

# Infertility can become an 'emotional roller coaster'



*Jo Ann  
Volk Lederman*

**FAMILY MATTERS**

Dear Jo Ann,

*My husband and I have been trying to conceive for two years with no success. For the past year, we worked with a fertility specialist and have failed two rounds of IVF. My husband is 38 and I am 34. Until the past few months, we were an ideal couple. Lately, we fight all the time. I feel out of control.*

Signed,

Sandi

Dear Sandi,

You are going through a most daunting period. Seeking treatment to conceive a child or carry a child to term can be and frequently, predictably, is an emotional roller coaster. You are working hard to create an outcome, some of which has not been in your control. Failed treatment can produce feelings of helplessness, anguishing grief and loss. One of my patients wished she could have a crystal ball. Another wanted to go to sleep until this nightmare was over. Is that how you feel?

Until this point, life was more in your control. To study hard could produce an A. Proper credentials and super interviews could result in a job. One simply had to meet the established criteria to make the high school or college team. Infertility treatment is different. No matter how hard and how thoroughly prepared, results can still be uncertain. Couples are willing to do anything, go anywhere, to assure that a baby will result. They need answers. Sometimes none are clear.

Infertility presents one of the most severe crises a young family can face. Physical, emotional and financial resources are challenged. The marital relationship is taxed in unexpected ways. New coping mechanisms may need to be learned. It sounds like you

both may need some shoring up at this point. Your usual methods of handling stress are not working. Do not let your marriage degrade now. It is time to get help! Modern advances in the science of infertility have expanded treatment options. Success rates are higher, but not perfect. For some couples, this stressful period is marked by a wide range of emotional issues. Infertility is often a long and lonely battle, but not one that has to be fought alone.

A team approach using your physician and a marriage and family therapist trained in working through infertility issues can and will prove to be an important part of your treatment. You will find it greatly relieving to speak with a therapist if you are:

Experiencing increased disagreements and discord between you and your partner.

- Having strained relationships between friends and family
- Having persistent feelings of sadness, anger or loneliness.
- Feeling guilty.
- Feeling more socially isolated.
- Feeling helpless
- Noticing a change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Having a newly failed treatment
- Considering surrogacy, sperm or egg donation
- Investigating other means for family building such as adoption

Recent statistics have shown that, psychotherapy coupled with relaxation, and visual imagery, can help reduce the deepest anguish of this period in time. As you and your husband develop renewed empathy you will feel more like a team, empowered to contribute to your own treatment outcomes together.

*Jo Ann Lederman is executive director of South Miami Psychology Associates, specializing in marriage and family therapy, couples therapy, infertility issues, behavioral medicine and business consulting. For more information, call 305-666-8833 or address email to <JoAnnVolkLederman1@juno.com>.*