



Supporting Couples with Infertility

I'm looking to help... Where do I start?

If you know a couple struggling with infertility, you might be wondering what you can do or say to support your friends or family who find themselves on this difficult journey. Having compassionate support from loved ones can make a world of difference in this situation. Thank you for being here for them! Since all couples have different personalities and preferences, it is always best to ask them if they would appreciate a particular gesture of support that you have in mind. If you are wondering where to start, asking your loved ones what type of verbal or physical support would be best for them will give you some great insight as to what they need. For further suggestions, please read on.

What you can do

- ★ Pray for them and let them know you are doing so.
- ★ Request a Mass be said for their intentions and let them know about it.
- ★ Text or call to let them know you are thinking of them. Ask "How are you feeling today?"
- ★ If they have shared with you that they are concerned or stressed about upcoming appointments, bloodwork etc, follow up to see how they are doing. You can preface your message with "No need to share if you would rather not, but I just wanted to follow up with you and let you know I have been thinking about you."
- ★ Send a card or a small care package.
- ★ Enquire about and show interest in other areas of their life that are important to them - their jobs, ministries, hobbies, vacations, family members, dreams and aspirations outside of children.
- ★ Invite them to spend time with you for a meal or a fun activity.
- ★ Use active listening skills when they share with you, and validate their feelings.

What you can say

Studies on the psychological impact of infertility have revealed that depression and anxiety levels among women facing infertility are comparable to those of people with cancer, H.I.V. and heart disease.¹ Please keep in mind that if your loved ones are being vulnerable enough to share with you their emotions regarding infertility, they are looking for validation of their feelings, to be understood and for you to enter into their pain with them. Using active listening to learn more about where they are coming from and letting them know you are there for them are some of the best things you can do.

Instead of saying...	Consider...
<p>"Just relax! Don't Stress!"</p> <p>"At least..." or "It could be worse..."</p> <p>"Enjoy your time now without kids!"</p>	<p>"That sounds really hard/overwhelming. What about your situation feels the most stressful for you right now?"</p> <p>"How can I best support you?"</p>
<p>"You could just adopt."</p> <p>"Have you considered adoption/when will you consider adoption?"</p> <p>"Maybe you should consider a life without children."</p>	<p>"That sounds really challenging. What do you think you'd like your next steps to be?"</p> <p>"What feels like a good next step to you and your husband?"</p> <p><i>The couple themselves will bring up the subject of pursuing adoption or a life without children if it is something they want to discuss.</i></p>
<p>"Just trust in God."</p> <p>"You are so faithful. I know God will answer your prayers."</p>	<p>"Know that I am praying for you every day."</p> <p>"How can I pray for you?"</p> <p><i>In addition, have other conversations where you can share spiritually uplifting things: how God is working in your life, inspirational books you are reading, an encouraging Bible study or scripture verses that are meaningful to you.</i></p>
<p>"It'll all work out for the best in the end."</p> <p>"What's meant to be will happen."</p> <p>"It will happen when you least expect it."</p>	<p>"I'm sorry this is so hard. I wish this were easier for you both."</p> <p>"Know that I am here for you no matter what happens."</p>

¹ "The psychological impact of infertility: a comparison with patients with other medical conditions." International Society of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology. 1993. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8142988/>