

Lesley's story

I met my husband when I was in my 20s, we got married, and when I was 35 we decided the time was right to have children. After a few months nothing had happened and we were referred for IVF. It was a real shock; one minute we were trying naturally and the next we were in the IVF clinic. We just assumed everything would happen naturally; if only we'd known how fast my fertility was falling, our lives may have turned out differently. We felt isolated and alone. The only people we told were our parents and all around us friends had young children or were getting pregnant naturally.

Over the next three years we went through six rounds of IVF. Before we started we made the decision to stop when I was 40 and we stuck to that. By this time we were done, physically, emotionally and financially. But it was so hard. We were never offered support or help of any kind and felt as if we were the only people in the world who couldn't have children.

I felt completely alone; I didn't know who I was or my place in the world. On the outside I was projecting the Lesley who was ambivalent about children, the Lesley that was tough and strong; but inside I was falling apart. My head knew that I wasn't going to be a mother, but it was taking my heart a long time to catch up. I know now that I was grieving, but I didn't know then. I just assumed I felt sad.

We hibernated for about a year and didn't see friends because we couldn't cope with children. Then we joined More To Life (MTL) and met some couples who have become our closest friends. Together with these other wonderful couples, slowly we started to get our lives back together, but still felt sad. Then my life fell apart again when my father in law died, followed a few months later by my mum. Now I knew I was grieving and did what I'd learned to do, which was to box it away. And there it stayed. I just carried on and sadness became my new norm.

When I was 47 I resigned from my job. I had no idea who I was and what I wanted, but I knew it wasn't this. All of a sudden I had real freedom and flexibility in my life and a big question to answer; now what shall I do?

I decided to train as a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) Master Practitioner, and two things happened: The inner work I did replaced my grief, sadness and other negative emotions with self-confidence, self-acceptance, inner peace and happiness; I learned how to use the techniques to help others to heal and to live a positive life.

I decided to set up a coaching business to help women. I wanted to support childless women but didn't feel strong enough to do it because it meant being really open about my story and myself. In the end I reached out and asked for help which was a big step as I had a belief that I SHOULD be able to do this on my own. I worked with a coach who believed in me and the difference I wanted to make in the world. She supported me in changing my business to support childless women. It was a real turning point. Since 2013 I've been sharing my story and helping other women to reclaim theirs. I've continued to learn and to develop new skills. And for the first time in my life, I absolutely love my life and I'm becoming authentically me, all of which is wonderful.

As a couple, joining MTL was the best thing we did. Knowing that others have walked the same path, that they understand and support you is incredible. I don't know what our lives would be like without our MTL friends.

What I've learned

I believe that it's impossible to go through the challenge of infertility and not be changed by the process. I've used those changes to create meaning in my life. There's no doubt that I'm different now. I'm stronger than I thought, I know myself a lot better and I'm a lot more empathic. I've learned so many new skills and have reclaimed my creativity.

I've also discovered that:

Time will only heal you so much - you need to take positive action to heal your grief and sadness; It is hard to do this on your own - working with someone who has been where you are and knows the way out makes the journey so much easier.

Childlessness has proved to be a gift because without it I wouldn't be enjoying the wonderful life that I now have. I want to show other women that they can have a positive life. I want to show them that they don't have to hide, and if they take action to find support they can become who they were meant to be.

Bio - Lesley Pyne supports childless women to heal and to create a life they love. She uses her first-hand experience in coming to terms a life without children and her professional skills in NLP and time line techniques to help other childless women. Her website is:

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Note: More To Life is the community run by Fertility Network UK for those facing the challenges of childlessness.