

Expert Advice and Top Tips When Trying for a Baby



Dr Sandra Wheatley, Social Psychologist and Chartered Member of the British Psychological Society shares her advice for couples who are trying to conceive.

Did you know that in the UK, 1 in 7 couples have difficulty conceiving?¹ This means there are about 3.5 million people who are currently trying to conceive (TTC) and may not have been able to start a family as soon as they would like to. The experience is different for everyone and no two people will feel the same about it.

Struggling to conceive can be an extremely difficult time and can have a huge emotional impact on everyone involved. Looking after yourself and your partner is vitally important. Thankfully there are a number of things you can do to help at this often incredibly difficult time.

Do's:

Find time to have fun. Organise a daily 'treat', however small. It could be a walk in the park, a workout, or simply a chat with friends. Set aside time for relaxing with family and friends.

Gentle exercise can help you start to feel better about yourself. Relaxing classes like Pilates or yoga are also a good way of getting out and meeting other people and taking your mind off things that are troubling you.

Take life one day at a time. Try to find the positive in things. Making yourself find positive aspects of your day will be very difficult at first, but it's important you try. With practice it will become easier - if you don't look for the positive things in your life you might not see them!

Be open about your feelings and worries. This will help others understand what you need. Ask people you trust to help you and feel free to share information on TTC with them to help them understand what you're going through.

Talk to your doctor - no question is ever too small or trivial. They're trained to help you, and they get out of bed each morning to help people exactly like you - so let them know you need their support.

Support groups are a good way to meet other individuals and couples going through a similar situation to you and to share information and offer support. It can be relieving to share your experiences with people in a similar situation and may help you to see that there are other people feeling the same as you are. You might find local support groups in your area, or if you don't feel ready to meet anyone yet I suggest looking for support online.

Dont's:

Try not to be a superwoman - some of the aspects of TTC will take up a lot of time and you will need to step back from commitments in other areas of your life.

Don't organise or attend situations that you're not comfortable with. If it isn't going to make you feel better then don't do it. When you're feeling particularly sensitive or vulnerable, looking after yourself should be your priority. Do take the time to explain to others as sensitively as possible why you have turned down their invitation, but remember to prioritise your own feelings as much as those of others. It's completely okay for you to be open about the feelings you might experience when you're around families, babies or children and understandable that you would want to avoid allowing yourself to feel that way. You can be certain your friends and family would be horrified to think they had caused you any pain.

Don't blame yourself or your partner for your situation or be too hard on yourself. Finding someone to blame or arguing won't make it go away and is not helpful for anyone, least of all you. Life can be tough at times, and it's important that you and your partner are there for each other when your relationship needs to be at its strongest.

How you and your partner can help each other when you're TTC

At various times throughout your journey to start your own family one of you may need support more than the other. This will probably change over the coming months – so be prepared to look after each other when you feel like it's all just too much.

You are likely to be the most important person when it comes to helping your partner through this period of your lives. This might seem very flattering, but can also feel like a burden. Try and remember that neither of you wants to be a burden to the other.

Together you can help each other. In time you'll feel that your relationship is stronger because you've been through this difficult time together.

- **Remember to reassure your partner that you love and support them.** Let them know that you will not abandon them. Deep down, you're probably both scared about this.
- **Talk to each other about your hopes and concerns.** This can help to bring you closer and give you the strength to continue. To know where you stand, you need to know the comfortable and the uncomfortable stuff that is going through each other's heads.
- **Make time for yourselves as a couple.** Remind yourself of what made you want to be with them in the first place and value what you have together. Remember to show affection as much as you can.
- **Be intimate with your partner,** even if you don't feel like sex – a kiss and a cuddle can help you to feel comforted and safe, and in your own time this will help to get your sex life back on track. You could try giving each other a massage. Don't worry, you don't need to be an expert – laughing about how silly you feel will help to take away any performance pressure! Sex for pleasure, not just for purpose, is your aim!

The emotional toll of trying to conceive can have a real impact on your relationship, family bonds and close friendships.

Dealing with it on a day-to-day basis can be a huge challenge for everyone involved. With support and patience, together you can help each other to make it a positive experience.

To read the full tips for couples who are trying to conceive visit
www.thestorkconception.co.uk/emotional-support/

References

¹ Infertility. NHS Choices. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Infertility/Pages/Introduction.aspx> [accessed April 2015]