



Precious Babies by Kate Brian

I read this book as a former colleague of Kate's and also as someone who was unsuccessful with assisted conception, though we went on to parent through adoption. There are still moments when the pangs of 'what might have been' can bring back to the surface the emotions from our own treatment; so I started to read on a Saturday morning when everyone was busy in the house. It meant it wasn't just before bed time so if I needed a hug there was someone close by!

The book isn't just one of those pregnancy books that seem to assume you've had fun in getting pregnant and are now in a relaxed state, wholly enjoying your first trimester. It starts at day one, getting the result and taking time to reassure that the doubts, anxieties and fears are quite normal reactions along with the hopes and excitement. Many of our members have shared that the two week wait is the hardest part of fertility treatment; then following a positive result is like having that two week wait extended to the first scan.

There is sensible advice shared in a realistic way, with personal experiences,

expert views and counsellor input along the way. I found some of the counsellor comments to be a bit harsh, but on the whole all of the comments were helpful in raising awareness of many of the thoughts and feelings shared by people as they progress through their pregnancy.

One contributor shared how the IVF had overshadowed her pregnancy; however, by sharing any anxieties, fears and concerns you may encounter in the ACe-Babes forums, enables these to be left there and for you to go on to enjoy any parts of your pregnancy you can.

The book also shares the sadness of miscarriage and of trying again afterwards. For me somehow this made the book even more special, in sharing personal experiences it showed that people are really quite amazing and do find the strength to go on, to pick themselves up and continue in their quest to have a family.

As the book approached the chapter on birth it became clearer just how much pressure women who are pregnant after treatment, put on themselves to portray the ideal mother-to-be. Planning the perfect birth, breastfeeding successfully is of course a given, being able to show the world that of course you're coping brilliantly. It's as if we almost collude with the

unhelpful comments shared by people if you do dare to moan publicly, who reply that you've chosen this so why complain.

There is good sensible advice about pregnancy, birth and beyond about being kind to you. Trying not to worry about domestic chores, that it's okay to feel incompetent and sharing how we really can be incredibly hard on ourselves when we think that what other people think is important.

The book, quite brilliantly, doesn't stop after the birth; it keeps going and getting better! The sections on family life, sharing information, trying again – not trying again and moving on to the teenage years all contain equally useful information for anyone parenting after experiencing infertility.

For some this might be a really useful positive book to read during treatment, some may prefer not to get hold of a copy until they get their positive result; but it is one book everyone going through treatment should know about.

I finished the book the same day and immediately tweeted to Kate that I thought it was a hug in a book for anyone newly pregnant following a treatment cycle.

Tracey Sainsbury
Former member of I N UK staff