



Communicating and sharing the mental load

A very heavy load

Going through infertility often involves carrying a very heavy mental load, which can be incredibly taxing. As soon as the emotional weight has lifted from getting our monthly period, we are back to tracking fertile signs every time we use the bathroom, checking LH strips, taking morning and evening medication, rearranging our schedules around intimacy and then rearranging our schedules again around bloodwork, medications, injections and scans and then spending hours preparing for and following up after medical appointments, followed by filling new prescriptions, adjusting meal plans for new diets, and scheduling more testing dependent on your cycle which we can't dictate ahead of time. Crucial conversations are often left up to us to initiate ie. sharing information regarding charting and fertile windows, whether to stop or start new treatment steps, discerning adoption, etc. It is important to keep honest and open communication with your spouse and other loved ones to let them know when we feel overstretched and how they can support us.

Setting up your communication plan

★ Sharing the mental load

When setting up a communication plan to share the mental load with your loved one, you'll want to sketch out all the items that make up your current mental load. Consider what tasks you are currently undertaking in the following areas.

- Medications
- Appointments
- Charting
- Emotional triggers
- Discernment and research
- Initiating important conversations

You can share the items category by category by using our handy checklist, or compile your mental load in more of a calendar format that shows which items you are responsible for on which days. When sharing the list with your loved one, we encourage you to share the challenges associated with each item.

Example

“Scheduling my post-peak bloodwork is really challenging because I have to check for fertile signs every time I'm in the bathroom and if I miss any signs or misread them, I might schedule the bloodwork for the wrong day and it will be inaccurate. I also have no way of knowing ahead of time when P+3 will be, so I can't plan my schedule for next week until the last minute and may have to rearrange multiple items.”

★ Suggesting supports

▮ The Fruitful Hollow ▮ www.thefruitfulhollow.com ▮ @TheFruitfulHollow ▮

Resource created by Ellen H. (ellen@thefruitfulhollow.com)

Once you've shared your mental load with your loved one, the next step is deciding what to do with that information. One option for this step is to ask your spouse to take a look at your list and identify which items he would like to offer to assist with. Another option could be selecting several items yourself and requesting a specific manner in which you need support. Some supports may be asking your loved one to take over a particular item, while others may look like asking your spouse to take on some regular household items so you have more capacity for the TTC tasks that only you can do.

Examples

"Would you be able to set out my medication in the morning for me please?"

"I have a lot on my plate right now. Please could you cook dinner two nights this week and take care of the menu planning? That will help me have more capacity for scheduling my bloodwork and dealing with my scans this week."

"I have a lot of injections and medications to take this week. I know you can't do those for me, but thanking me every day for my efforts would really mean a lot."

★ Ask about your spouse's mental load

After sharing your mental load with your spouse and coming up with a plan to help support you, make sure to ask your spouse to share what the items are that make up his current mental load and find out how you can best support him as well.

COMMUNICATING THE MENTAL LOAD

Example

Mental load items	Suggested supports
<p>Medications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing/calling in prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Picking up prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Remembering to take medications <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting schedule around medication 	<p>Me: "It would be helpful if you could thank me for taking meds and staying on top of it all.."</p> <p>Hubby: "Would it be helpful for me to help sort your pills into a weekly pill organizer?"</p>
<p>Appointments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Selecting clinics/doctors/labs <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling appointments <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing paperwork for appointments <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting schedule around appointments 	<p>Me: "It would be helpful if you could thank me for my efforts in preparing notes and doing appointments."</p> <p>Hubby: "Let's attend the appointment together. We could go out for a reward afterwards."</p>
<p>Charting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ordering charting supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Observing biomarkers all day <input type="checkbox"/> LH testing <input type="checkbox"/> Charting biomarkers daily <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing charting information with spouse 	<p>Me: "It would be helpful if you could ask to see my chart after dinner in the evenings and thank me for keeping track."</p> <p>Hubby: "I will try to make a habit of consulting your chart."</p>
<p>Emotional triggers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recent pregnancy announcements <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming birth announcements <input type="checkbox"/> Gatherings with babies/kids/pregnant women <input type="checkbox"/> Period arrival <input type="checkbox"/> General infertility anxiety/depression 	<p>Me: "I would like you to plan some quality time for us together."</p> <p>Hubby: "I can plan some nice dates. What type of activities would you really look forward to?"</p>
<p>Discernment/research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Researching labs/clinics/doctors <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption research/discernment <input type="checkbox"/> Discerning starting or ending Napro 	<p>Me: "I would like to set aside time for discussion and research together."</p> <p>Hubby: "I will make time for my own research too."</p>
<p>Conversation initiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Appointment prep and follow-up <input type="checkbox"/> Intimacy <input type="checkbox"/> Charting <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption questions/discernment <input type="checkbox"/> Napro next steps 	<p>Me: "It would be helpful if I didn't always have to initiate the big conversations."</p> <p>Hubby: "I can try to initiate charting conversations in the evenings."</p>

COMMUNICATING THE MENTAL LOAD

Your turn

Mental load items	Suggested supports
Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing/calling in prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Picking up prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Remembering to take medications <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting schedule around medication <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
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