

A letter to my friends and family...

I know you all mean well when you say things like “your time will come” or “I know someone who just stopped trying and then it happened for them” or “get a dog, it will take your mind off things”. I hate having to lie to people who ask “are we planning on having children” as we have been married over 2 years....or when they say “ooh that will be you next...” and I have to smile and reply...”yes hopefully one day” or “we haven’t really thought about that yet”.

The fact is, for me the reason that we can’t conceive/maintain a pregnancy is **MEDICAL** and no amount of want or hope or distraction will make it “happen for us”.

To tell someone who can’t conceive or who has lost a child “don’t be bitter”, is no more helpful than telling a man with a broken leg to get up and run a marathon! Feeling bitter or jealous or sad when people announce their pregnancy is not a choice, it is a natural emotion that cannot be controlled.

My experience of finally managing to conceive a miracle pregnancy after YEARS of trying, surgery, being poked and prodded, being pumped full of drugs and having blood drawn repeatedly day in and day out; when I FINALLY saw a positive test....I can’t even put into words what I felt. Only 10 weeks later I find myself laying on the table at the scan, looking at our tiny baby and being told by the radiographer that it has stopped growing... The memory of this moment, of my husband’s face, of the millions thoughts that went through my mind will NEVER leave me.

Having to then carry around a dead baby (and yes, to me it was a baby even though I was only 10 weeks) for 2 weeks and finally have it ripped away from me by a surgeon, was honestly the worst thing that has ever happened to me. And if that experience has made me bitter, then I will be bitter for as long as I need to be, because unless that has happened to you, you cannot possibly understand.

For days, weeks, months afterwards – in fact until the present day - I have felt nothing but numb. Everyone on my Facebook newsfeed seemed to be announcing pregnancies, all the TV shows I watch have women giving birth in, pregnancy is EVERYWHERE and suddenly I hated everyone who was pregnant, who had a successful scan, who got to announce a pregnancy or find out the sex.

Watching other people experiencing all the milestones that had been so cruelly taken away from us made me want to shut off the world and stay in my bed. People told me I was being “dramatic”, that it was positive, that “at least you know you can conceive now”. These words made me hate the world even more, like it was some kind of test run, that what had happened wasn’t important and I should just shrug it off and move on with life.

Amazingly when the month of our baby’s due date rolled around we found ourselves pregnant again by an absolute miracle, but instead of the joy that other ‘normal’ pregnant couples experience, we were paralysed with fear - fear that was unfortunately realised 3 weeks later when I had my second miscarriage of the year.

I felt as if the future was bleak, that it would never happen for us and honestly, I just wanted to die. No I wasn't 'depressed', I didn't need to 'see someone', I just needed privacy and peace to process my grief with my husband, not surrounded by what felt like a million pregnant people!

Believe me, I hate myself for the way I react to pregnancy announcements - scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed and 'unfollowing' anyone who is pregnant or has had a baby, dreading seeing another healthy scan photo or bump picture.

For me the worst feeling is seeing the guilt in the eyes of my closest friends that are pregnant and unsure whether they can talk to me about it or not. And me, forcing myself to ask them questions about their growing bumps and willing myself to be happy for them when they put my hand on their bump to feel the baby kick - struggling through the whole interaction with a fake smile plastered on my face, then going home and crying for hours to my husband, who tries his best to pick up the pieces.

So the point of this letter is not to make you feel sorry for me. I have done plenty of that on my own. It is to remind you to think before you speak, before you offer up advice on a subject you have no clue about, to realise that for some people a pregnancy announcement, even of a close friend or relative can be the most painful thing to process and that for some people the things that we are supposed to be able to do naturally don't come naturally at all...

And if you are trying to conceive/struggling with loss and any of what I have said makes sense, then know that you are not alone and you are not crazy and sometimes telling the world your story is the best therapy you can have!

A.L.F.