

Infertility and Mother's Day

By Michelle L., alongroadtobaby.wordpress.co 14 May, 2017

Growing up for us on Mother's Day always meant KFC buckets, DQ ice cream cake and fun family parties. That was usually because it was always overshadowed by my birthday (sorry Mom).

With Mother's Day approaching this weekend, there is no way I could have possibly anticipated how much harder this day would be for me. You see it's not that I'm not happy for all of the deserving Mother's being celebrated around me (including my own), it's just that I long to be one.

When we knew that fertility treatments would be starting at the beginning of this year it seemed reasonable to me that by halfway through 2017 I would finally be pregnant. This is not the case. After two failed rounds of IUI, the journey is becoming increasingly harder and each month brings its own set of emotions.

While I'm absolutely thrilled for my Mom tribe, especially those celebrating their very first Mother's Day, it is yet again a reminder that I haven't joined the club. On the other side of that, I must also thank all of our Mom friends who allow us to be such an active part of their children's lives. Without that, I'm sure we would feel a lot more lost.

I will put on a happy face this Sunday.

I will spend the day with my own Mom doing the things that make us happy but deep down inside my heart will break just a little bit more. I will see Mother's and their children around me and while it will be tough, I will stay strong. I will get through it just like any other day because, as I've said a million times, I WILL be a Mom. Just not this year.

My advice to my infertility sisters who will inevitably struggle on this day is to embrace it. Don't feel bad for feeling all the feels. It's all a part of the process and without it, we wouldn't be able to move forward and carry on. Celebrate the day any way you would like to, even if it's not at all.

But please know, you are not alone.

Infertility Survival Guide: Baby Showers

4 tips to getting through or skipping out

by Keiko Zoll. Seleni

When you're dealing with infertility, attending baby showers can be very difficult or downright unbearable. Here are four tips to help you take care of yourself, manage your emotions, or feel comfortable skipping out entirely.

Give yourself time to cry, even just for a few minutes. Baby showers can bring up both joy and sadness for women dealing with infertility. These feelings are completely normal and valid. Give yourself the space you need to let out your emotions before you go, whether in the arms of a partner, on the shoulder of a friend or family member, or in private. If your emotions become overwhelming during the shower, excuse yourself to the bathroom, have a quick cry, wipe off your face, and rejoin the group. Later, when you're at home in an emotionally safe space, let the tears flow. It's ok.

Have a response ready for questions about when you're planning to have kids. Even though the focus is on the mom-to-be, other guests will undoubtedly ask or speculate about whose baby shower will be next. This can be exceptionally painful when you're dealing with infertility, so it helps to have a few one-liners prepared. Keep it short and vague ("Not yet. We're still in the trying phase.") Or matter of factly explain what's going on ("Actually, we're not sure. We're dealing with infertility, so it's a little out of our hands at the moment.") Either way, take charge of the conversation and redirect it to another subject if you feel uncomfortable.

Distract yourself with jobs at the shower. Help set up the space, prepare appetizers and snacks, keep a record of gift givers and their gifts, or clean up wrapping paper and bows. You might be able to distract yourself during a baby shower if you have very specific tasks to perform.

Politely decline. You don't have to go to the baby shower, even for a friend or family member. Really. You can be honest about your feelings with a close friend, or if you're feeling particularly pressured, just bow out on the morning of the event because of a "stomach virus." When you're privately struggling with infertility, it can be emotionally overwhelming to attend an event where the focus is a visibly pregnant woman, and the main topic of discussion is family building. You can always send a gift or card to welcome the new addition. Ordering gifts (or gift cards) online and sending them directly to the recipient can spare you a walk through a baby store.

You may feel guilty for having mixed emotions about attending another person's baby shower when you're having trouble getting pregnant. Recognize that these are perfectly valid emotions, and you are not a bad person for feeling sad, angry, or jealous. You are just going through a very difficult time. And hopefully, one day you will have the chance

to celebrate your own baby's impending arrival. You will undoubtedly be considerate of all the emotions this can bring up for other people.

How to Survive the Holidays During Infertility

It's not easy, but it is possible to find a little peace

by Dr. Ariadna Cymet Lanski

When you are experiencing the intense challenges of infertility, the holidays can seem more like a burden to you than a time of joy. If that's how you feel this time of year, know that you are not alone. In my psychotherapy practice, I work with many patients dealing with infertility who find that the holidays lose their meaning after the repeated losses of failed fertility treatment.

Experiencing loss can make you question whether you will ever overcome the pain of its paralyzing grief. It can feel as if you won't survive or ever feel happy again. And so giving thanks at a time when all you feel like doing is crying can seem counterintuitive at best and cruel at worst. But sometimes giving thanks can help you go on. It is not easy, but here are a few suggestions for trying it.

- **Make a conscious decision to move forward.** Winston Churchill once said, "If you're going through hell, keep going." That means you still have to get out of bed every day, put your feet down on the floor, and say, "Thank you for my feet." Even if they don't feel like walking.
- **Allow yourself private time and space to feel sad.** Listen to songs that are important to you or that allow you to get in touch with your deep feelings and cry. Then cry some more and sigh some more, but at some point switch to a different kind of music to distract yourself.
- **Do something active such as taking a walk and meditating on your specific pain.** Have a little talk with yourself about your losses, your disappointments, and fears. Allow your tears to flow; they are healing you.
- **Write down your longing for the family you hope for.** Expressing your feelings is crucial to your journey through grief and sorrow.

- **Go to an "adults-only" gathering this year.** Or go to a movie instead of doing what you usually do for the holidays – it's OK to redefine normal. You have a right to take care of yourself.

- **Turn to people who understand you for consolation.** Do not turn against them. Even support from one or two people will help you feel less isolated. Remember that your friends and family might not fully understand what you are going through, but they do want to keep you company. Take your friend up on that invitation to yoga class on Thanksgiving morning, and while in class give thanks for that close relationship.

- **"Fake it till you make it."** I am a great believer in this philosophy. Consciously reflect more on your present blessings and less on your sorrow and losses. At the beginning it might seem fake – even hard to do – but the more you do it the more you will see that there are some things to be thankful for even in the face of adversity. Or as Waldo Emerson put it, "When it is dark enough, you can see the stars."

- **Take time out to help someone in need.** There is something transforming about helping someone, because the smallest gesture can mean so much to someone who has no friends, family, or means to provide for their loved ones. It is a reminder that on some level we are all connected. So give to your favorite charity on Thanksgiving Day, volunteer to serve dinner at a shelter, or distribute food baskets at a senior living facility.

Experiencing infertility can bring you to very dark places, but with a little planning and some positive thinking (even if it's forced), you can find a little light and peace during the holidays.