

## IMPORTANCE OF SELF CARE

### Resolve, National Infertility Association (US)

Infertility can be stressful, full of unknowns, all-consuming, frustrating, expensive, physically, mentally and emotionally taxing, along with a host of other things, not to mention fairly common. It's estimated to affect ten percent of the population or one in eight couples – so whether you're aware of it or not, chances are excellent there's someone in your life who's impacted by it.

Whether you're pursuing infertility treatment to conceive yourself or you're pursuing surrogacy to build your family, every part of your body and life is affected by the process. Sometimes these stressors are physical (such as side effects of fertility medications), sometimes they're emotional (worry, financial pressure, even excitement takes its toll), but most of the time there's a complex cocktail of the two.

While there's little you can do to directly change the physical process of infertility treatment, you can commit to managing the mental and emotional effects through diligent self-care. Not only can you practice self-care, *you should practice self-care*. And rather than considering it a luxury, look at it as an essential part of your treatment plan. Tune into your body and listen to what it's saying, and take action accordingly.

Finding ways to practice self-care has many benefits beyond stress relief and relaxation (which is reason enough for it – it just plain feels good!). But other benefits may include preventing additional diseases or illnesses from developing, feeling productive and satisfied, developing a greater sense of engagement with friends and your community, a sense of achievement, among many others.

There are many different ways to care for your body, mind and what works best for you may not be what works best for someone else. Also, your needs and wants can change over time, so it's essential to check in with yourself frequently and ask “Is what I'm doing serving me well? What can I do differently to change the way I feel?” and adjust accordingly.

Here are some suggestions – consider them launching points for your own, personalized self-care plan:

- Join an infertility support group like Resolve or other groups local to you
- Develop a meditation practice (through a class or self-study)

- Commit to regular exercise or movement – it need not be over-the-top intense to have benefits – even a brisk stroll, if taken regularly, can be very beneficial
- Explore mind-body connection exercise such as yoga or tai chi
- Get regular massages or spa treatments
- Take a class in something you always wanted to learn, like a foreign language, a style of cooking, gardening, etc.
- Develop a writing practice, whether it's a daily journal or creative writing (poetry, short stories, personal narratives, etc.)
- Volunteer with an organization or cause that's important to you
- Learn to (or dedicate the time to) make things with your hands such as woodworking, needlework, drawing or painting, etc.

Pursuing infertility treatment can feel overwhelming at times, which is natural. And taking time for yourself to do something you enjoy and are interested in might even feel unnatural at times, like you're "taking your eye off the ball" or getting distracted from your goal. Nothing could be further from the truth though – it's important to remember that good health is more than merely following a prescribed treatment plan. It's just as important to listen to your own body and your own thoughts, feelings and inclinations and meet your social and emotional needs.

The mind-body connection is strong, so use it to your best advantage, both in pursuing your goal of becoming a parent and keeping yourself healthy all along your path to parenthood!