

Educate Others about Your Infertility

by Tina Smith

During five years of unsuccessful attempts to get pregnant, book author Laura Christianson and her husband cherished family members and friends who were sensitive to their heartache but also found supporters to be “few and far between.” Most people, imagining they were being helpful, dished out the typical but ignorant advice. The Christiansons enjoyed several exotic vacations and eventually became parents to two boys through adoption but never achieved a pregnancy.

“It’s up to us – the infertile people – to help others understand how they can best support us,” Laura states, boldly sharing five important infertility lessons with countless acquaintances and loved ones who’ve not personally struggled to have children.

- ***Infertility is a chronic medical condition.*** *One-in-six couples of childbearing age experience fertility challenges. Similar to other medical conditions, infertility often requires medical intervention.*

Laura’s case, along with so many others like it, demonstrates how relaxing and adopting are not “cures” for an infertile condition.

- ***Infertility precipitates a spiritual crisis.*** *Many a well-intentioned person has hinted that infertility is God’s punishment for unconfessed sin. If everyone who neglected to acknowledge wrongdoing experienced infertility, our world wouldn’t have a problem with overpopulation.*

Whether infertility is an act of God or simply a medical malfunction, Laura remains convinced that we are invited to bring our anger, tears and shattered dreams directly to a Higher Power and find comfort.

- ***Infertility causes self-centeredness.*** *Guesstimating ovulation, scheduling intercourse, and taking fertility drugs turns us into anxious, moody, nail-biting shells of our former selves.*

Follow Laura’s lead – “apologize for temporary insanity and beg loved ones to be patient with you.”

- ***Infertility makes us feel stigmatized.*** *Because infertility is closely linked to our sexuality, we're squeamish about discussing it in public. Partly because we're reluctant to bring up the subject, infertility takes on a mysterious, secretive air.*

Laura brings to light how so many infertile couples feel isolated, particularly at church, where most yearn for welcome and acceptance. She suggests discussing infertility issues with a clergy person, asking pastoral staff members to help form a support group, and urging pastors to regularly pray for infertile couples.

- ***Infertility unsettles loved ones.*** *We can get so wrapped up in our own suffering that we fail to realize how deeply our infertility affects others.*

Parents of infertile couples, for instance, mourn the loss of genetic offspring and feel guilty, assuming they've passed on infertile genes. Laura encourages infertile couples to broach the subject with their parents, assure them they are not to blame, and talk about treatment options. Couples can start a dialogue and listen to opinions but still make final decisions in private.

"Discussing infertility in an informative, fact-based manner diffuses potentially volatile encounters. Infertile couples must remember that while we've spent a huge chunk of time processing our infertility; our loved ones haven't," reminds Laura. "We need to break them in gently.

"The most important request we can make of our supporters is to simply be there for us: to cry with us if we lose a baby, to cheer for us if we become pregnant or adopt, to love us by listening."

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