

Ten tips for Coping with the Fertility Process by Meg Sullivan, LMSW

What in many peoples' minds is a very private matter-conceiving a baby-becomes public domain when there are difficulties in this process. Doctors, nurses, counselors and technicians while there to help, are now privy to intimate matters involving your reproductive physiology, your sex life with your spouse/partner, and your feelings of vulnerability in what feels sometimes like a hit or miss process. Add possible feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and inadequacy to the mix and we have stress. Unfortunately this stress can be an obstacle not only to your personal happiness and fulfillment; it can make conception and a healthy first trimester more difficult. To avoid stress-related maladies and complications act as if you are pregnant right now. Most women, once they realize they are pregnant begin eating right, putting their feet up, avoiding stressful situations and take naps. They reckon themselves as special, worthy of being taken care of, and deserving special treatment because they are bringing in a new life. Regardless of the means by which you bring a new member into your family in your own minds, you and your partner are "in the family way" now and can begin a new lifestyle based on self-care, greater mutual and self-respect, and healthier habits.

Ten Tips For Coping With Family Building

1. Say "No" to what feels like too much. Begin to carve out what is unnecessary from your life. Evaluate things in terms of "is this supportive of us being pregnant?" Within a short period of time you will have carved out "re-group" time to spend relaxing, exercising, preparing fresh food, and connecting with supportive family members and friends.

2. Explore books on sexuality that highlights intimacy, loving connections, and massage. Remember you wish to conceive your baby in an atmosphere of love and solidarity with each other. "The Art of Sexual Ecstasy" is an excellent primer on the Eastern practices of tantric sex. Exercises that build self-love, feelings of shared joy, and multi-dimensional channels of connecting can bring a whole new power to you as a sexual being. Linked to this site is www.conceivingconcepts.com where you can view and order a wide variety of fertility products ranging from books and CD's in the subject areas listed here to fun fertility jewelry.

3. Acquaint yourself with the benefits of simple breath work and meditation. Andrew Weil, M.D. has produced a CD set with instruction and benefits of breath work. Don't wait for Lamaze classes to teach you how to breathe, focus and connect with your partner in a supportive way.

4. Drink water and unsweetened cranberry juice. Adequate fluid will promote a healthier you. Dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, and make you a grouch.

5. If you are religious and or spiritual in your orientation to life remember the power of prayer as a source of connection with the Creator of your belief. You don't have to do this alone; it's not all up to you. Seek comfort, guidance, and support by lighting a white candle each day with your prayer. The white signifies the purity of your intention. Sometimes it's the letting go involved in "Thy Will Be Done" that opens the floodgates.

If the suggestions in #5 are not part of your lifestyle employ the art of creative visualization with the power of love in your intent. Light your candle, breathe slowly and evenly and create images and sensations of your pregnancy, invite your baby into your life, and visualize the bonds with you and your partner as loving and strong. Two excellent guides in the power of intention are: "Creative Visualization" by Shatki Gwain, and "The Circle" by Laura Day. Both are available in libraries and bookstores.

6. Keep a journal. Most people balk at this suggestion and have a myriad of good reasons to not sit, reflect and write. Once you experience on a personal level the results that research has been saying all along; people that journal and walk each day overcome depression and lower their anxiety. These practices do have a stabilizing effect on mood and thoughts. Try them. You will, in the future, wish to journal your child's development and can begin now.

7. Once you begin having a clearer understanding of yourself and your needs and desires from these practices its important to communicate them. Prepare yourself for your appointments with your fertility team. They are devoted to your experience and will work more effectively with good communication.

8. Mental health counseling can assist you and your partner in sorting through difficult emotions, dealing with pain and uncertainty, and creative problem solving. . Group support and education is available at the center. Explore integrative medicine with acupuncture, massage, energy work, meditation and guided imagery. Call the office for referrals to qualified professionals and the Crossroads of Fertility support group. .

9. Make a circle and within it write the names of people who are your closest support in your process. Include medical professionals, family, friends, and clergy—people you can trust and who have positive empathy for what you and your spouse are going through. Outside the circle write the names of those you'd rather not discuss this with. In short, if there are people who stress you and who have made this their business-you have now made a boundary keeping them at a polite distance. This is a powerful exercise, its important tot shield yourself when in the “family way”.

10. In our community there are several practitioners who can teach meditation, yoga, soft martial arts, and qigong. All these traditions strengthen your mind-body-spirit connection and also have the added physiological benefits of fluid joints, greater balance, tone to skin and muscles, and greater mental focus. These are all key in preparing for, during and after pregnancy.

In a process that seems, in many ways, so out of your hands, you can see that there are several powerful things you can do to facilitate family building by easing stress. The main philosophy of CNY Fertility Center is the empowered patient process. Each and every one of these tips will empower you in the special challenges that lie ahead.

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