

Few matters touch people as deeply as those concerning families and children. For many people realizing the dream of beginning a family is a relatively smooth process. Generally speaking, couples who attempt to begin a family naturally and are unable to do so after one year are labelled infertile. For those families experiencing infertility, or reproductive failure, the process of attempting to begin a family can be painful, alienating, and distressing. Repeated failed attempts to begin a family can result in feelings of depression, anxiety, failure, grief and loss, and can place otherwise wonderful relationships in jeopardy.

For women and families who have made the difficult decision to pursue Assistive Reproductive Technology, also known as ART the roller coaster ride begins. Treatment for those who struggle to conceive may include in vitro fertilization, or intrauterine insemination. While there have been impressive changes in reproductive technologies over many years, the fact remains that even with the assistance of reproductive technology not all women are able to successfully conceive or carry a baby to full term. The result of months or years of failure to begin a family can be quite devastating for women and families. For many women this pain is privately held.

**The women I have encountered who have struggled with reproductive distress** have suggested to me that matters related to the decision to begin a family are often quite private. Some women have shared that they do not often wish to disclose to others that they are struggling to conceive in part because it is so painful to talk about grief and loss related to starting a family with people who have not experienced this type of stress. In some cases women may be concerned that disclosure could create feelings of extra pressure on them while they are in treatment, and they risk having to explain failed attempts to even more people. Some women have suggested that they struggle with concerns regarding whether their employers will consider them for promotions, if the employer becomes aware that they are trying to begin a family. Other women have offered that they believe that they will be seen as socially defective or broken in some way.

When all is said and done, political, religious or spiritual perspectives aside, alternatives to beginning a family (such as adoption or the decision to remain child free), still fail to address the painful reality of not being able to begin your family as you choose, and in the time you choose. If you or someone you know is currently in treatment for reproductive issues, free peer support is now available.

Please contact Mia at Central Community Health Centre for details 519-633-7989 x 422.