

## A Bridge of Understanding

### For Couples

Couples may experience relationship stress over infertility, just when you most need one another's support. At the best times, your relationship can serve as a safe harbor through the waves of emotions that accompany treatment. Sharing the difficult decisions involved when choosing which treatment options to pursue can also draw you together.

Partners may respond to stress and frustration differently, creating distance or discord in the relationship. Blame and guilt can arise. Yet it is possible to avoid these destructive emotions so that couples emerge from infertility with an enriched and sustaining emotional intimacy.

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What to  
Expect  
When  
You Wish  
You Were  
Expecting

Help for Getting through the  
Experience of Infertility



## Common Experiences of Infertility

One out of six couples will have some complications or delays in trying to have a baby. Infertility can create a closer connection for couples, clarifying and affirming what matters most in one's life. Most often though, infertility is stressful for both the woman and the couple.

Infertility researchers recommend patients learn to reduce stress in order to create the most beneficial physical environment for pregnancy to occur. Infertility may be one time when friends and family cannot provide the right kind of support. Some conversations about infertility can even create a sense of feeling misunderstood, judged or blamed. Infertility can be emotionally and physically exhausting. When treatment doesn't work the first time, hopefulness can be replaced by deep feelings of grief. This can be a time of great loneliness.

## For Women

Infertility treatment's emphasis on stress reduction and self care can allow women the time and space to develop new strategies for navigating the intense emotions that often accompany infertility, including the demanding roller coaster of grief and hope. Discovering these strategies while infertile can yield lifetime benefits.

Enhanced self care during infertility can also help women to keep or reclaim their sense of being a whole person, when treatment can reduce them to simply being a patient focused on the physicality of tracking temperatures, hormone shifts and injection times.

## Infertility Support

Women's groups can offer an emotionally supportive time to talk, breathe, share understanding and cathartic humor, and receive support from other women who know exactly what it's like to go through infertility. Groups offer a chance to hear, "I know what you mean," rather than "If you just did this..."

Individual therapy or a group on infertility may offer helpful ways to get through this difficult time. Whether you prefer to talk with someone on your own or seek the support of other women, it can be beneficial to explore self-care. Often people need relationship strategies for coping with infertility as well.

Look for help with methods like this:

- Practical relaxation techniques for managing and reducing sensations of stress
- Tactful methods for responding to unsolicited advice
- Ideas and tools for fostering regular self-care routines
- Habits to retain your sense of being a "whole person" rather than becoming immersed in being an infertility patient

