



You are not alone – Infertility Guide

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Winnipeg Infertility Resource Centre

In 1983 a dedicated group of women started Winnipeg's first infertility support group. In 1990 they joined the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada, a national organization whose mission is to

provide timely compassionate support and information to people who are experiencing infertility and to increase awareness of infertility issues through public education and advocacy. They became the Manitoba Chapter.

Providing support to couples has always been the Chapter's main focus whether through the peer led support groups or individually.

The people who utilize our services are Manitoba couples or individuals experiencing the pain and anguish of infertility. Approximately 500,000 Canadians (one in six couples) face this unique health problem, which often results in devastating personal, emotional and social consequences.

For Manitoba this statistic means 20,000 couples are affected by infertility. By providing educational and emotional support we can help couples cope with their situation and help them make informed decisions about their future. As each couple is unique with their own set of values, coping strategies, and support systems, so too will be their individual road to recovery. Resolution of infertility is unique to each couple and often depends on the medical diagnosis.

Diagnoses of infertility, which can be medically treated, achieve a pregnancy in about 50- 70 % of cases. If pregnancy is achieved, the hard work of creating family and the years of infertility can be grieved as the

joy and stresses of parenthood replace the pain of infertility. The incalculable losses of a finite diagnosis of infertility must be grieved. Because this diagnosis is out of their control, at some level and at some point the couple is forced to come to terms with their condition and may consider other alternatives such as adoption or childless living more rapidly. Unexplained infertility is particularly difficult as the continued

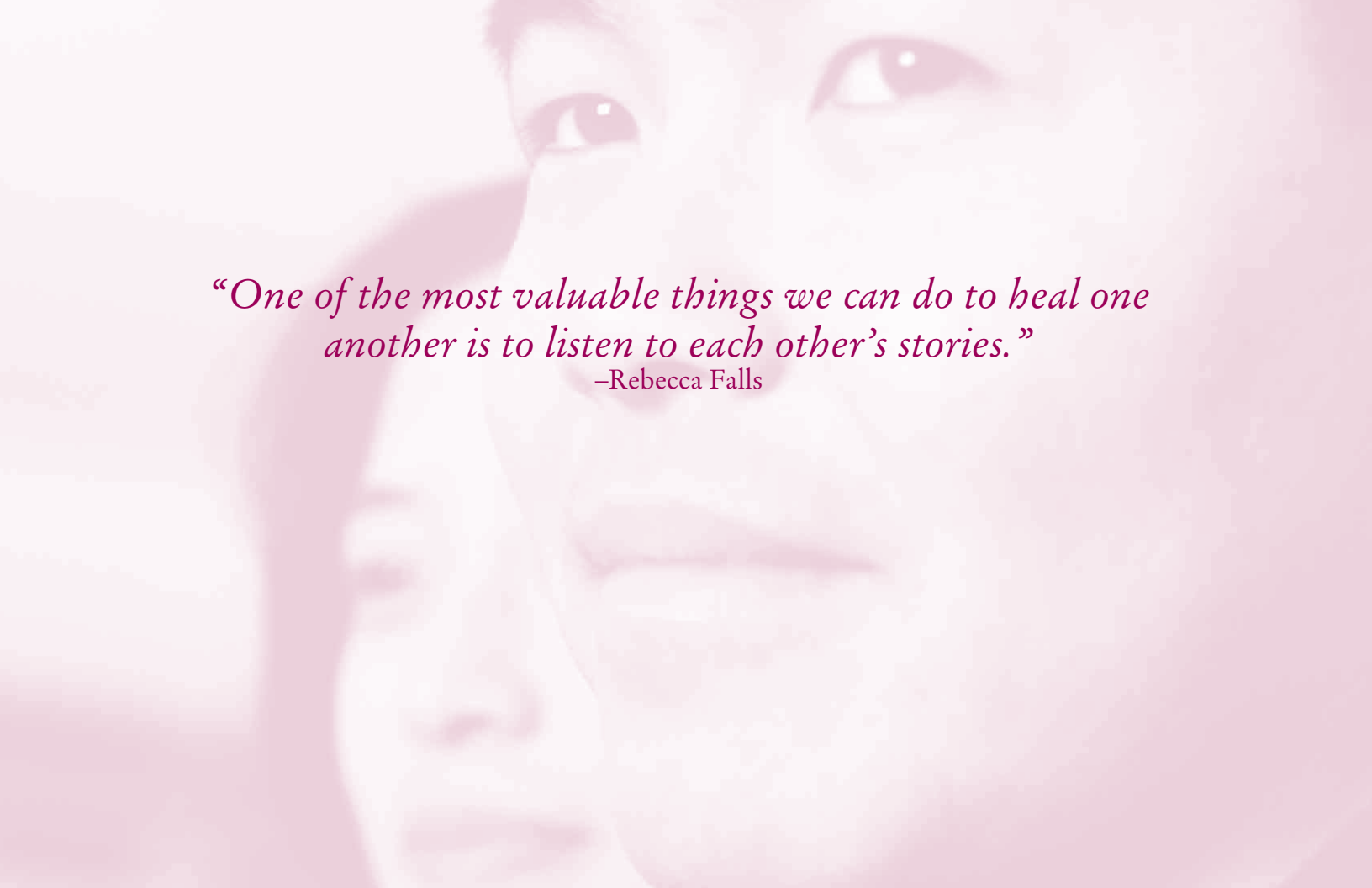
hope for a child plays out each month and continues throughout the childbearing years. Secondary infertility has its own unique set of losses. Couples experiencing secondary infertility often have difficulty finding support from either the fertile or infertile world.

It often takes a minimum of ten years to come to some resolution of infertility. The years of invasive medical tests and treatments are physically exhausting and emotionally stressful. Throughout the experience couples often feel alienated from an apparently fertile society, silently suffering through their reluctance to express their grief, even to close relatives and friends.

We feel we have done our job and met our goals when the couples we serve say to us "Thank you, I thought I was alone in the world", or, "Yes I need to grieve my losses and put some control back into my life", or "Thank you for making me feel normal for feeling so abnormal". Every person who is affected by infertility experiences some level of depression, anger and failure. If we can alleviate some of the pain we have done our job.

Winnipeg Infertility Resource Centre
204 488-2673
mbiaac@hotmail.com





“One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is to listen to each other’s stories.”

–Rebecca Falls

You are not alone.

This booklet was made possible by a generous donation to the Winnipeg Infertility Resource Centre from the Winnipeg Foundation. It is written as a resource for all Manitoban couples experiencing the anguish of infertility. Throughout we have used the medical term “infertility” for ease of writing. We realize this is a static definition that does not capture the complexities of the infertility diagnosis.



This booklet is designed to address the emotional aspects of infertility and provide a few local provincial resources. It is a first printing with possible omissions. We hope to improve upon it in the second printing but we need to have feedback from you, especially about resources outside of Winnipeg. Know of a good counselor /support group in other communities? We need to know. Email us at mbiaac@hotmail.com and we will try to be more inclusive in the next brochure.

Wherever you are in this emotional journey we call infertility, take heart that hope, peace of mind, and happiness still exist and will be yours again to enjoy. Letting go of the expectation that achieving life's goals will be easy or fair is difficult. In a perfect world infertility would cease to exist. There is nothing inherently good about infertility and it is difficult to see the big picture when in the midst of the pain. But things will get better.

Joy and suffering are an intrinsic part of life. Whatever brings you joy will bring you sorrow, whatever brings you sorrow will bring you joy. Comfort may come from unexpected places. Perhaps the significant people in our lives just don't "get it". Perhaps the words of strangers, alive or long gone, will provide reassurance. Hearing or reading just the right words can bring comfort.

In such times it can be enough just to know that many souls have been also touched by what is happening to you now, that the variety of human experience is universal, that in your grief, your fear, or even in your joy, you are not alone.

Infertility Myths and Facts

Myth: Infertility is a women's problem.

Fact: False. Infertility is 35% female 35% male, 20% combined and 10% unexplained.

Myth: Everyone seems to get pregnant at the drop of a hat.

Fact: More than 600,000 experience infertility. You are not alone.

Myth: It's all in your head! Why don't you relax.

Fact: Infertility is a disease of the reproductive system. The deep emotions you feel are the result of infertility, not the cause of it.

Myth: Don't worry -- it just takes time.

Fact: Fifty percent of those who complete an infertility evaluation achieve a pregnancy. Those who do not have a "spontaneous cure rate" of about 5% .

Myth: If you adopt a baby you'll get pregnant!

Fact: The rate for achieving pregnancy after adopting is the same as for those who do not adopt.

Myth: Why don't you adopt? so many babies need homes!

Fact: Adoption is a happy resolution to infertility. However, most explore medical treatment prior to considering adoption.

Myth: Maybe you two are doing something wrong!

Fact: Infertility is a medical condition, not a sexual disorder.

Myth: My partner might leave me because of our infertility.

Fact: The majority of couples do survive infertility...learning new ways of relating to each other, which deepen their relationship.

Myth: This is God's way of telling you two aren't meant to be parents!

Fact: You know what loving parents you would be, and it is particularly painful to have to explain to others that you have a medical problem.

Myth: Infertility is nature's way of controlling population.

Fact: Zero population growth allows for couples to replace themselves. Infertility denies them the opportunity to choose.

Myth: I shouldn't take a month off from treatment... I just know that this will be THE one!

Fact: Continuity is important, but sometimes a break can provide needed renewal.

Myth: I'll be labeled a 'trouble maker' if I ask too many questions.

Fact: You need to be informed about what treatments are available. Don't be afraid to ask questions of your doctor.

Myth: I know I'll never be able to stop treatment until I have a pregnancy.

Fact: You will begin to think more about parenthood, feeling normal again, childfree living or adoption.

Myth: I've lost interest in my job, hobbies, friends ...

Fact: Infertility is a life crisis ..it is normal to feel a sense of failure that can affect your self-esteem ..Stay informed about options and connect with others facing similar experiences.

For complete article go to: www.resolve.org

“Yesterday’s pain may lead to today’s understanding and thus, hope for tomorrow.”

A pain that's always there

excerpt from: Winnipeg Free Press
March 14, 1994 by Candace Propp

In our society, to have offspring is considered not only your God given right, but your duty. The vast majority of people grow up with the "reality" of someday having a household of little ones. But for about 20 percent of the population this reality turns into an illusion, and their right becomes a struggle rather than a choice of when and how many.

Infertility, the inability to conceive after one year of unprotected sex, is little understood among the general population even though the odds-one in five couples-make it quite possible for your own family to be struggling with it. All too often infertility is kept a secret, shrouded in feelings of frustration, shame, failure and guilt.

Similar to all extremely stressful life experiences, the emotions of anger and depression are the most pervasive as the couple or individual confronts their losses, and there are many associated with infertility.

First is the loss of control over life's decisions. As tests and treatments progress, plans for holidays, job opportunities and special purchases are put on hold. Control seems to be in the hands of the medical profession: their timetable becomes the client's.

Financial control is dependent upon the types and frequency of the infertility treatments. Even control over one's sex life is dominated by the calendar rather than intimacy. Intrapersonal control begins to break down as the months progress with no pregnancy happening. The infertility person loses faith and trust in doctors, friends, family and God.

Their self respect and dignity are threatened by invasive and personal tests; tears replace humor and a feeling of isolation and being different overrides "normalcy." In addition, the infertile couple or individual must begin to come to terms with the loss of one or more of the following: the physical and emotional gratifications of pregnancy, the genetic continuity linking past with future, the joint conception of a child with one's partner, and finally but predominantly, the opportunity to parent.

Gone is the previously held concept of family. Statistics state that the most stressful life event is the loss of a child. Infertile people face losing all their children.

Every month for years those struggling with infertility deal with the pain of their children's death. Chosen names, nursery colors and special celebrations die as hope diminishes. Fortunately, the majority of infertile people do succeed in having children through adoption or the wonderful advancements made in reproductive technology. Many others grow to lead fulfilled lives being childfree. No one experiencing infertility, however, will be able to put aside the fact that they are infertile, or forget the pain it takes to reestablish a sense of family.

Journaling

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us. As we discover what lies within us, we heal ourselves, know ourselves, and learn to trust our inner wisdom to guide us. An unexamined life is a shallow life indeed. The greatest adventure, if we desire to experience it, is the journey inward to the center of our own being.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Journaling as a therapeutic tool has been well documented. Individuals and couples experiencing infertility might utilize journaling in several ways. You may wish to work through the pain, loss and grief by writing about infertility and its related issues; or you may wish to get your minds off the infertility and explore areas in your life which are more positive and over which you have more control.

Keeping a journal is a way for those who find it difficult to talk to others to create a dialogue with themselves. Too often people with chronic invisible illnesses are misunderstood and/or not believed by others; this failure of communication is a form of invalidation. The individual suffers not only from a loss of self-esteem but also from the loss of sense of self. To block the hurts, they become progressively numb and erect walls in self-defense. These walls become effective barriers to communication, keeping out all others. In time, the walls become thick enough and strong enough to keep out even themselves.

A journal is a way of regaining contact with our inner selves. Writing your thoughts and organizing them can bring order out of confusion and chaos. You will find that you are able to sort and examine your ideas and feelings, and put distance between them and yourself. Doing this gives you a greater measure of control over life. The deep inner exploration and evaluation that keeping a journal encourages, can be an invaluable asset for coping with infertility in positive ways. Journaling is the cheapest kind of therapy. There are no rules and there is no right or wrong way to do it.

Journaling

Suggestions for Keeping a Journal:

- Find the best time of the day for you, the choice is yours.
- Make a commitment to write regularly whether daily, weekly, for three weeks or indefinitely.
- You can write as little or as much as you want.
- Write anything, from poems to rants to dreams to novels.
- Ground or center yourself, take a deep breath.
- Find a quiet space, turn off the phone.
- Listen to your favourite music.
- To keep things in perspective, date each entry.
- Don't think too much what you are writing, just let it flow.
- Create some emotional distance, don't read it right away.
- Pamper yourself during this vulnerable time.
- Get started. This is the hardest decision.

Goals for Keeping Journals:

- Understand your experience of infertility
- Track treatment effects and mood changes
- Work on issues that have been getting in the way of healing
- Help understand issues that affect your health
- Guide you on a journey to wellness
- Enhance self understanding
- Help achieve life goals
- Get to know yourself better
- Keep a record of counseling and support groups
- Improve your relationships
- Grieve your losses
- Gain a deeper understanding of issues and others
- Explore dreams
- Get in touch with feelings
- Discover the good things in your life
- Keep track of life changes and growth
- Tie up loose ends.

Getting started:

- Write a letter to yourself, from one year from now, from five years from now
- Write a letter to your unborn child.
- List the best things that have happened this day (month, year) in your life.
- Describe the worst thing that ever happened to you.
- Make a list of all the reasons you want to be alive.
- Write five things you need to do today and how you feel about doing them.
- Take an inventory of your life. Write your own prayer.
- Write yourself a question and then answer.
- What you would do if you had one day left to live.
- Write about who you are.
- Write about someone else.
- Describe a special moment.
- Write a dialogue with a part of your body, with your infertility.

- Make lists: life lists, things you want to do in your life, why you like yourself, why you like someone else, why you feel stressed, what you fear, what you have lost, things you would never do again, what makes you laugh, what makes you cry, what makes you happy, things you are grateful for, what makes you sad, who are favourite people.

Questions to get you started:

- How can I increase the joy in our lives?
- What are my feelings about our difficulty achieving a pregnancy?
- What do I imagine fatherhood/motherhood would be like?
- How would I like to be the same or different from my own father/mother?
- What do I think I would miss by not becoming a father?
- Have I ever imagined what our child would be like?
- What is/was the most traumatic event associated with my infertility?
- Do I worry about the state of our marriage?
- Are there ways in which we need to re-connect with each other?



Coping Techniques

Learn about the normal responses to infertility.

The first step in reducing the stress of infertility is to stop feeling panicky about feeling rotten! Another step in overcoming isolation is to build a bridge back to your family. All but the least sensitive can be educated about infertility, and can be taught by you how to be helpful and supportive. Ask them to do some reading on infertility. Also, be sure to let them know how you want to be treated.

Give yourself permission to cry and be angry.

Don't try to shut off your feelings. If you need to cry about the unfairness of one more pregnancy announcement, go ahead. If you need to pound a pillow or pummel a punching bag, do it. When you try to "snap out of it," you waste all your energy.

Give your spouse permission to feel and cope differently than you. If you're a wife, don't waste energy trying to get your husband to feel as devastated as you do. If you're a husband, don't try to get your wife to be "more like a man," forgetting about infertility except when she's at the doctor's office or in the bedroom.

Improve your communication about infertility. You might try what I call "The Twenty Minute Rule," which forces you to limit the amount of time you talk about infertility in a given evening.

Tell your spouse how you want to be helped.

But partners are mere humans, incapable of mind reading. If you need to pass up the family gathering that features five nieces and nephews under two, then say so. If you want to be hugged, or massaged, or left alone for a few minutes, or just listened to without any response, you'll be more likely to get what you want if you ask.

Get more information. One of the worst facets of stress is uncertainty about the future. You can't get a crystal ball, but you can reduce some of your uncertainty by collecting information. Go to: www.resolve.org

Managing the Stress of Infertility

Develop an awareness of stressors and stress. The better you know what specific things push your stress buttons, and the better you know exactly how you behave when they get pushed, the better you'll know how to prevent or get rid of future stress. So learn to monitor signs of stress in your mind and your body.

The Emotional Aspects of Infertility

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 outcomes, and the challenge of having to make important decisions such as when ‘enough is enough.’ It is important to learn how to take care of yourself, make sure you get the support you need, and to manage your emotions so that your self-esteem and outlook on life remains as positive as possible.

Coping with the Holidays

Holidays can be stressful, even in the best of circumstances. Expectations are at a peak. Pressure comes, both from the outside and within, to break out of the normal routine - to celebrate, and to enjoy! But for the person experiencing infertility, holidays can be the most difficult time of the year. You certainly can’t make the pain of infertility disappear miraculously. But by planning in advance and acknowledging that the holidays may be uncomfortable; you can prepare yourself and have a pleasant holiday season.

Meditation & Relaxation Techniques

While stress does not cause infertility, infertility most definitely causes stress. Infertile women report higher levels of stress and anxiety than fertile women, and there is some indication that infertile women are more likely to become depressed. This is not surprising since the far-reaching effects

of infertility can interfere with work, family, money and sex. Finding ways to reduce stress, tension and anxiety can make you feel better.

When to Seek Help

It may be hard to know when emotional responses to the pain and frustration of infertility are within normal, expected range or are excessive and problematic.

Learn about the warnings signs and when to seek help
www.resolve.org

“Grieving is not a weakness; it is a necessity.”

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes.” -Marcel Proust

*Fortunately analysis is not the only way to resolve inner conflicts.
Life itself still remains a very effective therapist. - Karen Horney*

If we can allow ourselves to “open up” to one person/therapist or friend, and feel the peace that authenticity can bring, then the ability to confide in another will transfer to other trusted people in our surroundings. Confiding means crying as well as talking. We have a full range of emotion: we will feel them, like it or not, and a certain freedom comes from accepting our real selves.

I think it is imperative that your infertility counselor have first hand experience and knowledge with respect to impaired fertility as the phase of decision making or treatment you are facing. The grief of this disheartening malady can seldom be fully appreciated by those who have easily been blessed with as many children as they want...the therapist must understand your imbedded pain, because there is no grief like the grief of losing your children.

(Friedeman, 1995, p VII)

How to Become Your Own Best Infertility Counselor
Jolance Press 1995

Manitoba Clinicians with a sensitivity to the pain of infertility :
Candace Propp, BA., BEd 204-669-4913
Elaine Bergen 204-771-3300
Joan-Dianne Smith MSW RSW FCGPA 204-947-3485

“This communicating of a man’s self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joy, and cutteth griefs in half.”

–Francis Bacon

You may be finding it particularly difficult to deal with the emotional and physical stresses that come along with a diagnosis. Family, friends, medical specialists although well-intended do not always “get it.” It can sometimes be difficult to feel fully understood by these people. For this reason, many people dealing with infertility look to infertility support groups for help. Infertility support groups can offer an understanding and informative place for you to discuss your experiences with infertility.

Infertility support groups consist of those who are experiencing some sort of personal fertility issue. Members often include individuals, partners, and families who are suffering from infertility. People in infertility support groups are at different stages in their fertility journey, and may include those who:

- Have just received a diagnosis of infertility
- Are considering treatment for infertility
- Are going through treatments, such as IUI or IVF

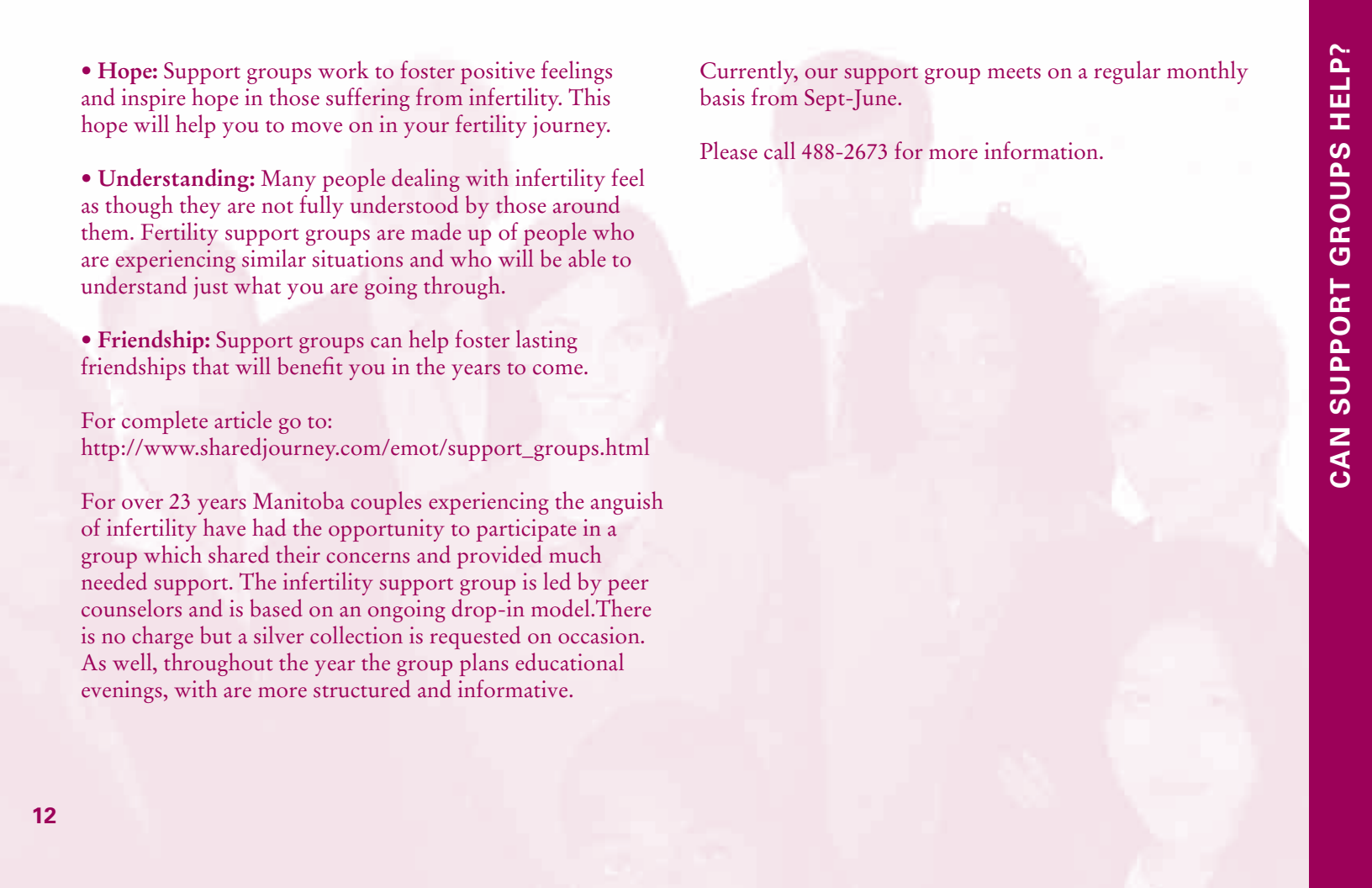
- Are discussing alternatives to fertility treatment, such as adoption

You may be unsure as to whether or not you would benefit from joining an infertility support group. Some signs that you may find it helpful to attend support group sessions, include:

- You feel alone in your fertility journey.
- You have few people to talk to about your emotions and fertility options.
- You are having difficulty deciding on the path you want to take to fertility.
- You are experiencing problems in your relationships with family and friends.
- You feel as if your infertility is taking over all aspects of your life.

Infertility support groups can offer you help in a number of different ways.

- **Resources:** Infertility support groups often provide members with resources and information about dealing with fertility and various fertility treatments.



- **Hope:** Support groups work to foster positive feelings and inspire hope in those suffering from infertility. This hope will help you to move on in your fertility journey.

- **Understanding:** Many people dealing with infertility feel as though they are not fully understood by those around them. Fertility support groups are made up of people who are experiencing similar situations and who will be able to understand just what you are going through.

- **Friendship:** Support groups can help foster lasting friendships that will benefit you in the years to come.

For complete article go to:

http://www.sharedjourney.com/emot/support_groups.html

For over 23 years Manitoba couples experiencing the anguish of infertility have had the opportunity to participate in a group which shared their concerns and provided much needed support. The infertility support group is led by peer counselors and is based on an ongoing drop-in model. There is no charge but a silver collection is requested on occasion. As well, throughout the year the group plans educational evenings, with are more structured and informative.

Currently, our support group meets on a regular monthly basis from Sept-June.

Please call 488-2673 for more information.

Excerpt's from Infertility Etiquette

By Vita Allgood

As a society, we are woefully uninformed about how to best provide emotional support for our loved ones during this painful time. The pain is similar to the grief over losing a loved one, but it is unique because it is a recurring grief.

When a loved one dies, he/she isn't coming back. There is no hope that they will come back from the dead. You must work through the stages of grief, accept that you will never see this person again, and move on with your life.

The grief of infertility is not so cut and dry. Infertile people grieve the loss of the baby that they may never know. A couple will eventually resolve the infertility problem in one of three ways:

- They will eventually conceive a baby.
- They will stop the infertility treatments and choose to live without children.
- They will find an alternative way to parent, such as by adopting a child or becoming a foster parent.

Knowing what not to say is half of the battle to providing support...

- Don't tell them to relax
- Don't minimize the problem
- Don't say there are worse things that could happen
- Don't say they aren't meant to be parents
- Don't ask why they aren't trying IVF
- Don't offer unsolicited opinions if they are trying IVF
- Don't play doctor
- Don't be crude
- Don't complain about your pregnancy
- Don't treat them like they are ignorant
- Don't gossip about your friend's condition
- Don't push adoption (yet)
- *Let them know that you care*
- *Support their decision to stop treatments*
- *Support their decision to not have children*

Reaching a resolution can take years, so your infertile loved ones need your emotional support during this journey. Most people don't know what to say, so they wind up saying the wrong thing, which only makes the journey so much harder for their loved ones. Remember to be sympathetic and compassionate, both go a long way for everyone.

For complete article go to: www.resolve.org

Infertility causes stress, stress does not cause infertility. Infertility is always a medical diagnosis and like all chronic illnesses demands lifestyle changes. Harvard educated, Alice Domar Ph. D. is a leading author and researcher in the field of women's health. She believes all medical conditions can benefit from stress reduction techniques and should be implemented in our often-alienating western medical system. Alice Domar, PhD, is the director of the Mind/Body Center for Women's Health at the Harvard Medical Institute. "Mind/body medicine is any method in which we use our minds to change our behavior or physiology in order to promote health or recover from illnesses.

These approaches include the following; Any technique that includes the relaxation response, including meditation, yoga, mindfulness, deep breathing, repetitive prayer, body scans, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, and guided imagery. Coping skills that manage stress, such as self-nurturance, social support, problem solving emotional expression and journaling. Assertiveness training and communication skills that empower us to develop and sustain a nurturing network of relationships." Excerpt from *Conquering Infertility* (Penguin2002) p.41. **Mind/body medicine including cognitive therapy, either within a group or on a one-to-one basis with a therapist, allows you to challenge and replace thought patterns that trigger or reinforce depression, anxiety and other negative states. Our thoughts can determine our emotional states and our emotional states can influence our physical health.** "I'll never get pregnant." "I'll never have a baby." "I'll never be a parent." "It's my fault." "I'm a failure as a wife and woman." "I'm a failure in life."

These and other variations are all too often thoughts running like an endless looping tape through the minds of women experiencing infertility.

If these thoughts continue unchecked, depression and anxiety become chronic. Cognitive restructuring is a "rethinking" process, which can be described as "learning to reframe and rethink negative self-talk." Thoughts and attitudes cause your moods - not external events. Therefore, if you change your thoughts, you can change your moods and emotions.

In the case of infertility patients, negative thoughts such as the ones above contribute to a feeling of depression, sadness, worthlessness and hopelessness. If the cognitive restructuring process can be applied to that negative, often distorted thinking - depression decreases, anxiety decreases, self-esteem increases, and stress in general is handled better.

The process is simple but not necessarily easy. There are four questions to ask and answer about those negative thoughts that keep jumping around in your mind:

Does this thought cause me stress?

Where did I learn this thought?

Is this thought logical?

Is this thought true?

Practice the above process with a friend - it helps with the infertility distress and with life in general.

Medical Treatment. Manitoba has an excellent accredited fertility clinic with the highest of ethical standards and success rates comparable to any Canadian clinic. The Heartland Fertility & Gynecology Clinic provides people with access to state-of-the-art reproductive technology and advanced women's healthcare. Because infertility is always a medical diagnosis the first line of treatment must be a complete infertility workup. Fifty percent of couples will achieve a pregnancy with medical intervention; however, two out of three couples will not achieve a pregnancy after costly advance reproductive technologies.

Getting the most out of your care. To get the most out of your relationship with your doctor and their practice, it is a good idea to keep an on-going list of questions that you want to ask about your care. When you go for an appointment, ask your questions at the end of the appointment so that your appointment is not just focused on answering your questions. Find out what your doctor's plan is for you, and then ask your questions. Some couples find it works best if they go together to the appointment; one partner can ask the questions and the other can jot down the answers. By doing this, it relieves the stress of one person having to remember everything. Also, many people find that they sometimes "blank out," if their doctor says something they don't expect, such as suggesting a new drug treatment or reporting an abnormal lab result. From this point on in the appointment, some patients find it hard to focus and keep their mind and questions organized. Having both partners at the appointment can help with this.

As with any medical situation, the consumer has to evaluate the type of care he or she is receiving. Reading about infertility and educating oneself are important tools for patients to use in evaluating their care. Infertility results in feelings of frustration and helplessness. One tangible and important step that can reduce some of these feelings is finding and selecting the best medical care. By finding a specialist and taking an active role in your own medical care, you can regain some sense of control and feel the satisfaction of actively participating in the decisions which will affect the course of your infertility treatment.

Heartland Fertility & Gynecology Clinic 701 - 1661 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 3T7 Canada
Tel: (204) 779-8888 | www.heartlandfertility.mb.ca

Adoption Information

Adoption can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Choosing to adopt a child means you are willing to make a lifelong commitment to raising a child and creating a family for that child.

People making this decision face a series of separate challenges: getting themselves out of treatment; making some emotional peace with the loss of the dream of making a much-desired baby; and facing assorted fears and concerns about adoption and the adoption process.

Beginning the adoption process is an exciting experience. Depending on where advice comes from agencies, attorneys, friends and family, the Internet, even the media those seeking to build their family through adoption often run into an overwhelming amount of information. Unfortunately, the advice that prospective adoptive parents often receive does little more than create a mindset that there must be a “best”

way to adopt. In reality, there is no “best” way to adopt. The “best” way to adopt is the way chosen by adoptive parents that they are most comfortable with and that complies with all legal requirements. As with every endeavor, pursuing adoption requires that adoptive parents do their homework before committing themselves emotionally and financially to an adoption plan.

It is important to gather as much information as you can about adoption, to understand the different types of adoption, and to connect with others who have experienced the adoption process.

For complete article go to :
www.resolve.org

The following agencies have created many “forever families” for Manitoba residents. Give them a call, they are the experts. Knowledge is power.

Canadian Advocates for the Adoption of Children Inc.

Box 1680, 214 Main Street
Minnedosa, MB R0J 1E0

Executive Director:

roberta@cafac.ca

Phone: (204) 867-5556

Phone: (204) 867-5561

Fax: (204) 867-5259

Email: info@cafac.ca

www.cafac.ca

Adoption Options Manitoba Inc.

1313 Portage Avenue

Winnipeg MB R3G 0V3

Telephone: (204) 774-0511

Fax: (204) 783-3481

e-mail – reception@adoptionoptions.mb.ca

Executive Director – Sharon Riches

sgf@adoptionoptions.mb.ca

www.adoptionoptions.mb.ca

Jewish Child and Family Services

Suite C200 – 123 Doncaster St

Winnipeg MB R3N 2B2

Phone: (204) 477-7430

Fax: (204) 477-7450

Randee Pollock, B.S.W., M.S.W., R.S.W.

Adoption/Foster Care Coordinator

Email: jcfs@aspercampus.mb.ca

www.jcfswinnipeg.org

Ukrainian Adoption Services Inc.

777 Pritchard Avenue

Winnipeg MB R2X 0E8

Phone: (204) 947-2953

Fax: (204) 582-0543

Kris Condo

Executive Director

e-mail: krisuas@mts.net

<http://uaseeadoption.ca/>

Child and Family Services Division Family Services & Housing Government of Manitoba Adoption Services

222 Provencher Boulevard

Winnipeg MB R2H 0G5

Phone: 944-4288

Fax: 944-4666 or 944-4503

e-mail: cfsd@gov.mb.ca

For complete listings of all Provincial
and First Nations agencies please go to:
www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/adoption.html

Tax Deductions Medical & Adoption

All non-insurable (i.e. any portion
of the expenses that you have paid out
of pocket are not being reimbursed by
another source) medical expenses can
be claimed. Receipts must be provided.
For 2005 taxation year and forward, the
Federal Government allows adoptive
couples to claim up to \$10,000.00 in
adoption expenses.

*“The cave you fear
to enter holds the
treasure you seek.”*

-Joseph Campbell

*“Each person represents
a world in us, a world
possibly not born until
they arrive, and it is only
by our meeting that a
new world is born.”*

-Anais Nin

Making the Decision

©Judy Einzig, LCSW

Navigating the emotional journey towards being happy in a life without children involves a process of grieving. It's a loss of their dream. Outsiders incorrectly assume that people without children have chosen not to have them. Many people, especially women, connect their value in life with the activity of parenting. Society esteems those who raise children, often ignoring those who pursue other paths to form a worthwhile life. But it is precisely this step in the direction of another path that one must take when moving toward resolution.

When you move in this direction you may want to consider where you will direct the energies that you would have used to parent your child. Make an agreement with your spouse to identify and prioritize what each of you will agree to do to continue to nurture these maternal/paternal instincts. Give each other the space to grow and pursue these feelings.

Living without children is an opening into a world of possibilities. There's a reinvigoration of connections with people. You begin to feel whole again. As this realization sinks in, a huge surge of energy and excitement often is released. Many people become more creative. With this release, people move beyond their grief over the loss of their dream. They put their energy into what excites them about their lives.

For some, the emotional resolution leads to a spiritual expansion. When you're young, you dream that you'll reach all your goals. In midlife, you face the dashed hopes and dreams in all areas of your life. You accept your life as it is, along with the choices that you've made in the past that led to this situation. You make peace with your life and yourself. For complete article go to: www.resolve.org

One of the best ways to explore childless living is to talk to couples who have made this choice whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Dialogue with generations older than yourself. What were their motivations, losses, and gains. Again, you are not alone. Many have experienced the same feelings, asked themselves the same important questions you are dealing with now. As difficult as it is to live in a child centered society, this is a good thing. We must be grateful for a country which protects the rights of children. Raising civic and global citizens benefits us all.

No Kidding www.nokidding.net is a volunteer non-profit social club for childfree and childless couples and singles. It started in Canada in 1984 but now has international chapters around the world. Manitoba has its own chapter: www.angelfire.com/biz7/nokiddingwpg/nokiddingwinnipeg@hotmail.com

“There are victories of the soul and spirit. Sometimes, even if you lose, you win.”
–Elie Wiesel

Finding Balance Between What You Can and Cannot Control

by Vera Snow

It's easy to think you have control over your infertility. It's harder to think you may be powerless over it. Which one is true? Actually, both are true. The problem is distinguishing between where your responsibility begins and where it ends. Knowing when to focus your energy and knowing when to give it up to something bigger than yourself.

Your story may look similar to this: finding the love of your life, getting married, buying a home, getting financially stable and finally preparing to build a family. If one of these things doesn't fall into place it's considered an utter failure, sound familiar? So if you're wondering why infertility poses so much stress and anxiety, it may just come from this ALL or NOTHING attitude.

Infertility, however, is unique in its challenges because it causes you to examine some fundamental questions. Your first questions may be: "Why is this happening to us?" Finally, you may even end up asking the ultimate question: "Who is in charge of life, the world, the universe anyway?"

Though these questions are important for your own personal growth, they can apply to any life situation that challenges your balance. Infertility is no different. It forces you to think about what it is you can or can't control. Yes, no matter how heartless and unrelenting infertility can be, it is still up to you to decide how, when and where you want to focus your energies, and therefore, how, when and where you want to let go.

For instance, grief and loss is a familiar and necessary aspect of infertility. It is necessary because it leads to healing and resolution. Encourage yourself through and feel grief. Blocking it only wastes your energy supply.

Another aspect of infertility that causes undue stress and anxiety is anticipating results. Even though you can't predict the results of any particular treatment or procedure, you will usually waste an exorbitant amount of energy worrying about it. How you participate in the application of these treatments and procedures, however, is completely within your control. It is your responsibility to nurture and protect yourself so that you are in optimal mind, body, and spirit.

So are you in control of your infertility? Yes. Are you powerless over your infertility? Yes. The point is you have to make a conscious decision about what is in your control and what is out of your control. Make every effort to enhance your energy where it is useful and be prepared to disengage your energy where it is useless. Remember, if you can find a balance when struggling with something as difficult as infertility, you will be able to deal better with any other life challenges that come your way.

For complete article go to:
www.snowpublications.com/balance_between.htm

[Vera is the author of “When You Are Coping With Infertility” published by Augsburg Fortress and is a “Compassionate Listener”. For more information regarding her whole-person approach to infertility, see “Fertile Ground” at www.snowpublications.com.]

“Perfection has one grave defect: it is apt to be dull.” –Somerset Maugham

“Your three best doctors are faith, time and patience” –From a fortune cookie.

Winnipeg Infertility Resource Centre

Support Line: 488 – 2673

Email: mbiaac@hotmail.com

Programs, Services & Accomplishments

Manitoba Board: Our board members are individuals who have been affected by infertility and wish to help others by assisting the organization in some manner. These volunteers give of their time and energy by active involvement in the board. The board ensures the programs and services are carried out in an ethical and confidential manner. It operates under the bylaws as set out by the national office. Members contribute in many different ways. Thank you to all board members past and present for your gift of time and energy. You know who you are and you are appreciated.

Support Group: Currently we offer support group meetings on a regular monthly basis, Sept-June. They are based on an informal, drop in, peer led group model. Studies show support groups are one of the best ways to ease the isolation and emotional roller coaster of infertility. Usually group members simply want to talk about their challenges with people experiencing the same feelings of lack of normalcy and frustration. They are strangers to each other yet instinctively know what each other is feeling. This program is our number one priority.

Educational Evenings:

Seven Adoption Evenings – adoptive couples sharing their journey to adoption with all types of adoption represented.

Complementary Medicine

Naturopathy

Chinese Medicine

Chiropractic

Nutrition

Coping Strategies

Meditation.

Journaling

Healing Circle

Specific Topics

“Emotional Aspects of Infertility”

“Becoming a first time parent in your forties” -panel

“Resolution”

“His Infertility/Her Infertility”

“Dealing with Doctors” - physician and nurse led evenings

Evening for “Family and Friends”

“Living Childless”

“IVF/TDI”

“Grief and Loss”

Complementary Medicine/Alternative Therapies

Studies show 85% of infertile couples utilize a combination of conventional medicine and alternative treatments. Comprehensive infertility treatment needs to heal the psychological wounds of the experience and these are currently addressed by alternative therapies. Manitoba has many excellent practitioners too numerous to mention in this brochure. Couples need to make informed decisions when choosing such modalities. Like conventional medicine there is no guarantee of success.

Known Donor Gametes/ Surrogacy/out of Province

Agencies: WIRC believes infertile couples in Manitoba need more resources and treatment options and we are well aware of the limited options for couples. Changing health policy in Canada will influence medical treatment in this area, how, remains to be seen. Like all life changing decisions related to infertility, couples are encouraged to seek counseling and gain the knowledge to make an informed decision as to what is best for them.

Liasion With Other Organizations And Agencies:

Provide information, resources and/or presentation to students from all educational institutions.

Special Events: Pathways To Parenthood Symposium April 2004

Dialogue With Manitoba

Government: We continue to dialogue with MB Health. Copies of our proposal to the government are available.

Library & Resources: Today most individuals have access to cutting edge information on the Internet. Our library does have many audio and videotapes, master theses, journal publications, etc., which are not available on the Internet. A list of our library holdings is available.

Fundraising & Financial Support

Due to lack of funds we were forced to close our office but we are again attempting to increase funding in this area. Special thank you to Manitoba Community Services Council, Manitoba Lotteries, and the Winnipeg Foundation for their ongoing generous financial support of this unique health problem.

IAAC National: Our head office serves its constituents in many different capacities. Please check out their website www.iaac.ca for a listing of their programs and services which promote education and advocacy of the many issues of infertility.

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Toll Free: 1-800-263-2929

Fax: 514-484-0454

Email: info@iaac.ca

Reg. # 12892-1459-RR001

Increased Public Awareness & Visibility Through Media

Coverage: We have increased public awareness of the many issues of infertility through coverage in local newspapers, local and national magazines, local radio, and local and national TV.

Friends Of WIRC: Our friends in Edmonton and Toronto offer excellent information and support specifically directed to Canadian couples suffering from infertility.

Check them out.

<http://www.ivfconnections.com/>

<http://www.infertilitynetwork.org/>

Thank you and all the best in your journey.
Bev Friesen, WIRC Coordinator

A special thanks to Cats in the Bag Design, Ed Brajczuk of Blue Moon Graphics and Donna for your patience and support in making "You are not alone – Infertility Guide" a reality.

204 488-2673



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