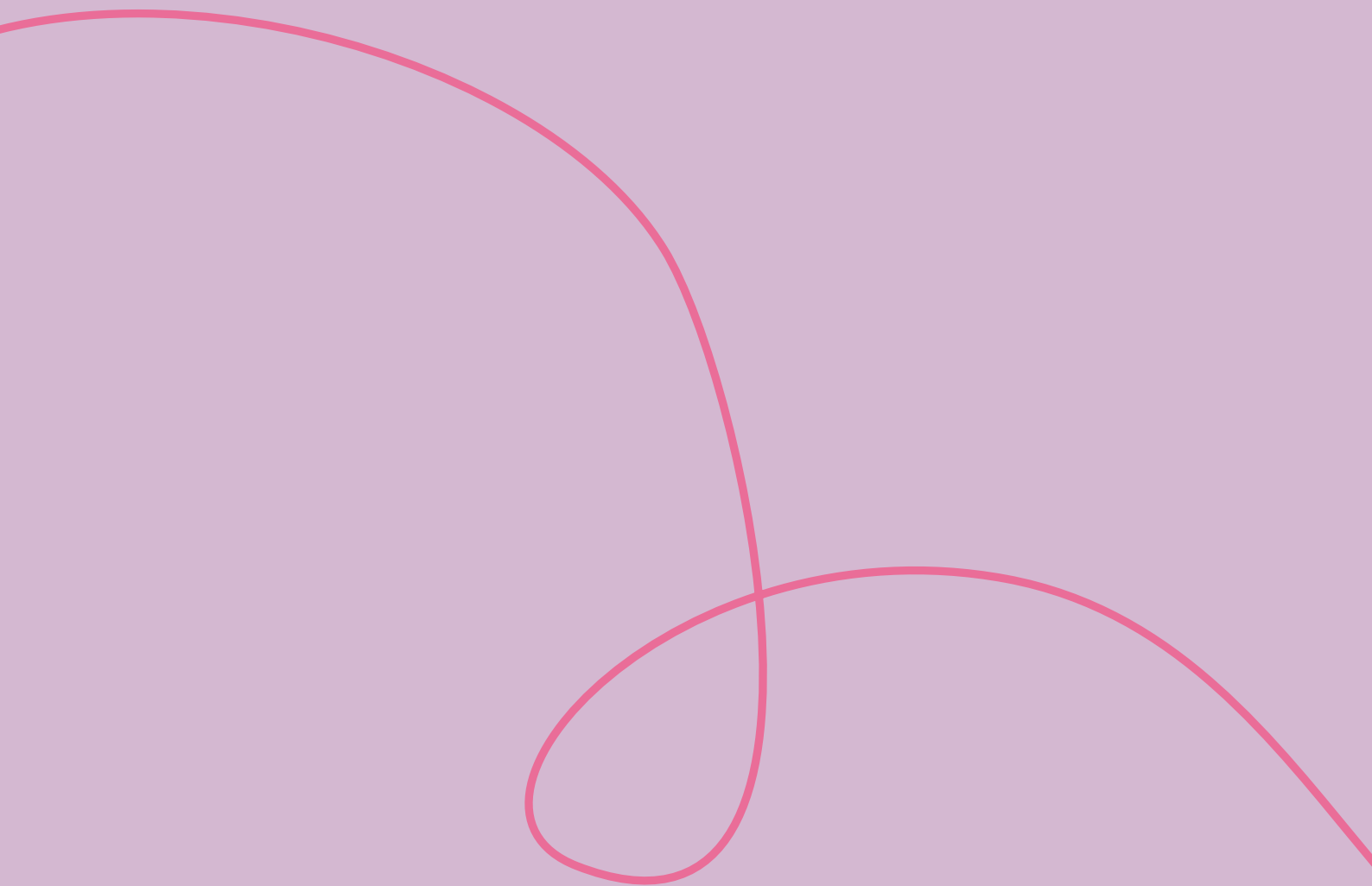


Whatever  
you are feeling  
*is normal*



How to get the support you  
need on the path to parenthood





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# finding your way on the path to parenthood

Learning about infertility can be hard, so is going through the fertility treatment process. It's completely normal to experience cycles of emotions as you make your way through this journey.

The main thing to remember is that **all feelings are normal and justified**, so allow yourself to feel them all. In this brochure, we will focus on some key time periods to help support you along the way.

## Emotions you may encounter through your journey<sup>1,2</sup>

### Learning about Infertility

Disbelief, Confusion, Frustration, Shock,  
Embarrassment, Sadness, Grief, Loss, Shame

### During Treatment

Hope, Understanding, Frustration,  
Embarrassment, Shame, Confusion

### IVF Success

(minimal cycles)

Happy, Excitement,  
Overwhelmed, Anxious

### Having to re-evaluate plans if/when unsuccessful

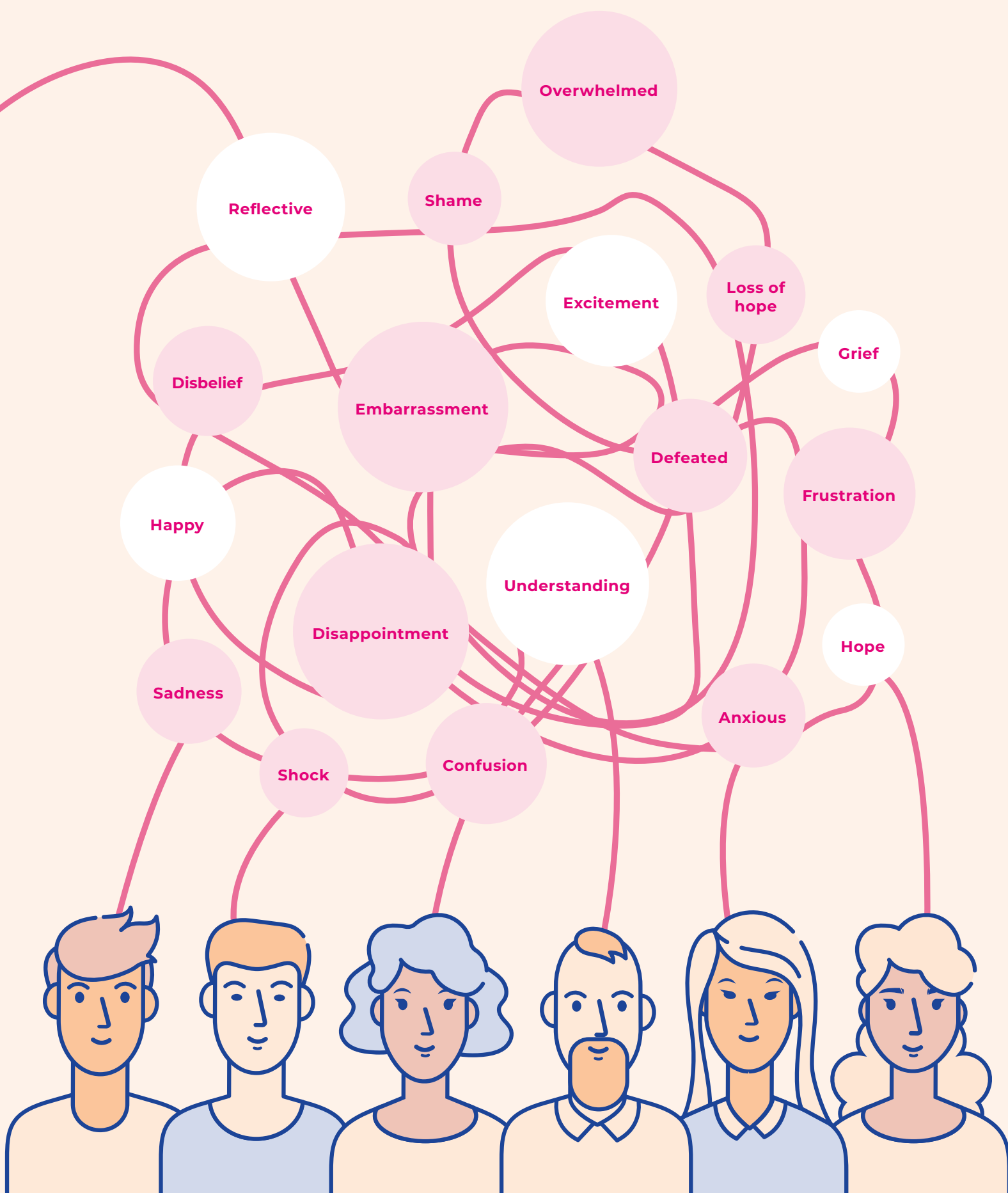
(multiple rounds of treatment)

Disappointment, Reflective,  
Loss of hope, Defeated

**If you feel like you need more support**

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your fertility specialist, nurse or other healthcare professional.

*everyone's experience*  
with infertility is different



# learning about infertility

When someone first learns about infertility or a partner's infertility, often times the initial reactions are that of disbelief and confusion.

During this time, it's important to remember that you're not alone, and that infertility is more common than you may think.

**Infertility affects  
about 1 in 6  
Australian couples  
of reproductive age<sup>3</sup>**



It's also common to feel emotions like shock, sadness, loss, frustration, shame and embarrassment when being informed of infertility.<sup>1,4</sup>

**Not everyone will experience these emotions in the same way, and it's likely that couples won't either.**

**Based on how you are feeling, try some of these tips to help find relief.**

**Disbelief,  
Confusion,  
Frustration**

*Seek answers.*

Do your research. Ask questions and gather responses from fertility experts or even friends or family that may have gone through it before.

**Shock,  
Embarrassment**

*Try a time out.*

Do something you enjoy. Let the information sink in, while engaging in activities that usually bring you joy.

**Grief,  
Loss,  
Shame**

*Consider speaking to someone who you trust.*

Even if you are someone who tends to bottle up your emotions, when you feel ready, reach out to the people you find comfort in. This person can be a friend, a partner, family, or even a trained professional. It may help you to release those feelings.

## When starting on the path to parenthood make sure you are clear on expectations.

And if you are undergoing this process with a partner, make sure that you both are on the same page.

Some key questions to consider:

- ❓ **How many children do you want?**
- ❓ **What parts of the fertility process are you comfortable with?**
- ❓ **What is the absolute stopping point?**  
(i.e., When do you start looking for alternatives?)

**If you feel like you need more support**

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your fertility specialist, nurse or other healthcare professional.

*You are part of this experience too!*

## FOR THE PARTNER

Learning that your partner is infertile is hard on you too.

Together, you will be working as a team as you decide the next steps of your joint path to parenthood.

But as an individual, you will also be going through your own emotions. You may be experiencing the same emotions as your partner; in which case the same tips may work for you.

However, your experience may be completely different. *Ensure you understand how each other is feeling by:*



## Open lines of communication.

Make sure to talk to each other. The fertility process is not easy, and you will both benefit by having each other to lean on.



## Listen (and be heard).

Listening goes both ways. Try to understand each other's communication style and see if you can come to a middle ground, from the beginning.

# during treatment

Once you decide on fertility treatment, you may find that your emotions fluctuate more. This is also natural due to the side effects of some of the medications you may be taking.

*If you are finding these fluctuations difficult to cope with on your own, we recommend speaking to your fertility specialist, nurse or other healthcare professional.*

## You may also want to try these tips to cope with a variety of emotions:

### **Frustration, Anger**

#### *Seek answers.*

If your treatment isn't going as you imagined, speak to your fertility specialist, they may have other options.

### **Embarrassment**

#### *Try a time out. Do something you enjoy.*

Engage in an activity you have enjoyed in the past.

### **Despair**

#### *Consider speaking to someone who you trust.*

Seek comfort in your people. They may provide just the support you are looking for. Or it could be the right time to speak with a healthcare professional.

### **Drained, Anxious**

#### *Explore relaxation techniques.*

Such as yoga and breathing exercises, which are proven to help with anxiety and stress.<sup>4</sup>



## Why not give these a try?



### Think of ways to not let treatment take over your life.

We fully appreciate that fertility treatment is an investment (in all ways: emotionally, physically, and financially) so you will dedicate yourself to this commitment. However, we can't stress enough that it's so important to not let it consume your whole life...because it easily can! Where you can, make time for your friends and activities that you enjoy.



### If you are going through this journey with your partner, check in/include them.

It may feel like this part is a journey of one, with all the appointments and medications, etc. but it doesn't have to be. Your partner may be waiting on the sidelines ready to support. Consider asking them how involved they would like to be. They may want to support you by helping administer your medications or attend appointments with you.

**If you feel like you need more support**

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your fertility specialist, nurse or other healthcare professional.

## FOR THE PARTNER

During this phase, you may feel that your partner is disproportionately taking on the bulk of the responsibility. Here's how to help your partner feel they aren't going it alone.



### Be there (whatever that means for you both as a couple).

Agree on what is needed for your partner to be supported. Whether that means helping more around the house or being more involved in the fertility process (i.e., helping to administer medications or joining for appointments).



### Act as the guardian of 'normal' life.

Be the gentle push to continue with activities you both enjoy. It's easy for couples to get lost in the fertility process, so try instating a "date night" to make sure fertility treatments aren't taking over your lives.



### Communicate.

You may be experiencing a range of emotions your partner may not be noticing, try speaking to them about it or talk to friends, family, or even a healthcare professional if needed.

# multiple rounds of treatment

**(without success)**

Unfortunately, the reality is that not every person will have success with the fertility process. So, you may find yourself in a position where you are undergoing multiple rounds of treatment (or embryo transfers) and not experiencing success. It's important to remember with fertility treatment, it isn't a guarantee, so try not to be hard on yourself.

*If parenthood is still something you would still like to explore, talk to your healthcare professional about alternatives and do your own research, when you are ready.*

**If you feel like you need more support**

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your fertility specialist, nurse or other healthcare professional.

## At this point, if you are feeling that you've had enough, it's important to:



### Refer back to your initial expectations.

What was your plan? Have you reached the number of tries you were willing to undergo? If so, it's OK to say you've had enough.



### Talk to someone.

If you are having trouble coping with this part of the journey, speak to a trusted partner, friend, family, or even healthcare professional for the support you need.



### Feel all the feelings.

Give yourself the permission and space to feel all the feelings (or even not feel anything). It's OK, in fact it's healthy.



### If you are going through this journey with your partner, check in.

They will be having a tough time with this too.

## FOR THE PARTNER

No doubt this is the toughest phase yet. You may very likely be experiencing the same emotions as your partner; in which case the same tips are relevant to you. Here is an additional way you can add support.



### Continue to be there.

Whether that is someone to lean on or the one reminding your partner of the expectations you set in the beginning, continue to be there.

# support comes in many forms

Although the outcome of fertility treatment may be wonderful, dealing with the process itself can be emotional and stressful.

Irrespective of the outcome, there is no doubt the journey will make you (or you as a couple) stronger. During this time, it's important to seek help where and when you need it. We hope you find this information helpful.

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