

INFERTILITY DISTRESS SYNDROME QUIZ

By Robin J. Roberts, LCSW, PhD

Take this quiz to see if getting psychological support will help you in creating your family.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the responses with which you identify. Each bullet point is worth 1 point. Total your score at the end. Score results are at the end of the quiz.

1. Your **Preoccupation with Infertility** is a fulltime, all consuming priority that negatively impacts normal life activities. It:
 - interferes with other life activities (work, finances, relationships)
 - forces the postponement of other important life goals (e.g., home buying)
 - precludes you from taking real holidays & vacations

2. Your **Behavioral Symptoms** include:
 - repetitive, compulsive behaviors – in the form of monthly treatment cycles, daily basal body temperature tests, and monthly ovulation tests and pregnancy tests, etc.
 - repeated testing, even when the first one is positive or negative. (“Maybe it was wrong.”)
 - a chronic sense of urgency and overdrive.
 - avoidance of family activities, baby showers, places where children are present
 - hypervigilance to changes in your body, especially breast tenderness and abdominal cramps
 - constant checking for signs of your period or pregnancy
 - spending more and more time on the Internet for reassuring answers and information
 - devotion to your calendar and scheduling treatment appointments.
 - a restricted diet (no caffeine, alcohol, sugar, etc)
 - over-indulgencies: overeating or drinking to relieve stress
 - giving up exercise

3. Your **Emotional Symptoms** include:
 - depression
 - tearfulness, even in public places, around children & babies
 - grief over multiple losses
 - hopelessness
 - fear of “toxic emotions,” especially anger
 - guilt for having “waited too long” or other imagined causes of your problem
 - shame and secrecy

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- your displacement of anger onto pregnant women, families with children and care providers
- monthly mood swings, on the “emotional roller coaster,” coinciding with your treatment cycles, exacerbated by elevated levels of hormones
- delayed or repressed happiness with “good” news (e.g. You delay celebrating a positive pregnancy test, because you “know what can happen.”)

4. Your **Cognitive Symptoms** include:

- obsessive search for the latest research, experts, and answers
- thoughts that are mostly irrational & negative
- more difficulty making decisions; “second guessing” yourself
- seeing “signs and omens” in ordinary events

5. Your **Physical Symptoms** include:

- an altered body image or sense of alienation from your body
- decreased sex drive, interest, or pleasure
- physical aches and pains
- weight gain over several months of ovarian hyperstimulants and hormones
- unregulated sleep or insomnia
- a lack of energy

6. You may have had a **Prolonged Identity Crisis**. This can include:

- increased marital tension or conflict
- social isolation (e.g. Only child-free or menopausal women are “safe” friends.)
- having serious doubts regarding your self-image as an adult, woman, or marriage partner
- exploring existential questions or soul-searching about the meaning of your life, viability of your marriage, the existence of God, etc.

You are not the only woman who does these things!

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0-5: *You are coping very well!* Continuing your healthy behaviors can lessen your experience of stress, limit distress, and give you the optimal attitude for successful treatment.

6-10: *Mild* Try getting yourself more outside support now so that you can avoid worsening symptoms later. Start by identifying helpful and understanding family members and friends, and reaching out to them. Don't keep the pressure between you and your partner alone. Don't give up everything for medical treatments: add some time for self-nurturing and for your relationships.

11-20: *Moderate* Despite your best efforts, infertility distress and depression may be negatively affecting your treatment. If you haven't reached out already, now is the time. You can turn to a RESOLVE meeting, go to an educational event, and attend a peer-led support group or a Mind/Body Group. How well you take care of yourself in the weeks and months before a treatment cycle can improve your mood and outlook, decrease your stress levels and optimize your treatment.

19-40: *Severe* You are experiencing severe distress and probably depression as well. Your patterns of negative emotions, pessimistic thinking, and chronic overdrive have exhausted you mentally, emotionally, and physically. Studies by the Harvard School of Mind Body Medicine show that the longer you are in treatment, the more likely you are to experience depression. It's time to consider a break from medical procedures to recover your sense of well-being before pursuing further treatment. The same studies show that women who get psychological support in the form of a mind/body group more than double their positive outcomes (Fertility & Sterility, April 2000). Good counseling, a professional led group or a mind/body group can help you feel your best, prepare you for whatever treatment lies ahead, and be more successful in your efforts.