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Becoming a Team When Family Planning Gets Hard: Conversation Starters for Partners During Fertility Treatments

Encountering difficulties while building a family can strain even the strongest relationship. Fertility treatments are hard enough, not being on the same page with your partner can make them even harder.

Together, The IVF Dad and Stork'd have created a set of questions to spark conversation with your partner to help you work through critical and challenging conversations about family-building, as well as help you feel better prepared to support each other through the journey.

Tips to Break the Ice

- 1) Try having conversations while doing something active like taking a walk or hike or car ride. It can help the discussion flow and make it feel less like an intense “one on one.” (This can especially help male partners open up.)
- 2) Consider writing your thoughts first and sharing what you’ve written down. This can help get ideas flowing.

What’s Your Mission Statement?

Establishing a family mission statement is vital when approaching these critical and challenging conversations. Here are some questions to consider to get your started:

What is your vision for a family?

- Think about the family we hope to have in five years. What are the first three words that come to mind to describe that family? (Focus on qualities, like how the family interacts.)
- Think 30 years in the future. If you are successful in building a family, what would you most hope your future children would say about you as a parent?

What is your “why” behind wanting to grow our family?

- In particular, tell your partner why you want to grow a family with them. What qualities do they have that made you know they’d be a great partner to have a family with?
- Where are our visions similar? Where are they different?
- Can we compose a mission statement for our family building that will guide our path forward?

Here are a couple example mission statements just to give an idea of what this might sound like:

- A) Working together, we hope to add children to our family to share our love and our interests with. We want to build a family in which we all respect, care for, and enjoy spending time with each other.
- B) I hope to live a life that is filled with joy, love and adventure - that may include kids or, if I am unable to have them, I will find joy and adventure in other areas of my life

Additional Questions to Consider for Your Conversation with Your Partner

Limitations:

- What are your non-negotiables?
- Do we have a budget?
- How comfortable are you with medical intervention?
- What would living a life without kids mean to you?

Genetics:

- Can you think of any people in your life right now who you love, but who are not genetically related to you?
- While this may not be your current plan, could you envision parenting and loving children who do not share your genetics? What might be challenging?
- Are you comfortable with using someone else's DNA (Sperm, egg or embryo donor)?
- Are you comfortable with adoption or fostering?



Financials

- How much money are we willing to invest ?
- How much time are we willing to invest?
- Where is the money coming from? Whose insurance? Whose savings?
- Where are we going to cut back spending to afford this?

Medical

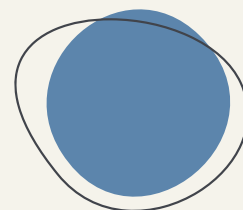
- How much pain am I willing to go through?
- How much pain am I willing to watch you go through?
- Are there any medical treatments we don't believe in or think are unethical?
- Are there any medical treatments that are off the table for any reason?

Care and nurture

- What will you be doing for self care along the journey?
- How would you like me to support you through the hard times?
- How will you support me?
- How will you let me know that you need more or less support? How could I tell if you were struggling emotionally but having difficulty sharing?

Joy

- What will we do for fun during the hard parts?
- How will we craft a life we love if we can't have kids?



Practical Questions

- If we get to the point of a two-week wait, are you for early pregnancy testing (i.e. before the fertility clinic does an official blood pregnancy test (called a "beta hCG" or just "beta") or against it?



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