



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

Formerly The American Fertility Society

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FACT SHEET

COUNSELING AND SUPPORT: WHEN AND WHERE TO FIND IT

Infertility is a medical condition that touches all aspects of a person's life. It affects how you feel about yourself, your relationship with others, and your perspective on life. How you deal with these feelings will depend on your personality and life experiences. Most people can benefit from the support of family, friends, medical caregivers, and professional counselors. The following information will help you decide if you need to seek professional help in managing the emotional stresses associated with infertility.

WHEN DO I NEED TO SEE AN INFERTILITY COUNSELOR?

Consider counseling if you are feeling depressed, anxious, or so preoccupied with your infertility that you feel it is hard to enjoy life. You may also want to consider counseling if you are feeling “stuck” and need to sort out your options and alternatives. Signs that you might benefit from counseling appear in combination and may include:

- persistent feelings of sadness, guilt, or worthlessness
- loss of interest in usual activities and relationships
- agitation and anxiety
- constant preoccupation with infertility
- difficulty concentrating and remembering
- a change in appetite, weight, or sleep patterns
- increased use of alcohol or drugs
- thoughts about suicide or death
- social isolation
- depression
- increased mood swings
- marital discord
- confusion in treatment options
- considering third-party reproduction (donor egg, donor sperm, donor embryos, surrogacy)

WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT?

Support can come from many different areas. Books can offer information and understanding about the emotional aspects of infertility. Support groups and meetings can reduce the feeling of isolation and provide an opportunity to learn from others who are experiencing infertility. Individual and couple counseling offers the chance to talk with an experienced professional who will help sort out your feelings, identify coping mechanisms, and help you find solutions to your problems. Discussions with family members and friends are also options.

HOW DO I FIND AN INFERTILITY COUNSELOR AND OTHER SUPPORT?

Start by asking your physician for a list of books, support resources, and trained counselors in your area who have experience dealing with infertility. Counselors may be psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, marriage and family counselors, or clergy. Consider contacting Resolve, Inc., a national infertility support group with extensive resources and over 50 chapters nationwide, at 1310 Broadway, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144; phone (617)623-0744. You may also want to call the American Society for Reproductive Medicine for a list of books written for patients concerning the emotional aspects of infertility.