

Infertility Almost Ruined My Marriage. Here's How We Learned To Heal

by Amy Lembcke October 4, 2015 6:22 AM



In our new [Realtalk](#) series, we're sharing personal stories about fertility and family planning. We hope they offer support and inspire honest conversation about an incredibly tough topic.

My husband and I married when I was 25. Shortly after I turned 26, we decided to start our family. We were stable in our marriage and ready to move forward. It just felt right.

I considered myself to be healthy. I ate a balanced diet, exercised regularly and felt emotionally stable. And so like many, I assumed that after having my IUD removed, getting pregnant would be as easy as popping open a bottle of wine and lighting some candles.

But a few months went by with no pregnancy. I decided to research signs of fertility, and began to track my basal body temperature, cervical position

and fluids on a chart. After a few cycles of charting, I began to notice a disturbing pattern: I wasn't ovulating.

I made an appointment with my doctor, prepared to walk into her office, charts in hand, to solve the problem. I viewed my lack of ovulation as a momentary hiccup that could easily be fixed. In no way did I expect this appointment to be the first step down a long road of failed treatments, miscarriages, and absolute heartache.

How could I be doing everything "right," and still not get pregnant?

The doctor took a brief history, glanced over my fertility charts and said, so matter-of-fact that it stunned me, "you have clear signs of PCOS."

[Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome](#), as I was to learn, is an endocrine disorder brought on by a significant hormonal imbalance. My body produces an egg each month but instead of releasing it during ovulation, it turns into a cyst.

In her next breath, my doctor rattled off a list of prescription medication she wanted me to start taking immediately. I was put on Metformin, a drug typically given to diabetics to control blood sugar, Clomid to help induce ovulation, Progestin to help bring on a period if I didn't get pregnant and a low-dose Xanax to help manage any anxiety.

At first, I was upset at the news. But that quickly turned into determination to get things "on track." For the first few months, I managed to keep my morale up.

Each month would begin hopeful. But by the end, with the arrival of my period, I'd crumble into pieces. Devastation does not begin to define the

amount of emotional turmoil I experienced. I was a failure. I was broken. I wasn't a woman.

Everything in my world revolved around baby-making, and the fact that I was not pregnant. At first, my husband and I shared our pain. We cried together, vented our frustrations and were still strong enough to support each other. But as days of "trying" turned into years, our pain and sorrow turned into anger.

The stress put such a strain on my marriage it almost fell apart. The drugs turned me into someone who had zero control over her emotions. Sex became mechanical and unenjoyable, and we were fighting all the time. Struggling with infertility turns you into a raw nerve and everything in our relationship began to be misconstrued. We began to resent each other.

My infertility had become the focus of my life — and I kept failing at it.

While everyone around us began to have babies of their own, we tried to conceal our pain. The few people we told didn't know what to say. Most of the time they gave us advice that was more hurtful than helpful, like "you just need to relax." We felt utterly alone in our struggles.

I cried. Oh, how I would cry. I would cry as baby announcements filled our mailbox, I would cry as I walked by the empty room in our home we had hoped to turn into a nursery, and I would cry as another Christmas would go by without toys under the tree.

As months of drug treatments passed without success, I began to research alternative methods. We took a momentary "break" to detox my body. I

started seeing a nutritionist. I visited herbalists, acupuncturists, naturopathic doctors and chiropractors. I took yoga classes, began to meditate, saw an energy healer, upped my exercise regime, journaled, drank red raspberry leaf tea, cut out caffeine and alcohol, cut out dairy and grains, spent obscene amounts of money on supplements, removed all plastics from my house, switched my beauty products and food over to organic, filtered our water — and did everything short of human sacrifice to will myself pregnant. Nothing worked.

How could I be doing everything “right” and still not get, or stay, pregnant? It was then that the extreme self-loathing took over. My infertility had become the focus of my life — and I kept failing at it.

It wasn't until miscarriage number-two that I finally hit rock bottom. To cope, I began to drink. Heavily. I withdrew, and couldn't find much to live for anymore. I hid my hopelessness from everyone, even my husband.

Then one night, after a few stiff drinks, my husband and I began to fight. I became so enraged I ripped a light fixture out of the wall and hurled it down the hallway. I sobbed as I sat on my hands and knees picking shards of glass up off the floor, and was finally able to recognize what my perpetual pain was doing to me, my husband and my marriage.

It was time for a radical change. If my husband and I were going to make it as a couple, we needed to turn our focus back onto us.

Then and there, we started the slow process of letting go. I packed up all of the random baby stuff I had picked up along the way, said good-bye to the life we thought we were going to have, and began to dream of a new one.

We sought counseling, tried to grieve our loss, worked on our spiritual growth, started traveling again, and began to tell everyone our story so we would no longer have to bear the burden alone.

Telling people of our struggles with infertility was one of the most terrifying and empowering experiences of my life. We felt the collective weight lift from our shoulders as people conveyed to us of their own troubles (or that of a close friend or family member's) to have a child.

In those moments, we began to see how sadly common infertility really is. Our story is not unique and we are not special. There are thousands of couples just like us who struggle with infertility and have to learn to live with it. It is a quiet, solitary burden to bear.

There is no happy ending here. Our nursery sits empty and we are still struggling to rebuild our life together. We are trying to redefine who we are in the face of failed dreams, trying to heal and trying to recover the love and hopefulness that once defined our marriage.

But we try. Every day we try. Try to be thankful. Try to spoil the children in our lives every chance we get. Try to accept our scars. Try to move forward. Try to understand that deep within us is a wound we will always carry. Try to be sensitive to each other's pain. We try. We get up each day and we try.