

# Five things I wish my NaPro doctor knew about infertility

As a NaPro doctor, each day you care for those of us who are struggling with infertility as we seek healing for the issues preventing us from conceiving or carrying a child to term. We appreciate your hard work and dedication to helping us. We know that you care deeply about us, so we want to share some things we would like you to know so that you can better support us as we walk this difficult and lonely path of infertility.

## **We want to have a baby!**

It's a deep longing; you know that because you are working with us to optimize our health to increase our chances of conception. But we also want you to help us remember that children are a gift – not a goal to achieve or a prize to win. In our desperation, we can sometimes lose sight of this truth. We may also tend to forget the inherent goodness of our marriage and of the pleasure and bonding that are part of our sexual union. We need you to help us get healthy and keep hope alive, but also to help us see that having a baby doesn't make us "winners," and that God loves us and our marriages whether we have children or not.

## **We need your honesty, but also your sensitivity.**

We chose you to be our doctor because we trust you and know you want what's best for us. Please be honest but also sensitive in the way you explain our chances of conceiving and any risks to treatments and surgeries. For certain issues, we understand that our chances of conceiving are very low or nearly impossible. We need to hear that reality, but we continue to pray for a miracle and we want to understand if any possibilities for treatment do exist. We greatly appreciate your support as we navigate a difficult diagnosis.

## **We know our God works miracles!**

We believe that all things are possible when we have faith and surrender ourselves to Him. But hearing stories of "miracle babies" can leave us feeling even more inadequate than we already do, and worse, we sometimes feel like God is withholding His miraculous power from us. You can be an encouragement to us by relating stories of patients who may have been in similar situations, but remember that we are unique women and couples whose outcomes may not be the same. Help us to see that which is truly *miraculous* in our marital love, in our availability to nurture others, and in how our suffering can be a witness to the grace of God in the sacrament.

## **We hear the clock ticking!**

For those of us who are older and still trying (maybe because we found our great love a little later than most do), we know the chances of conceiving are diminished. We also know that "advanced maternal age" is a consideration and that there are real medical concerns around treatment and even carrying a child as we age. It's hard not to hear that biological clock ticking loudly in our ears, and it's both scary and saddening. We know we're getting older! Your support is so needed as we navigate how to manage aging with this deep desire for children.

## **Our lives and marriages can be fruitful, even if our hopes for biological children go unrealized.**

Not every infertility story ends with a baby, but that doesn't mean that our desire to parent will go unfulfilled. This desire is *good* and is God-given! The lives and marriages of people with and without children are fruitful in many ways; for example, by caring for others, adopting children, working in their communities and more! In fact, we believe that as a doctor, you live out your spiritual parenthood through serving and caring for your patients every day. You can encourage us by remembering that even if treatment is not successful, this does not mean our fruitfulness will be limited.

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