

Keeping the spark in your infertile marriage

by Tina Smith

Let's face it – nothing takes the sizzle out of romance like conception roadblocks, timed intercourse and test tube procedures. Many couples whose parenting dreams are in limbo struggle to maintain emotional as well as physical intimacy. Consider the following suggestions for surviving infertile days without falling out of love:

Talk. Share your feelings but also listen to what your spouse is saying. Men and women rarely approach things from the same angle – whether they are discussing finances, vacation spots or infertility. Just because you aren't on the same page at all times about treatment or other options doesn't mean you aren't meant for each other. Factor in personality differences, background and other unique things about your better half.

Look deeper. Sometimes a person's words don't clearly communicate the intention behind what's being said. For example, a husband who wants to postpone fertility treatments may not be giving up on parenthood; he may be frustrated because he can't fix something that's causing his wife so much pain and it breaks his heart to know she may be disappointed again. Get to the bottom of what's really going on when your partner doesn't seem to agree with you. Seek to understand as much as you long to be understood.

Tune out others. Nearly everyone who knows you will have an opinion or a suggestion about starting a family, whether you ask for input or not. Remember that nothing matters as much as what the two of you want. Disregard comments from well-meaning friends and relatives – even your own mother or a best friend – that lead to arguments and discord in your marriage.

Laugh. Finding the humor in situations is guaranteed to give you a needed break from the stress of infertility, even if just for a blissful hour or two. Check out amusing books about how others have survived infertility, watch funny movies or sitcoms, journal your most outrageous infertile moments to reread on tough days, and realize that your path to becoming parents has a plethora of crazy aspects too priceless to experience without a little fun.

Create spontaneity. Because so many things in the world of infertility must be tracked, scheduled, eliminated or timed just right, the impulsiveness and fun of loving often gets pushed aside. So visit local attractions on spur of the moment, surprise your loved one with a note or small gift, bring home flowers, plan a getaway, or prepare your spouse's favorite meal or dessert. Fighting infertility does require a significant amount of energy but shouldn't completely eliminate your focus on what makes your valentine happy.

Find solidarity. The two of you are in this together, regardless of whether one or both of you have been diagnosed as infertile. Focus on what you love and admire about your spouse while celebrating the great daddy (or mommy) your soul mate will be. Many couples actually report having more solid marriages after battling infertility. Recognize the strength in numbers – going down this road together is much easier than going it alone. And finding success as partners will be so much sweeter.

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