



BODY & MIND
CONSULTING

COPING WITH INFERTILITY



COPING WITH INFERTILITY

If you're having a challenging time coping with infertility, you're definitely not alone. Research has shown that the psychological stress experienced by women with infertility is similar to that of women coping with major illnesses such as cancer or chronic pain. As if the stress from having infertility challenges was not enough well meaning family and friends may attribute your infertility difficulties to stress and counsel you and your partner to "just relax" and things will "just happen." While researchers once thought that stress caused infertility, more recent studies do not make this connection.¹

What impact does infertility have on emotional well-being?

Infertility often creates one of the most distressing life crises for couples and the whirlwind of emotions that infertility brings can lead to a feeling of overwhelm. If you find yourself feeling anxious, depressed, out of control, or isolated, you are not alone-- sometimes knowing that your feelings are "normal" can help.



Ways to Cope

When trying to get pregnant takes longer than you first expected, it can quickly take over your life.. While we often can't change our circumstances, we can change how we face the challenge. Here are 5 ways to cope and keep infertility from taking over your life:

1. Don't Let the "Two Week Wait" Take Over Your Life

The two week wait is a time of high stress for most women trying to conceive. To break out of the stress cycle the "two week wait" we counsel people to focus on other things and seek out friends and other people during this time. This is the time to plan a "date night" or a "girls-night-out" with friends. Although the thoughts about the "two week wait" may still be in your thoughts staying busy will keep it from being first and foremost in your mind.

2. Don't Let Your Period's Arrival Derail You Emotionally

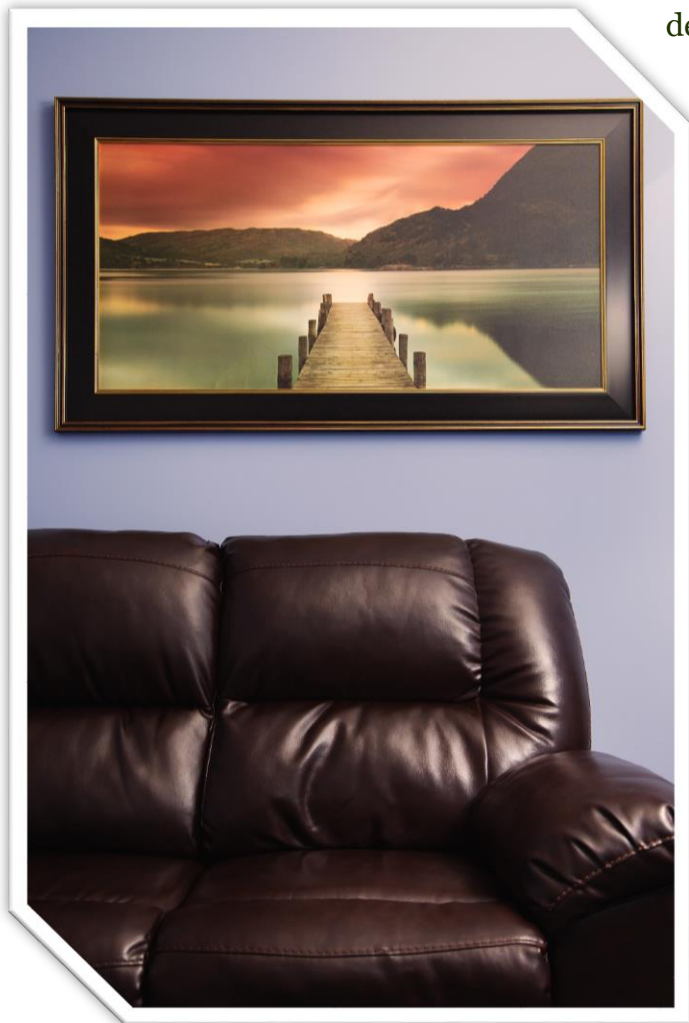
Although most women are not thrilled when their monthly cycle arrives when one is trying to get pregnant the period is one more "stress" and recognition that another month has passed without accomplishing the

COPING WITH INFERTILITY

intended "goal" of pregnancy. This can lead to feelings of tension, frustration, aggravation, and yes, additional stress. And if you have experienced miscarriages in the past the arrival of your cycle may also be symbolic of other losses. One client indicated "for a long period of time and considerable therapy periods were intense reminders of my inability to get pregnant and stay pregnant." Again, although it sounds like an "escape" staying busy through this time will help it to pass quicker and help you to regain composure and begin looking to the future.

3. Reinforce the positive aspects of your relationship²

Intimate relationships are put under tremendous stress when going through infertility. This stress can bring you closer at times and at other times pull you apart. The effect infertility can have on your sex life also adds strain to a relationship. Misunderstandings and not seeing eye-to-eye on the next steps in your infertility journey can also lead to tension and make things more difficult. Infertility is hard, but it's even harder if you don't have the support of your partner or spouse. Sometimes, your partner is the only one who can really understand what you're going through. If you are having a difficult time communicating sometimes couples counseling can provide assistance in developing strategies to communicate during this difficult time.



4. Make Time to Acknowledge the Difficult Feelings³

Taking back your life from infertility doesn't mean pretending infertility doesn't have an impact on your emotions. Actually making time to acknowledge difficult feelings can help you feel more relaxed. Writing, whether in the form of a paper journal or in an online blog forum can also be immensely therapeutic and healing. Hearing others' struggles and sharing your own can help you to gain strength to keep going and approach life decisions you and your partner may be facing.

5. Don't be Ashamed to Seek Outside Help⁴

While blogging may provide a therapeutic outlet for infertility stresses sometimes seeking out a support group to connect with others-- or seeking a professional psychologist for more personal attention can be the answer. Depression, anxiety, and panic

COPING WITH INFERTILITY

attacks are common in infertility patients, and counseling can assist in formulating an action plan to work through the difficult decisions and emotions that infertility brings. "If your sadness, depression, worrying or anxiety is prolonged and affecting many areas of your daily life, then it is important to seek professional help," explains Penny Joss Fletcher about a marriage and family therapist based in Tustin, California, specializing in infertility and adoption counseling. "A therapist can teach you coping skills and strategies to hopefully alleviate some of the depression or anxiety."

From helping you cope to sorting out your infertility options our psychologists at Consulting Associates LLC have special training and experience with infertility from both the female and male perspectives the challenge infertility brings to individuals and relationships. Contact us and we'll gladly help you cope with and overcome this challenge in your life.

References:

1. Clay, RA (2006). "Does Stress Hinder Conception?" *Monitor on Psychology*. 37(8). Accessed August 30, 2012.
2. Hirsch AM and Hirsch SM. "The Effect of Infertility on Marriage and Self-concept." *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing* Jan-Feb 1989 18(1):13-20.
3. Clay, RA (2006). "Battling the Self-blame of Infertility" *Monitor on Psychology*. 37(8). Accessed August 30, 2012.
4. Michelle P. Lukse, MP;. Vacc.N. (1999). "Grief, Depression, and Coping in Women Undergoing Infertility Treatment." *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 93:245-251. September 3, 2012.
5. "If you are having trouble conceiving, speak with someone who can help." *American Society of Reproductive Medicine*. Accessed August 30, 2012.