling—Talking about pressures helps. Many of us feel the pressure:

- To be pregnant by a certain age or time in life.
- To have a 2nd or 3rd child within a specified time.
- From families, friends, and our communities.
- From financial concerns and work schedules.
- From differences with our partners about how, when, or what we must do to become pregnant.

Feelings

Infertility is a major life crisis for people, similar to losing a parent, going through a divorce, or having a serious illness. It takes an incredible amount of emotional reserve to get through it. You may feel:

Intense grief and sadness—It's normal to feel angry, bitter, shocked, sad, overwhelmed, guilty, and numb for days or even months. These feelings may occur simultaneously or in stages.

Out of control—In many other parts of our lives, we learn that if we just work or study hard enough we'll reach our goals. Unfortunately this is not always the case with infertility.

Envy—Why not me? I'd be a great parent and I love children.

Fear—When we're afraid that we might not get what we want it's normal to think about making deals or bargaining to fulfill our dreams.

Guilt—Dealing with our past experiences, or previous unwanted pregnancies may bring up feelings of intense guilt.

Embarrassment—Discussing intimate details with others is difficult. Being told when to have intercourse and when not to is intrusive. Asking partners for semen samples may become routine but not any easier over time.

Stress with others

People may think they are being helpful by offering advice and asking questions about the most personal and potentially painful details of our lives.

Don't tell me to relax—"If I hear one more person tell me that I just need to relax and it will happen, I'm going to scream."

Why don't you just adopt?—Though this may be the path that we ultimately choose, being asked in this way can feel hurtful.

You need to do what we did—Or see my friend's doctor, or try this herb or that treatment. The list is endless and though we're doing our best, we may feel that we're not trying hard enough.

We got pregnant the first time we tried—When we hear this from others we may feel frustrated or incompetent.

To do list

- ❑ **Expect to be more emotional**—Trying to become pregnant is an emotionally challenging process. You are trying to be positive, focused and motivated, yet also preparing for possible disappointment.
- ❑ **Take care of yourself**—It's easy to spend all your time working on getting pregnant, yet it's vital that you get plenty of rest, eat well and exercise. It's just as important to get out, see friends, and have some fun, too.
- ❑ **Give yourself permission to be less than perfect**—In other aspects of your life. The added stress can affect work, family, and friendships. Your ability to deal with the stress will determine whether you can enjoy life or just manage to get through each cycle.
- ❑ **Try not to hold everything in**—It's OK to cry or get angry, otherwise a small incident can lead to a meltdown.
- ❑ **Set limits**—For your infertility conversations with your partner to 20 to 30 minutes each day. Otherwise, everything else in your relationship gets put aside.
- ❑ **Talk with your partner**—About your feelings and issues, and ask about their experience. Having our feelings heard, shared, and understood makes the journey less difficult.
- ❑ **Practice what you'll say to well meaning people**—Try this, "Thanks for your concern, we're doing everything we can. This is not something I'm comfortable talking about right now."
- ❑ **Consider**—Talking with a counselor or joining a support group. Resolve is a wonderful resource. www.resolve.org.



Take care of yourself and your relationship.