



How to talk to someone you think is experiencing infertility

Why is this an issue? Because people have said some really insensitive things. Good intentions really can go badly. So here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. **What type of connection do you have with this person?** Do you have a close, mutual relationship? Are you a mentor, or confidant or in a pastoral, therapeutic or other appropriate professional role? You might be asking about their health, their finances, and possible intimate topics. If the answer is not a solid yes, stop here. Is it not your place to be talking about this.
2. **Do you THINK or do you know what they are experiencing?** If you ask because you're curious, then it's about you. Don't. You may think you are walking on tip toes, but your inquiry could feel like an unwanted invasion. Family building challenges come in such a variety: waiting, medical issues, they are trying, they can't afford to continue, etc. You have no idea what you are walking into.
3. **Do you have advice for them?** Do NOT even talk to them if your intention is to give advice. You do not know what is best for them. Don't do it.
4. **Are you prepared to listen and support?** - This is pretty much the only legitimate intention. You can listen and help them sort through their own priorities. You can research options and information. You can remind them that they are not alone, that you love them and will be there. Only bring it up if you are truly prepared to respond to what they need.
5. **Are you giving them a way out of the conversation?** They may not want to talk now (this may jolt them when they are not prepared) or ever (this is off base or private). If so, they may feel the need to shelter YOUR feelings, which is the worst when they may be dealing with a landslide of their own. *Tell them they do not need to respond!* Consider a phone call, email or even text so they do not have to respond. "Because I care about you and want the best for you, I was thinking about your family building plans... If you want me to check in again or just send you love and support, count me in. If you don't want me to bring it up again, I will not."
6. **Are they talking?** If so, listen. Affirm feelings because they could be feeling just about anything and it would be normal. Don't pepper them with questions. Your goal is simply to open the door to love and care. Finally...
7. **Are you doing what they asked?** Not wanting to talk does not necessarily mean they don't appreciate you. Keep it about them and what they want, regardless if it is to talk or not. You have done what you set out to do. Now you can move ahead together.