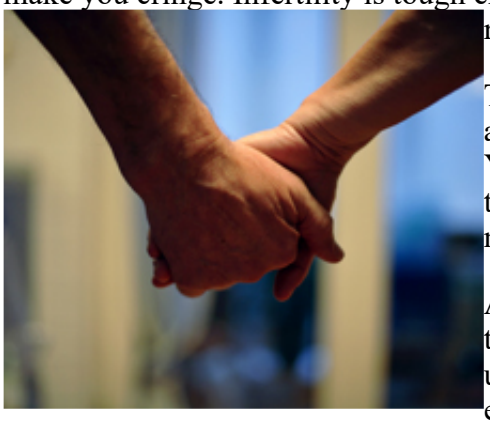
Emotional aspects of infertility

When the journey to parenthood becomes a struggle, it can be hard to put on a brave face. *When are you going to have a baby? Don't you want a family? Why are you waiting so long?* Questions like these can make you cringe. Infertility is tough enough, and undergoing tests and treatments while balancing the responsibilities of daily life can add plenty of stress.



The uncertainty surrounding infertility can make it difficult to plan ahead, and serious medical or financial decisions may need to be made. You may be experiencing a roller coaster of emotions, especially during treatments. Hope, disappointment, frustration and sadness are very normal responses to the situation.

All of this can put your relationship and your emotional health to the test. Your self-esteem can take a hit, and you might feel like no one understands what you're going through. Seeing others start families can evoke feelings of jealousy. Doubts about your relationship may surface and control over your life can seem lost. You may even be facing anxiety or depression.

Though these are stressful and uncertain times, try to focus on what factors you do have control over.

Manage stress. Find a stress relief technique that works for you. You may choose to practice yoga, walk the dog or get a massage. Keeping a journal can be helpful for identifying and working through your feelings. Relief might be found through meditation or religious support.

Take care of yourself with a proper diet and exercise. Manage your time effectively so that you don't feel overwhelmed. Remember to value yourself and focus on the positive aspects of your life.

Communicate with your partner. Open and honest communication is crucial for coping with the emotions associated with infertility. You and your partner need each others' support. Set aside time regularly to sit and discuss your feelings together. Be ready to talk and listen to each other, and to communicate your needs clearly. Understand that you may have different methods of coping with the situation.

Take individual needs into consideration and plan your course of action together. Don't pressure or blame your partner, but come to a solution that best suits you both. Decide together how much information you want to share with others. Where a health condition is involved, take extra care to listen to your partner—he or she may be more deeply affected than you think

Reconnect. Trying for a child is just one part of your relationship with your partner. Together, enjoy the rest of what life has to offer. Spend time together doing things that you both take pleasure in, express love and appreciation for one another and focus on each others' best qualities. Acknowledge the stress you may both be under and make time for relaxation. You can use it to relieve stress and enhance intimacy.

Seek support. There are many professionals trained to provide you with support and assistance—individually or as a couple—to help work through your feelings, evaluate your options and improve your coping skills. Counselling can be invaluable to those who face persistent feelings of sadness which interfere with daily life.

Many couples grapple with infertility. Sharing your experience with others in a support group may be the best therapy for you. Look for one in your community. If you don't feel comfortable sharing your feelings in person, you may find an online forum that works for you. Family and friends can also provide a great deal of love and support. If you decide to confide in them, tell them how you are feeling and let them know what they can do to help.

Explore alternatives to medical treatments. If medical treatment fails, or you learn you are not able to get pregnant, you still have options. Adopting a child from your area or from abroad can fulfill your dreams of

having a happy family of your own. Becoming a foster parent allows you to share your love and open your home to a child who needs one.

Infertility is an unexpected challenge, but by managing elements you can control, seeking the support of others and, if need be, exploring other avenues, you'll ease the pressure, lift your spirits and hopefully, discover peace and fulfillment in whatever form it takes.