A New Perspective on Infertility

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January 26, 2020 By Megan-Claire Chase

I think many cancer patients/survivors grieve for some part of themselves that's been lost to this horrible disease. When you add the loss of body parts or the body that you used to know, the grief becomes greater. Then when cancer makes you infertile when you're still of childbearing age, there's another type of grief that is palpable.

One of the hardest paths I've had to travel post-cancer has been due to the choice of having a child being taken away. Since I was intolerant of the medications to help prevent recurrence for pre-menopausal women, I had to be medically induced into menopause in 2017, so I could try the medications for post-menopausal women. Plus, during my pre-cancer days, I had ongoing issues with my cervix and ovaries — multiple abnormal pap smears and cysts the size of lemons on my ovaries. I had a bicornuate uterus which means it was heart-shaped, so high risk for miscarriages and premature birth.

It's painfully clear that I would've struggled to get pregnant and/or carry a baby to full term. Do I want to live, or die doesn't seem like a fair choice.

I had stopped blogging about my feelings on infertility because I would get so hurt when people would say, "just adopt or foster." It's such a callous thing to say even though I know they were trying to be supportive. I constantly wanted to scream that I'm chronically single!!!

I grew up with divorced parents where my mother had sole custody of me. I saw how hard it was to raise me as single, divorced woman. It truly took an amazing village to help raise and support my mother and I and know we were blessed to have such amazing support. That's why I would never want to raise a child on my own unless forced due to a divorce. I've cost my mother a fortune, even as an adult.

I would never willingly adopt or foster a vulnerable child without being able to fully support them financially and emotionally. I physically don't have the energy to handle raising a child on my own. I can barely keep myself afloat with medical bills constantly hanging over me and chronic pain that can often turn excruciating. How would that be fair to a child? They need more than just love.

The part I struggle with the most is the longing to share my childhood and college memories, values and wisdom with a child.

Fast forward to Friday evening when I was talking with my friend Francesca. I mentioned her a lot last year because we partnered together to write an abstract that we were selected to present titled,“You don’t really have a say in anything…like you don’t have any options”: AYA Cancer Survivors’ Perspectives on Fertility Preservation Conversations with Healthcare Providers at the 16th Annual American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS) in Atlanta in February 2019. It’s honestly one of the proudest moments of my life post-cancer thus far.

Though I’m 20+ years older than Francesca, who is studying for the MCAT’s, she is authentic, thoughtful, brilliant and compassionate among other fantastic qualities. She floored me by saying she thought of me like a godmother, an aunt and a big sister rolled into one. She said I didn’t need to only think I can impart wisdom or share my memories and values with a child.

The way she said those words…her tone and inflection just touched my heart and gave me a new perspective on my infertility. As you can imagine, I was brought to tears but tears of joy and appreciation. Francesca was surprised I didn’t seem to realize that’s how she viewed me.

I had been so stuck on the grieving train thinking only about the loss of a baby or young child, I never thought about the true impact I could make and have apparently been making on an actual young adult outside the cancer world. I’ve mentored over the years but never had anyone say what Francesca said to me with such sincerity.

Yes, I still feel the loss of choice, but have gained a new and unexpected perspective on this loss. I do have so much love to give and little words of wisdom to impart. I’m usually very observant but completely missed seeing I’ve been making a positive impact on someone for almost two years.

My life on the cancer train just took a lovely turn on an unexpected path which has given me a new sense of hope and purpose. Words matter. I see now that I matter too.

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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