



Counseling for Fertility & Miscarriage

A Guided Worksheet

———— RABBI SHLOMO SLATKIN, MS, LCPC ————

www.themarriagerestorationproject.com

Introduction

Facing fertility and miscarriage challenges can be an incredibly difficult and emotional journey, which is why acknowledging your pain and struggles at the outset is crucial.

The purpose of this worksheet is to offer guidance and support in fostering effective communication, tackling emotional setbacks, and making important decisions together in a healthy and constructive manner. Throughout this process, it is vital to remain open and actively participate in conversations and activities, even when they seem challenging.

By embracing transparency and engaging wholeheartedly in the exercises, you and your partner can build a stronger foundation for navigating these challenges and fostering a supportive partnership.

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We are happy to support you in your journey. Please don't hesitate to reach out using our website TheMarriageRestorationProject.com

With best wishes for your relationship success,
Rabbi Shlomo Slatkin, M.S., LCPC
TheMarriageRestorationProject.com

Personal Reflection

Instructions: Begin by writing down your current emotions and thoughts related to the fertility or miscarriage challenges. Be honest and specific about what you're feeling.

Use the following prompts to guide your reflection:

How has this journey affected your emotions lately?

Are there any specific moments or experiences that stand out?

What are your fears, hopes, or uncertainties about the future?

**Allow yourself to write freely without judgment.
This is a space for your thoughts and feelings.**

Understanding Fertility and Miscarriage

What is Miscarriage?

A miscarriage, also known as a spontaneous abortion, is the natural loss of a pregnancy before the 20th week of gestation. In many cases, miscarriages occur within the first trimester, typically during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Key Facts:

- Miscarriages are relatively common, occurring in about 10% to 20% of known pregnancies.
- Most miscarriages are due to chromosomal or genetic abnormalities in the developing fetus. Other factors, such as maternal health conditions and lifestyle factors, can also contribute.
- Miscarriages are not solely the woman's responsibility. They can result from factors related to either partner, including male factors like sperm abnormalities.

What is Infertility?

Infertility is a disease of the male or female reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse.

Infertility affects millions of people – and has an impact on their families and communities. Estimates suggest that approximately one in every six people of reproductive age worldwide experience infertility in their lifetime.

Key Facts:

- Infertility affects approximately 10% to 15% of couples worldwide.
- Infertility can result from various factors affecting one or both partners, including issues related to sperm quality, ovulation, uterine health, and more.
- Age, lifestyle factors (e.g., smoking, obesity), and underlying medical conditions can increase the risk of infertility.
- Infertility can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. It can also affect relationships.
- For couples unable to conceive naturally, there are alternative family-building options, such as adoption and surrogacy.

Understanding Fertility and Miscarriage

Miscarriage and infertility are emotionally challenging experiences that can have profound and complex implications for individuals and couples.

Here are some of the emotional implications associated with each:

Emotional Implications of Miscarriage

- Grief and Loss
- Sadness and Depression
- Guilt and Self-Blame
- Anxiety and Fear
- Isolation
- Relationship Strain

Emotional Implications of Infertility

- Stress and Anxiety
- Depression
- Loss of Control
- Jealousy and Isolation
- Self-Esteem Issues
- Decision-Making Challenges
- Impact on Relationships
- Hope and Resilience

It's essential to acknowledge and seek support for the emotional implications of miscarriage and infertility. Many individuals and couples find solace in support groups, therapy, and counseling. Seeking professional help and leaning on one's support network can be instrumental in coping with these emotionally complex experiences.

Gottman Method Worksheet (Inspired)

Name		Date
<p>For the below table identify which behaviors you engage in when communicating with your partner by ticking the relevant check-box and describing what this looks like for you in the second column.</p> <p>Then think of three phrases you can use or other ways you can incorporate the provided antidote to each relevant behavior in your future communication.</p>		
When communicating with my partner I use/ have used...	Describe how you have used this behavior in the past	What are some phrases or strategies you can use to incorporate the below antidotes in the future?
<input type="checkbox"/> Criticism		<p>Antidote: Raise issues gently and focus on problems (not people) in a calm and collaborative way.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Defensiveness		<p>Antidote: Take Responsibility for your actions and offer apologies when needed.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Stonewalling		<p>Antidote: Practice self-soothing to stay present with your partner and remain calm.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Contempt		<p>Antidote: Describe your own feelings and needs, and practice showing appreciation.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p>• Adapted from Gottman, J. M. (2008). Gottman method couple therapy. Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 4(8), 138-164</p>		

Effective Communication

Effective communication is essential for enhancing understanding and support between partners facing fertility and miscarriage challenges. These sensitive issues can put a strain on a relationship, but open and empathetic communication can help couples navigate these challenges together.

Here are some communication strategies:

CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Ensure that both partners feel safe and comfortable discussing their emotions and concerns. Avoid judgment and criticism.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE

Pick an appropriate time and private setting for discussions. Avoid bringing up sensitive topics during stressful or busy times.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Practice active listening by giving your partner your full attention. Put away distractions and focus on what they are saying.

Use non-verbal cues like nodding and eye contact to show that you're engaged in the conversation.

USE "I" STATEMENTS

Express your feelings and thoughts using "I" statements. For example, say "I feel overwhelmed" rather than "You are overwhelming me."

This approach takes responsibility for your emotions and avoids blaming your partner.

EMPATHIZE AND VALIDATE

Show empathy by acknowledging your partner's feelings and experiences. Validation can go a long way in making them feel heard and understood.

Say things like, "I can see that you're going through a tough time, and I'm here to support you."

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Encourage meaningful conversations by asking open-ended questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer.

For example, "Can you tell me more about how you're feeling?" or "What can I do to support you better?"

Effective Communication

BE PATIENT AND RESPECTFUL

Understand that both partners may process their emotions differently. Be patient with each other's coping mechanisms and timelines.

Show respect for each other's perspectives, even if they differ.

AVOID BLAME AND GUILT

Fertility and miscarriage challenges can evoke feelings of guilt or blame. It's important to recognize that these issues often result from factors beyond your control.

Refrain from blaming each other, and instead focus on navigating the challenges as a team.

REGULAR CHECK-INS

Establish a routine for checking in with each other. This can be a weekly or monthly discussion where you share your feelings, progress, and any concerns.

SHARE YOUR NEEDS AND BOUNDARIES

Communicate your needs and boundaries clearly. Discuss what support you require and how you can provide support to your partner.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP WHEN NEEDED

Sometimes, the emotional toll of fertility and miscarriage challenges may benefit from professional counseling or therapy.

Don't hesitate to seek the guidance of a trained therapist or counselor who specializes in these areas.

CELEBRATE SMALL VICTORIES

Acknowledge and celebrate small achievements or positive moments in your journey. It can help maintain a sense of hope and positivity.

Activity: Effective Communication

"I" statements are a valuable communication tool for couples dealing with miscarriage and infertility challenges because they encourage personal responsibility for emotions and facilitate open, non-confrontational conversations.

Use this activity to communicate with your partner about your feelings.

I FEEL OVERWHELMED WHEN...

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I'M AFRAID THAT...

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I NEED...

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I APPRECIATE IT WHEN...

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Activity: Effective Communication

I'M STRUGGLING WITH...

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I FEEL FRUSTRATED BECAUSE...

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I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS...

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I VALUE OUR RELATIONSHIP, AND I WANT...

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I'M PROUD OF US FOR..

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Activity: Effective Communication

I'M HOPEFUL THAT...

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I FEEL MOST SUPPORTED WHEN...

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**I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THIS JOURNEY ON OUR
RELATIONSHIP, AND I'D LIKE US TO...**

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I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR...

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**I'D LIKE US TO EXPLORE OTHER WAYS OF BUILDING OUR FAMILY,
SUCH AS...**

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Understanding Grief

Five Stages of Grief

Denial:

In this stage, individuals may struggle to accept the reality of their loss. They may feel a sense of shock, numbness, or disbelief.

Anger:

As the reality of the loss sets in, individuals may experience feelings of anger, frustration, or resentment. They may direct these emotions towards themselves, others, or even the person they've lost.

Bargaining:

This stage involves a period of seeking control or attempting to negotiate with a higher power. Individuals may make promises or engage in "what if" scenarios in an effort to reverse or postpone the loss.

Depression:

During this stage, individuals may feel deep sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness. They may withdraw from others, experience changes in appetite or sleep patterns, and struggle with low energy or motivation.

Acceptance:

In the final stage, individuals come to terms with the reality of the loss. They may find a sense of peace, begin to adjust to life without the person they've lost, and start to rebuild their lives.

Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

GRIEF SENTENCE COMPLETION

Complete the following sentences to explore your emotions and thoughts related to your experiences with miscarriage, infertility, or both. Feel free to write freely and honestly.

Since the miscarriage/infertility diagnosis, I have felt...

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One thing I miss the most about the pregnancy/parenthood I imagined is...

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The most challenging part of this journey has been...

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Sometimes, I cope with my grief by...

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Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

GRIEF SENTENCE COMPLETION

One thing I wish people understood about my experience is...

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My partner's support has been...

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A memory that brings me comfort is...

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I find hope in...

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The most frustrating aspect of our family planning discussions is...

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Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

GRIEF SENTENCE COMPLETION

I envision our family's future as...

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When I think about what I've learned through this journey, I realize...

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A goal I have for myself moving forward is...

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One thing I'd like to say to my partner about our family planning is...

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If I could offer advice to someone else going through miscarriage or infertility, I would say...

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Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

GRIEF SENTENCE COMPLETION

In moments of grief, I find strength in...

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I am grateful for...

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When I think of our future, I see...

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One thing I want to remember about our journey is...

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In my heart, I hold onto the belief that...

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Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

Emotional Expression: Write a letter to your unborn child or your future child, expressing your emotions.

Tips on what to say on your Letter

1. Give yourself ample time to write the letter. This process may evoke strong emotions, so it's important not to rush.
2. Begin the letter by addressing your unborn child or future child directly. You can use phrases like "Dear Baby," "My Precious One," or any name or term that feels right to you.
3. Be open and honest about your emotions. Share your joy, your sadness, your hopes, and your fears. Let your child know how much they mean to you, even if they are not with you physically.
4. Mention the journey you've been through, including the challenges, such as miscarriage or infertility. Reflect on how these experiences have impacted you and your desire to be a parent.
5. Talk about the dreams and plans you have for your child. Share the love and warmth you have in your heart for them.
6. If applicable, acknowledge any losses or grief you've experienced, such as the loss of a pregnancy. Express your sorrow and how it has affected you.
7. Let your child know that you are doing your best to create a loving and nurturing environment for them, whether it's through trying to conceive, adoption plans, or any other means.
8. Express your hopes and dreams for the future with your child. Discuss the love and support you intend to provide.
9. If you feel that your journey has caused any emotional strain or stress, express your desire for forgiveness and understanding from your future child.
10. Conclude the letter with a message of love, warmth, and hope for the future. You can use phrases like "With all my love," "Looking forward to the day we meet," or something personal to you.

Activity: Understanding and Navigating Grief

Emotional Expression: Write a letter to your unborn child or your future child, expressing your emotions.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Finding Common Ground in Family Planning

To provide a structured framework for couples to openly and respectfully discuss family planning disagreements in the context of their miscarriage and infertility experiences, find common ground, and work towards shared goals.

Share Your Current Feelings

Partner A: Describe how your past experiences with miscarriage and infertility have shaped your current feelings and attitudes towards family planning.

Partner B: Describe how your past experiences with miscarriage and infertility have shaped your current feelings and attitudes towards family planning.

Finding Common Ground in Family Planning

Identifying Perspectives

Describe Your Family Planning Goals:

Partner A: Share your family planning goals, including the desired number of children, spacing, and any specific considerations

Partner B: Share your family planning goals, including the desired number of children, spacing, and any specific considerations.

Finding Common Ground in Family Planning Identifying Perspectives

Discuss Your Reasons

Partner A: Explain the reasons behind your family planning preferences and the significance of these goals, considering your miscarriage and infertility experiences.

Partner B: Explain the reasons behind your family planning preferences and the significance of these goals, considering your miscarriage and infertility experiences.

Draft a Family Planning Plan

Collaboratively create a family planning plan that reflects your shared goals, compromises, and priorities, while incorporating your experiences and emotions. Include details such as the timeline, actions, and steps to achieve your family planning objectives.

Resources:

- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9688-miscarriage>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/lack-of-communication#communication-tips>
- <https://www.carepatron.com/templates/gottman-method-worksheets>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/infertility#:~:text=Infertility%20is%20a%20disease%20of,of%20regular%20unprotected%20sexual%20intercourse.>
- <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001488.htm#:~:text=A%20miscarriage%20is%20the%20spontaneous,unlike%20medical%20or%20surgical%20abortions.>

Contact Us

*Speak to a Marriage Counselor at
The Marriage Restoration Project*



443.570.7598



rabbishlomoslatkin@gmail.com

Book a time to talk

www.themarriagerestorationproject.com