



Support Cheat Sheet

Helping your spouse help you

Infertility can be full of stressful situations: your monthly cycle, medical appointments, pregnancies of family and friends, or waiting for an adoption match. When facing these stressors, we seek comfort and help from our husband. Many times, he longs to help but isn't sure what he can do to alleviate our anxiety, grief or stress. Don't make him guess! By creating a "support cheat sheet" for each other, you can clearly communicate your concerns and how you would prefer to be supported. In addition, be sure to seek out your husband's reactions to the stressor, and learn what his feelings and concerns are around it. Please share this support cheat sheet with your spouse in its entirety and discuss each section together.

Setting up your support cheat sheet

When creating a support cheat sheet, consider the following areas:

- ★ **Stressor** ~ Identify the situation you are currently facing or are expecting to face in the near future. For example, this could include upcoming medical appointments or procedures, arrival of your period, a series of recent pregnancy/birth announcements, or the anniversary of a miscarriage.
- ★ **Behind the scenes** ~ Explain how this stressor affects you and why it feels so challenging.
- ★ **How I will help myself** ~ We can't rely on our spouse to take on the full brunt of a challenging season for us. We need to be responsible for what we can do to help ourselves. For example, what activities can you plan for relaxing and letting off steam? Are there any work or home tasks you can delegate to make this time easier for yourself to navigate? Is there a friend, mentor or counselor you could chat with? How can you bolster your faith during this time? For more ideas, see our "[Levels of Self-Care](#)" and "[Toolbox for Stressful Times](#)" resources. It may alleviate some of your husband's concerns for you if you share your self-care plan with him. If you have upcoming bloodwork, he may worry for you, knowing how anxious medical appointments can make you, but if you share your plans for self-advocacy during the appointment and rewards afterwards, he may rest more at ease knowing you've set things up to make it easier on yourself.
- ★ **What really helps** ~ Be specific about what you need. Remind him that when he shows support, you may still cry or feel anxious, but that feeling loved by him will help you weather the storm much more easily. Sometimes knowing we aren't alone makes all the difference.
- ★ **What makes it worse** ~ Which well-meant actions/words harm more than help.
- ★ **Husband's perspective** ~ Connect with your husband to learn how he is most impacted by this stressor and where his concerns lie. Remember, he may need some support from you as well and/or may want to find ways to recharge himself so he can be better present for you in your time of need.

SUPPORT CHEAT SHEET

Example

Stressor

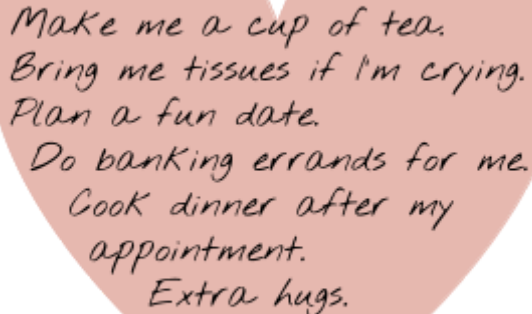
Medical tests, bloodwork and scans in the next 3 weeks

Behind the scenes

When I am going through medical testing I feel anxious and stressed because it's painful for me, and it's challenging to plan appts. around my cycle. I also feel angry because I do so much testing but we're still not pregnant. It feels pointless.

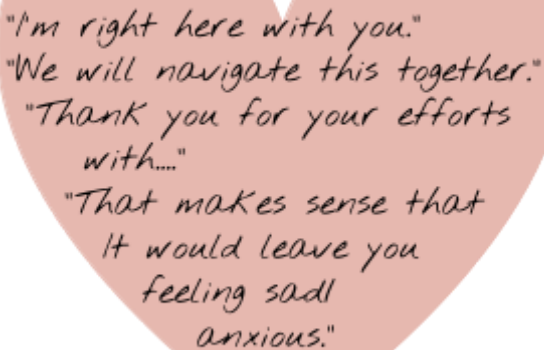
What really helps

The ideas below would help me feel loved and supported. I may still cry or seem anxious but I'll be able to cope better because I will feel closer to you and less alone.



*Make me a cup of tea.
Bring me tissues if I'm crying.
Plan a fun date.
Do banking errands for me.
Cook dinner after my appointment.
Extra hugs.*

What you could do

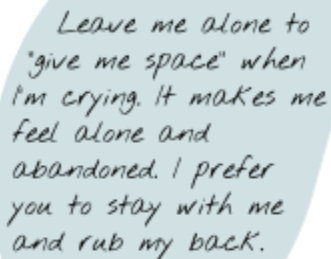


*"I'm right here with you."
"We will navigate this together."
"Thank you for your efforts with..."
"That makes sense that it would leave you feeling sad/ anxious."*

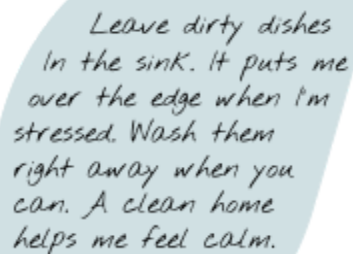
What you could say

What makes it worse

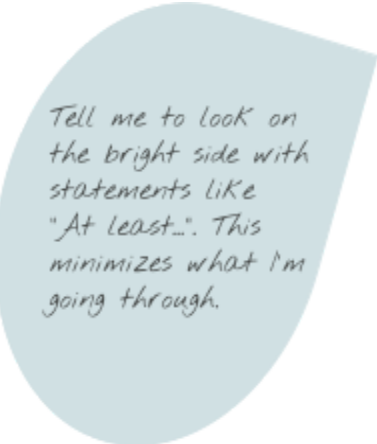
When I am going through this stressor, please don't...



Leave me alone to "give me space" when I'm crying. It makes me feel alone and abandoned. I prefer you to stay with me and rub my back.



Leave dirty dishes in the sink. It puts me over the edge when I'm stressed. Wash them right away when you can. A clean home helps me feel calm.



Tell me to look on the bright side with statements like "At least...". This minimizes what I'm going through.

How I will help myself

Rewards: *I will take myself out for a small treat after each appointment*

Tasks to rearrange to alleviate my stress: *I have completed a couple of my work projects early so they are out of the way, and canceled volunteer work this month.*

Activity to de-stress: *walks, tv before dinner, coloring, puzzles*

Faith-builder: *Keep up with prayer time before breakfast*

My support system: *I'll reach out to Samantha and my counselor for support*

Other: *I'm choosing a redecorating project to keep my mind occupied*

Discussion points

Items we may want to discuss/re-evaluate related to this stressor include:

Would we consider taking a break from testing for a few months after this?

Husband's perspective

It is challenging watching you struggle through this because:

You get really teary, anxious and sometimes irritable. I'm worried for you and also feel on edge because I'm not sure when your emotions will appear.

I am concerned that:

You may be putting too much stress on yourself. I also worry about you driving home safely from appointments if they were upsetting for you.

This stressor is challenging for me personally because:

I'm facing stress at work and am concerned about having enough energy to be as supportive to you as you need. I'm also sad past treatments haven't helped us conceive.

One thing that would be helpful for me to navigate these times for myself is:

Having one night each week to get out and do my own thing to recharge, and one Saturday with my friends before or after your appointments.

One thing that would help me better support you is:

Giving me a heads up when you need my help with errands or dinner or if getting out would be helpful to you.

One suggestion I would like to offer you is:

Keep the meals over the next few weeks simple so it's one fewer thing to worry about. Also, I'm OK if you cancel your testing if it's too much for you.

One thing you could do to support me during this stressor is:

A backrub at the end of the day. Or allow me a couple evenings a week for hobbies.

Discussion points

Items we may want to discuss/re-evaluate related to this stressor include:

Will future testing be too stressful for you? Let's plan a weekend getaway for us.

SUPPORT CHEAT SHEET

Your turn

Stressor

Behind the scenes

When I am going through _____ I feel _____
because _____

What really helps

The ideas below would help me feel loved and supported. I may still cry or seem anxious but I'll be able to cope better because I will feel closer to you and less alone.



What you could do



What you could say

What makes it worse

When I am going through this stressor, please don't...



How I will help myself:

Rewards: _____

Tasks to delegate to alleviate my stress: _____

Activity to de-stress: _____

Faith-builder: _____

My support system: _____

Other: _____

Discussion points

Items we may want to discuss/re-evaluate related to this stressor include:

Husband's perspective

It is challenging watching you struggle through this because:

I am concerned that:

This stressor is challenging for me personally because:

One thing that would be helpful for me to navigate these times for myself is:

One thing that would help me better support you is:

One suggestion I would like to offer you is:

One thing you could do to support me during this stressor is:

Discussion points

Items we may want to discuss/re-evaluate related to this stressor include:

