

kindbody

Why Support Groups Work

BY DR. TONYA WOOD

Dr. Wood is a licensed psychologist with over 20 years of clinical and teaching experience. She is past President of the California Psychological Association. She uses a compassionate, person-centered approach to address issues related to infertility, family planning, and reducing disparities in access to care.



For many of us, the story of our journey toward parenthood is a highly anticipated tale of love, excitement, and joy. We have visions in our heads of how that story will unfold and the happiness we will feel at the end. However, many of us encounter unexpected bumps along the way. That journey becomes wrought with detours and delays, which tells a different story. A story of pain and loss. A painful fertility and family-planning experience can be heart-wrenching, leaving one feeling alone and isolated. If you're anything like me, that sense of loneliness is accompanied by an entire host of other emotions: sadness, fear, shame, frustration, anger, grief, and disappointment. After the initial pain (maybe even shock) of not being able to easily conceive, you are thrust into this new medical world with all its terms, tests, and procedures that can be confusing and overwhelming. In these moments, when one wants guidance the most, seeking help or reaching out to others can seem like an impossible task. We want to put forth a positive outlook and brave face for friends and family. We hide our emotions and push through all the pain and tears. We don't want to upset our well-meaning friends and family who do not know words of encouragement or advice to offer.

“I didn’t want to upset my loved ones, but I couldn’t carry this alone.”

JULIE FLYGARE

In these moments, building a community with those who have a shared and common experience is critical to your well-being. You do not have to carry the weight of infertility alone. At Kindbody, we are committed to fostering a sense of community that brings hope and healing to everyone at all stages of the family-building process. To help you find your tribe and build your community, Kindbody offers support groups at no charge for any kindbody patient.

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Research has shown that individuals participating in groups receive many benefits, which include increasing a sense of hope, learning effective coping strategies, building a strong and supportive social network, decreasing isolation, overcoming stigma, and reducing feelings of loneliness (Worrall et al., 2018). In addition, individuals who engage in support groups report a reduction in symptoms of distress, improved social functioning, and a perceived improvement in overall well-being (Worrall et al., 2018).

Because of these considerable emotional, social, and mental health benefits of support groups, our kindbody team wants to provide this resource and service to our patients.

A primary benefit of support groups is creating a safe, protected space with others on similar paths toward parenthood. Within the comfort of a professionally led support group, surrounded by those who can understand and resonate with your experience and emotion of family planning, we aim to help you build friendships and forge social connections with others on similar paths. The group setting will provide an opportunity for you to talk openly and honestly about your feelings without fear of judgment or shame. You can receive support and may also be a source of encouragement for someone else. Very often, the words of those who have been through similar struggles bring hope and peace. Sharing your stories of strength and courage may heal your heart and bring comfort, hope, and peace to others.

At Kindbody, we recognize how vital these emotional connections are to your overall health and well-being, and understand that they are a critical aspect of your fertility care. While you may feel like you are the only person on this journey, you are not alone. Finding your tribe is easier than you think. Although it may not seem like it, reclaiming your story of love, joy and happiness is possible... just with a few added footnotes.

References

Worrall, Hugh; Schweizer, Richard; Marks, Ellen; Yuan, Lin; Lloyd, Chris; and Ramjan, Rob, "The effectiveness of support groups: a literature review" (2018). Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health - Papers: part A. 5441.<https://ro.uow.edu.au/smhpapers/5441>

