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Dealing with Infertility during the Festive Season

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7 WAYS TO SURVIVE THE FESTIVE SEASON WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH INFERTILITY

By Tanja Faessler-Moro, Fertility Counsellor, Virtus Fertility Centre

The Christmas season can be hellish for many people. Inconsiderate extended family members want to know why you've gained so much weight; when you're getting married; or, as you may be questioning yourself, ask about your plans for starting a family.

A Harvard Medical School study suggested that women dealing with infertility experience levels of stress that rival those with chronic health conditions like cancer. The trouble is, while you'll likely garner some sympathy with a cancer diagnosis, people are usually less sensitive and understanding when it comes to childlessness.

As the Christmas season looms, it may feel like you are being tugged in all directions – longing for that picture perfect Christmas family time of your own, trying to put on a happy face while you may be hurting on the inside, wishing people would leave the issue alone as it is so personal, and at the same time wanting nothing more than their approval and acceptance.

All these feelings are perfectly normal.

Christmas is meant to be a time of joy, gratitude and family. Dealing with infertility during the festive season is difficult but, we hope to help by sharing 7 ways to gracefully survive this festive season when managing infertility.

1. Be prepared

Practically speaking, you may have to deal with curiosity from family members, or have to endure insensitive comments. For this, it pays to practice ahead of time so you're not caught off guard. At home, rehearse in the mirror a few lines you can say if someone enquires about this sensitive topic.

Be polite, somewhat vague and friendly. There's no need for defensiveness, just take control of the situation, be warm and then change the topic.

2. Communicate healthy boundaries

Unfortunately, you may have to deal with those who are pushy, rude or insensitive. If someone makes a hurtful comment, prepare for this, too. People usually don't know how hurtful it is if they suggest some wonder diet to you or imply that everything is your fault for stressing too much. Be patient with them. Politely and firmly reinforce your boundaries – you never have to discuss anything you are not comfortable

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discussing, and you're within your rights to make this known.

3. Practice self-care

The holidays can be a draining time at best. Since December is so often a period of overindulgence, set yourself some goals when it comes to eating and drinking, your sleep routine and even your spending habits. Make sure you are not overextending yourself or putting yourself into overly stressful situations – something that's remarkably easy to do over Christmas and New Year's.

4. Remember to be grateful

A gratitude journal can boost your feelings of well-being by 10 per cent. If you can get out of your head for long enough, you may notice that you actually have plenty to be thankful for. Constantly realign to all the ways that your life is full and meaningful already, by writing down three things you're grateful for every day.

5. Find your own well-being in the present

So often, our suffering is caused in most part by our own thoughts and interpretations of reality, rather than reality itself. Try to reclaim your own presence of mind and power in the coming months and remember: nobody can make you feel anything, at least, not without your permission.

When you get carried away in your own thoughts about the world around you, one thing always happens – you are no longer in the world. Sometimes we cannot predict the shapes our happiness will come in, but one thing's for sure, happiness visits those who dwell in the present moment, and not in fantasy or worries of what could be. Find peace and well-being within you, right now.

6. Challenge negative thinking

If your thoughts manifest in a debilitating form, it might be time to learn to challenge this negative thinking. Watch your inner monologue and be careful of one-dimensional, "black or white" thinking. The more you tell yourself something, the more you'll think it's true, so it pays to be watchful – is it really true that you can never enjoy Christmas because you don't have children? Is it really true that people think badly of you because of it?

When you tell yourself something like, "Everything will be OK, just as soon as...", what you are doing is completely brushing away the wonder of the present moment, and all the ways that your life is already OK, right now.

7. Take a breather

All of the above can be achieved if we can just take a moment every day to stop, turn inward and reflect on our experiences. By incorporating a breathing exercise into your daily routine, you train yourself to relax, loosen your muscles and lower your cortisol levels, and bring yourself back to focused awareness on the present.

There is any number of helpful breathing exercises, but you can try a 4/7 technique: wherever you are, close your eyes and find your breath. Breathe slowly in for a count of four, pause for a moment, then breathe slowly out again for a count of seven. Placing your hands on the lower ribs/diaphragm can focus your attention on the way your lungs fill and empty as you breathe. Simply let go, become loose and easy in your breath, thoughts and body. Clear your mind, even if it's just for a short while.

The Christmas season can be a difficult time as you navigate your journey to parenthood, but try to see the many ways that the festive season can remind you of the joys you already have in your life, the best of all being your own innate sense of calm and wellness.

Our thanks to [Tanja Faessler-Moro](#) from Virtus Health

About Virtus Health

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Clare Eastwood

British born but having lived overseas for the past 17 years, my life has seen me saying farewell to the damp grey skies of the UK for a life of nibbling warm baguettes in France and now I'm found enjoying the hot, often sticky but always colourful days of Singapore. Living the happy life with my hubby, our 2 boys, 4 guinea pigs and 2 dogs, when I'm not busy with family and pets I do enjoy my well deserved 'me' time. I love to throw myself into writing and I hope everyone will find my work something of interest, inspiration or just a good read!

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