

# Emotional Aspects of Infertility Treatment

The unexpected news that you have a fertility problem can create a great deal of stress and frustration. Being infertile can make you feel out of control and that the next step in your life is blocked. Faced with the loss of a natural part of life, some people feel grief, loss and guilt.

Many infertile couples aren't prepared for the emotional roller coaster of grief and loss of infertility treatments. The layers of stress are multiple:

- Financial — How will we pay for treatment easily costing thousands of dollars?
- Professional — Will I miss job promotions or will my work suffer because of treatment needs?
- Emotional — How will we cope as a couple if treatment fails?

Facing friends, family members or co-workers who have children is another stressor in an infertile couple's life.

There are a number of issues that are critical for a couple facing treatment:

Be prepared to experience a lot of unfamiliar and uncomfortable feelings and to learn how to manage them. Understand there are psychological reactions to infertility that are very real and related to the stress of treatment. Being infertile is overwhelming. So is treatment.

Understand that men and women cope with stress and infertility differently. While a woman is physically and emotionally dealing with the effects of treatment, her outlets may involve many people. She may want to talk a lot about her experiences — with her husband — or with anyone who will listen. Her partner may be perceived as being emotionally and physically distant because he is trying to remain calm, despite his deep concern for and commitment to his partner.

Know that marriages will either be strengthened or pulled apart by infertility treatment. What happens depends on the couple's relationship prior to treatment: Can you discuss intimate feelings? Do you have a good marriage? A good sex life? Are you a cohesive unit as a couple?

Realize that infertility and its wide range of treatment options can be overwhelming. There are many complicated issues, such as preserving eggs by freezing them for future use, adoption, donor eggs, selective abortion, surrogacy and a host of other related topics. Couples who educate themselves as much as possible about treatment have a better chance of not being overwhelmed by its intensity.

Understand from the outset that treatment may not be successful. It's typical for couples at the beginning of treatment to do whatever it takes to achieve a pregnancy. Eventually, most realize that emotionally and financially there is a limit. However, before a couple can move on to other options, like adoption or remaining comfortably childless, for example, they must resolve their infertility. They have to get to the point that they can grieve and put closure on the fact that one or both biological bodies are not going to give them a child. This stage of infertility has its own stages of grief and loss. Couples must be ready to say, "I'm ready to stop this."

*Copyright 2003*

*[National Women's Health Resource Center Inc. \(NWHRC\)](#)*