



Infertility, Adoption, and Child Free Living

Vivien Bergl, LCSW, CEAP, Solutions EAP Coordinator

When we think of February, we often think about Valentines Day and Love! What about the love you have for your child? We are socially conditioned to think about having children. Everyone knows the rhyme:



*Dick and Jane are sitting in a tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G
First comes Love, then come Marriage,
Then comes baby in a baby carriage!*

What if the baby doesn't come and you are trying to conceive? This can be a difficult time for an individual and/or couple.

This month we will talk about infertility, options and treatment as well as adoption choices and remaining child free. Some people also prefer to adopt rather than birth a child. They feel that there are so many children that need a loving family they wish to go that route. Obviously these are very personal decisions. You may not realize that someone in

your work environment is struggling with this. They may need time off for infertility treatment; they may have side effects of that treatment. Or they may need time to pursue adoption options that involve meetings, phone calls, and so forth. We will start off by addressing infertility next week.

First to define it: Infertility is a disease or condition of the reproductive system often diagnosed after a couple has had one year of unprotected, well-timed intercourse, or if the women has suffered from multiple miscarriages.

Infertility affects approximately 10% of the population. Since infertility strikes diverse groups-affecting people from all socioeconomic levels and cutting across all racial, ethnic and religious lines - chances are great that a friend, relative, neighbor or perhaps you are attempting to cope with the medical and emotional aspects of fertility.

Infertility is a medical problem. Approximately 40% of infertility is a female factor and 40% is due to a male factor. In the balance of the cases, infertility results from problems in both partners or the cause of the infertility cannot be explained.

It is important to see a specialist or a Reproductive Endocrinologist, or in some cases your OB/GYN or urologist for a complete fertility work up and diagnosis. Unfortunately, there still exists a great deal of misinformation about infertility. There are many infertility myths. Too numerous to list here, one in particular stands out. People often say, "If you just relax, you'll get pregnant." These kinds of statements can be misleading and hurtful for couples experiencing infertility.

Medical technology now offers more answers and treatment options to men and women trying to conceive a child. There are so many options now it is both positive and negative.



On one hand there exists more hope for people trying to conceive and on the other, it can be complicated. It can be overwhelming and test people's values, emotional states and financial situations. Often couples may not agree on the route to go which further complicates the issues. We will not go into the myriad of options in this e-tip, such as artificial insemination, in vitro, egg donor, sperm donor, etc. It is recommended to talk to professionals in this field for the information.

Managing the stress of infertility. While stress does not cause infertility, infertility most definitely causes stress and depression. It is important to recognize this. One of the most challenging aspects of the infertility experience is dealing with the emotional ups and downs relating to medical treatment, the uncertainty about the outcomes and the challenge of having to make important decisions such as when "enough is enough". Therefore you need to learn how to take care of yourself and make sure you get the support you need. Plan ahead, the holidays can be difficult, baby showers might be too much. All these things and more will face the individual and/or couple.

One organization that is helpful is RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association at 8405 Greensboro Drive, Suite 800, McLean , VA 22101-5120 www.resolve.org

We are going to move on to the topic of adoption and child-free living. Some people have already gone to extreme measures of infertility treatment before they stop and decide on either the route of adoption or child-free living. Others tried little infertility treatment before reaching the decision to pursue another choice. Again, this can be a trying time for individuals and/or couples. Many times the couple does not agree on the route. I strongly recommend getting help if this is the case. However, sometimes couples readily agree that they would like to pursue adoption.



Once again, you are faced with a myriad of choices. Do you adopt domestically or internationally, an infant or an older child, one with special needs or not, one of a different ethnicity or not, can you afford it? Do you have an open adoption (one with contact with the birth parent(s) and/or birth family) or a closed (no contact with the birth family)? The questions and the implications are great. However, do not despair. You and your partner (if you are coupled) will succeed in becoming a parent!

Where do you start? I recommend talking to people who have adopted, attend information meetings about adoption that are sponsored by organizations and talk to trusted friends and family members. Most important, explore your feelings about what

you are comfortable with. Be honest with yourself. At the end of this etip, we will provide you with resources to start finding out about adoption.

The other choice people make is to live child-free. This choice may come after trying to conceive or without trying. Note the term childfree - it applies to anyone (straight, gay or bisexual) who plans not to raise children for a variety of reasons. Since there is always a way to become a parent (as we have discussed) the decision to not have children is the preferred choice! There are many reasons people choose not to have children. Parenting is a selfless, largely self-sacrificing job. Choosing a childfree lifestyle may be an appealing option in an economically turbulent and difficult world. The choice not to bring children into the world is not inherently selfish. There are quite enough children in the world. People who are child-free often have the resources (time, energy and money) to contribute to society and others' children in an extremely valuable way. People without children also have more freedom, control of their lives and opportunity to express themselves. Unfortunately people can be judgmental about this choice. The following are some website to pursue supporting child free living.

http://www.webmd.com/infertility-and-reproduction/child_free_living
www.childfreebychoice.com

Adoption websites:

<http://adopting.com>

<http://www.jcics.org>

<http://www.adoptioninstitute.org>

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assessment, short term counseling and referral when needed.**