

**Caught in the middle of infertility**  
by Tina Smith

*\*\*\*second article in 3-part series\*\*\**

Not much has changed in my unending quest for motherhood. Frustrating days have stretched into despondent months and the frightening possibility of permanently empty arms.

Finding a fertility specialist seemed to be a step in the right direction for my husband and me. We uncovered new information and alternative options. Tests helped point efforts in the right direction, but the true source of our infertility remains a mystery. We've cleared my fallopian tubes, stimulated egg production, increased my husband's sperm count and enhanced optimal conditions for fertilization both inside and outside my body.

My husband gave up smoking and can't remember that last time he enjoyed a hot tub. I've gained weight from fertility drugs and drive everyone crazy with my mood swings. The spontaneity in our love life is gone. Both of us continue to be bombarded by questions from well-meaning and concerned family and friends. We feel compelled to give explanations, even though we don't have answers ourselves.

Last year, we came closer to becoming parents than ever before. I'll never forget the moment I learned my pregnancy test was positive. Suddenly, nothing other than that little life mattered. I found myself nearly embracing the bruises from daily progesterone injections. The stress, the debts, the uncertainty – all had been worth it. I even bought a rattle and a pair of white baby booties. For six glorious weeks, my husband and I basked in the glow of success, counting the days until we could see the baby's heartbeat on the ultrasound machine.

That day came and went, marked only by the familiar demon of disappointment. Many times doctors can't pinpoint why conception occurs, hormone levels rise and then an embryo simply stops growing. Miscarriage is no more common with assisted reproduction than with natural conception. But in an instant, we were back at square one. The magnitude of our grief was matched only by our anger.

As a couple who desperately longs to be parents, my husband and I are ashamed to admit we just wish someone would tell us that childbirth won't ever happen for us. The waiting and wondering is nearly worse than a tangible loss. We long for permission to let the dream fade.

Amazingly, that pesky little bird of hope continues to perch in my soul. I try to deny it or talk myself out of it. Doubts grow as my body ages, resources dwindle and relationships falter, but becoming a mother remains paramount.

So I press on. I've been part of a support group for some time now but recently made a connection with another woman who is struggling through infertility. We're having lunch together next week. I've delved into yet another book. This time, the focus is foods that improve infertility. That means I'll have another round of questions for my follow-up visit with my specialist.

It's all a battle against giving up. I keep reaching out -- for encouragement, for new information, for anything to keep me on this path. And every day, I wake up believing that my time will come. Who knows? It could be just around the corner.

***To be continued ...***