Infertility & Emotional Well-Being

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Welcome to the Center for Reproductive Medicine (CRM). Infertility can be a challenging emotional experience as well as a medical condition. Experience has shown us that patients may feel fear, anger, sadness, guilt, disappointment, loss, shame, and anxiety.

We know that our patients never envisioned themselves starting or expanding a family with the help of a medical team. In addition, well-meaning friends and family can be intrusive and say insensitive things at precisely the time you are feeling most vulnerable. For all these reasons, it is important to find emotional support during what can be a difficult and isolating time. To help our patients cope with these stresses the CRM team includes two clinical social workers, Laura Lubetsky and Annie Geoghegan, who specialize in helping individuals and couples through their infertility treatment.

Our social workers are available to meet with you individually or as a couple at any point in your treatment to offer support and the insights gathered from counseling hundreds of people coping with infertility. It can be a difficult journey: People have different coping styles and experience different emotions. This can make it hard for couples. Medications can exacerbate a women’s emotional response to her infertility. It is common to experience sadness, anger, and moodiness. Many report feeling helpless and sometimes anxious as they watch their partner undergo medical treatments, tests and screening procedures. These are normal reactions to “infertility moments.”

Many of our patients welcome the opportunity to talk about these emotional stresses. In addition, there are other steps you and your partner can take to feel more in control of your life and your emotions while undergoing treatment. Try some of these ideas to manage those “infertility moments:”

Keeping the lines of communication open: Sometimes, we suggest couples set aside 15 or 20 minutes a few times a week to talk with each other about their thoughts and feelings. That provides room for communication but keeps the infertility from taking over the relationship.

Feeling in control: Some people find their infertility “leaking” into other parts of their lives. Patients who are used to being in control of their work and relationships, for example, may experience a sense of loss, frustration, anxiety and anger at the realization that they have so little control over having a child. This may be the first time they have bumped up against something so important that they can’t control. Many of our patients have found meditation can be helpful. Deep breathing exercises can be especially useful in getting thru the stress of treatments. It takes only a little practice and as little as 5-10 minutes a day to start:

1. Find a quiet time and place where you can sit comfortably. Close your eyes, rest your feet on the floor and arrange your hands comfortably in your lap. Slowly breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. As you breathe in feel
your stomach expand like a balloon. As you breathe out, feel your stomach contract. After you have mastered this breathing exercise try this:

- Again, sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and your hands in your lap. Start by tightening the muscles of your feet and hands, while squeezing your eyes shut. Then completely relax your body. As you breathe deeply try to deepen your body’s relaxation. Repeat tightening your hands, feet and squeezing your eyes shut and then relaxing your body again, all the while breathing deeply. Concentrate on your breathing. Practice this for a few minutes everyday especially when you feel anxious or stressed. This helps promote calmness.

- Some patients find yoga helpful. Yoga is a gentle form of physical exercise that helps people relax through breathing and stretching techniques.

Taking Care of Yourself: Sometimes women express concern and discomfort with their feelings. For example, they might experience envy or jealousy when they see pregnant women or babies. This is a common reaction. It’s important to take care of yourself during this difficult time: Taking care of yourself might mean declining an invitation to a baby shower or family function or attending only briefly. Don’t worry: These feelings are temporary.

In any event, you should remember that Laura and Annie are available to talk with you and your partner. Feel free to call them and schedule an appointment. They can be reached at 617-732-5500.

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