



# How to protect your mental health as an LGBTQIA+ person going through fertility treatments

Going through fertility treatments can be taxing, both mentally and physically. As an LGBTQIA+ person, you may be facing additional challenges, like provider bias or even discrimination. Fertility treatments often include disappointment, stress, and impatience while you wait for the next steps in your treatment. That's why it's crucial to protect your mental health.

For the LGBTQIA+ community facing unnecessary barriers and costs in fertility, mental health challenges may be exacerbated. If you or your partner are struggling with these issues, you're not alone.

## Reduce all other stress as much as possible

Try to identify other things that are contributing to your stress levels. Think about what you can take off your plate in terms of day-to-day chores, or lean on friends or family to pick up any extra slack.

## Decide how much you want to share, and with whom

For some people, opening up to loved ones about fertility treatment can provide much-needed support. For others, sharing adds more stress. If a conversation ever veers off-course, change the subject or say “I don’t feel comfortable sharing that.” This is your journey, and you’re not obligated to give others a play-by-play.

## Seek out peer support

Infertility is estimated to affect around one in 10 couples in the U.S., but it’s easy to feel alone when you’re in the thick of it. Support groups specifically for LGBTQIA+ people going through fertility treatments can be a great source of comfort. Ask your fertility clinic if they host a support group, or have a local program they refer patients to. There are also online communities you can check out.

## Make time for yourself

“Offer yourself periods of respite that include activities you enjoy or healthy distractions,” Mental Health Provider Cynthia Coffelt says. She also recommends self-care activities like journaling, meditation, and exercise. Whatever brings you some calm and joy, incorporate it into your regular routine.

## Consider therapy

Reaching out for help is the first step to feeling like yourself again. “Talking about your experience with a mental health professional can help you process your feelings and any obstacles you might encounter,” Coffelt says. Some fertility centers have in-house mental health practitioners who specialize in reproductive psychology, or you can connect with a mental health provider outside of the clinic.

## Remember it’s OK to press pause if you need to

You don’t have to go through non-stop, back-to-back fertility treatments if your mental health is suffering. “Give yourself permission to ‘take a break’ between treatments if it becomes too physically or emotionally draining,” Coffelt says. “Talk with your doctor or a Reproductive Endocrinologist about timelines and recommendations.”