

**Recognise your own feelings** at this difficult time and spend some time understanding how you both react to stressful life events. You may have feelings of guilt, shame, a sense of loss of masculinity, helplessness, anger and isolation. If you are also becoming overwhelmed, (particularly if you are withdrawing) it is important to communicate this to her. Your feelings are also important for the survival of this relationship.

**Learn to accept the differences** in how you both may be reacting to the infertility stress.

**Try to balance hope with compassion.**

This is a difficult time and while remaining hopeful is helpful, being totally hopeful and trying to convince her of this may discount her feelings, particularly in the first 2 days after a nonpregnancy cycle.

**Communicate your positive feelings to her,** particularly when she is feeling down.

**Help your partner remember the good things** about your life together, while not invalidating her sadness.

**Plan play time.** In recognition that this can be a stressful time, have regular dates where you can have fun and take a break from infertility.

**Seek help before problems get too big** or connect with the counselling team at Repromed early in the treatment process.

For further details, please refer to the Emotional Health – a team approach brochure.



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Tips for  
men



## How to support your partner while you are both waiting to have a baby

Your role is **very** important. You can make a big difference to how your partner copes with treatment. To be able to demonstrate that you are with her on this journey makes this difficult path easier.

### You can do this by:

**Being there by listening.** Listening can be hard to do as it can feel as if you are not resolving anything. It is however offering acceptance and respect to that person, their experiences, thoughts and feelings and showing that you want to understand her. This is offering support.

### Listening is the most valuable gift you can give.

Unfortunately sometimes there will be nothing you can say that will make it feel better. Listening requires giving time to her, encouraging her to talk more by open-ended questions, understanding the situation from her perspective. Try not to judge her feelings or give advice unless she asks for this.



**Being there by small acts of kindness.** Doing things that you know she likes and that you both like doing together.

**Asking her what she would like you most to do for her at this difficult time or during treatment.** What people want can often be unique to that person at this particular time and may vary throughout the journey.

**Being involved in the treatment.** As much as possible by attending medical appointments, being aware of what stage treatment is at, on which day she is likely to receive news about the cycle outcome, giving needles if required, attending on day surgery and embryo transfer.



**Offer to assist** with or take charge of the scheduling of future treatment appointments. Think of the fertility specialist as your own physician, not just your partner's doctor. Ask the specialist about upcoming tests, procedures, or drugs that your partner will undergo. Will it be painful? How can you assist her before, during and after the procedure? Are there expected side-effects?

**Assist your partner** when she is searching the internet and reading literature.

**Scheduling pleasant distractions** particularly during the 2 week waiting period from after the embryo transfer until the cycle outcome.

**Understand the grief** (for both of you). Infertility is a time of in-limbo grief and sometimes ongoing grief while waiting to have a baby. Each month can be the loss of a dream, the loss of the child that you do not have – a reminder that you may not be able to live the life that you planned to live. Anger, sadness and fears may sometimes dominate and expression of this is healthy.

**Understand fertility stress** (for both of you). This may involve the pain of not being part of the baby club; hearing other people's pregnancy news and insensitive comments; making decisions about the impact of treatment on work, careers, family and friends and what to say to others.

**Understand treatment stress** (for both of you). The emotional impact of diagnoses, treatment, loss of control and the emotional roller-coaster ride of balancing hope and disappointment. Even when there is a joint fertility problem, the woman can feel the responsibility for the successful outcome of the treatment and the physical impact of treatment on her body.

**Share your feelings of loss too.** It can be comforting for her to know that you are feeling pain and disappointment as well, that you are in this together.

