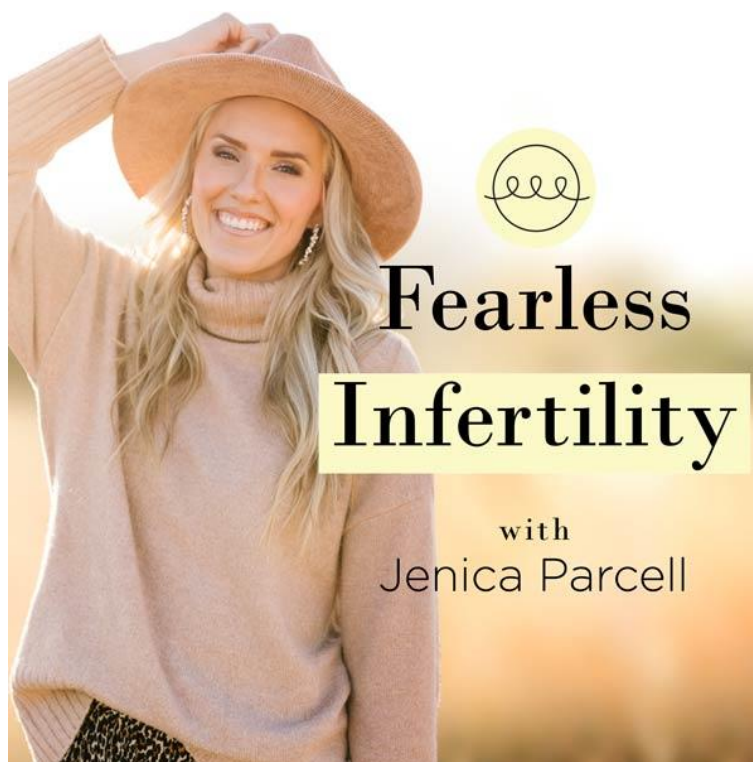


18. Supporting Your Partner Through Infertility with Eli Weinstein



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jenica Parcell

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Hi, friends. Welcome to *Fearless Infertility* a podcast for women struggling with the mental anguish that comes with infertility. My name is Jenica and after suffering in silence for too long I was able to pull myself out of the dark, take control over my mind, and create joy during my infertility experience. I'm here to help you do the same, sister. Let's dive into today's show.

Welcome back to Fearless Infertility. I am thrilled to get to share with you my podcast guest today. His name is Eli Weinstein. He is a licensed therapist and he and his wife experienced infertility and now have a beautiful little girl. His wife was diagnosed with PCOS, which is what started their journey with IVF treatment and their struggles there.

He hosts a podcast called The Dude Therapist. And he is my first male podcast guest and I really, really enjoyed our conversation because it opened up the door to help educate us as women in how to create a safe space for our spouses to be able to tell us about what they're experiencing.

I think we've gone really, really wrong in our society where men when expressing their emotions are seen as weak. And I think it's such a joke, because we're all human, men just as much as women experience emotions that are difficult, that are trying, and that aren't bad, right?

I think that one of my goals here on this podcast is to really eliminate the lie is that there are good emotions and bad emotions. There are simply emotions. And we might like them more than the others, but I think it's healthy as a human to experience them all. And men are also human beings, right. And they're not robots, and they shouldn't be strong all of the time.

And in our conversation today we talk about how to open up a safe space for your husband to experience human emotions. Because, like I mentioned, in our society it's not seen as manly or okay to not be okay, and to have normal human emotions while going through an experience like infertility with us.

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We talk about the thoughts that help him now during infertility and would have prevented a panic attack after his daughter was born because he was trying to be too strong. And he was getting mad at himself for not acting in certain ways that he thought were right.

And I love our conversation because doing certain things that we talk about here in this episode have really improved me and Tyler's relationship. And I honestly feel like for most of our marriage we've had a really incredible relationship. But when I opened up to him that I wanted to hear about the things that he was scared of, and I wanted to hear about the things he was going through. And that I didn't think there was anything wrong with him when he was experiencing sadness, for instance. I think that just really allowed him to be like, "Oh, okay, I'm safe here in our relationship." And it's helped us to grow and become even stronger in our marriage.

This episode is truly incredible and talks about that and how to be a great support to your partner during infertility. And I am very excited to share this episode with you. So let's get started.

Jenica: Welcome back, my friends. First of all, can we talk about what a jerk I am? Like, honestly, here was my night last night. Okay, we got home a little bit late from a little weekend trip. It was Tyler's birthday, but we also attended a funeral of my brother in law's father. And it was a whirlwind weekend, we got home a little bit late last night, we go to sleep. Goldie wakes us up at about four in the morning, she's throwing up.

And then normally my kids will go to school on the day that I'm recording this. And they didn't because obviously she's sick. And I didn't want Harris to go to school and get all the other kids sick in case he's carrying it. And so I didn't prepare for this episode as much as I would have liked to. Which is fine, honestly the episode is incredible. We really get to what I wanted to get to, and it helped me a lot and I know it will help you.

But there's one problem, and the problem is that I literally pronounce the guests name wrong. Yeah, that I did that. So, his name is Eli Weinstein, I

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called him Eli. Eli, thank you for being so kind to me. He didn't even correct me, he's so nice. And he's such an awesome person. He really, really opened up to me about the emotions during infertility.

And like I said in the intro, he is my first male guest and it's so rare for men to feel comfortable talking about infertility because society has conditioned all of us to really think that it's not okay for men to open up about their emotions. It's not the manly thing to do. They always need to be strong all the time, which I genuinely think is an absolute joke. Because do we want to be married to robots or do we want to be married to men? I, for one, enjoy, you know, being married to an actual real human.

And we talk about such incredible things in this episode. But really quickly before we get started, I wanted to share with you I'm still giving away the pajamas and socks from The Slice Of Sun. They are the buttery soft, delightful things to put on your body when you're going to bed. Because they're just like such a comforting piece of clothing to truly remind yourself that you're part of this incredible infertility community of women who are thinking the same things as you are, who are experiencing the same things as you are.

And I want you to remember when you're wearing them that you are not alone. You are a part of an incredible community and you have access to a ton of incredible resources here. And I'm really proud of you for showing up for yourself today to learn these tools to be able to better your lives immediately.

So I give away a pair of pajamas and socks every week to someone who has subscribed, rated, and reviewed the podcast on Apple Podcasts. And the winner this week, the username is MelG615. The title of her review was strength and peace.

And she says, "Jenica is so strong and you can tell she's full of peace just by the way she speaks. It just brings about a strength and peace in myself listening to her. I appreciate all of her great insight and ways to adjust my

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thinking to live a more joyful life that is full of peace. Thank you for sharing. I've enjoyed following her on Instagram, and I'm looking forward to hearing more."

Thank you so much. Please email me at hello@thesliceofsun.com with your address and your size preference and we will get that shipped out to you. If everyone could continue to leave reviews after subscribing to Fearless Infertility on Apple Podcasts, I would love that because it helps those who have no idea about these tools and resources to be able to find them when they're searching for infertility related topics on Apple Podcasts. So I will continue to be giving away pajamas and socks every week if you do that.

And I loved your review because I think that for me peace is the best thing that I can desire. I always want to feel a sense of peace. And that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm happy. I think peace and happiness are two different things.

Peace can mean just simple acceptance into our current circumstances. And for me, peace is such a desired emotion because it means that I'm thinking a thought that is accepting reality and accepting where I'm at. And it's accepting myself in love, and not trying to be someone else, do something else, or fight against my current circumstances.

So I really love in your review that you said that it really brings you peace. Because that's genuinely what I think these tools can do for all of us.

So let's get into Eli's podcast episode. When I say Eli just block that out in your mind and replace it with Eli, okay? Ready, go. Let's get into the episode today.

Jenica: All right everybody, I am super excited to share with you today somebody that I recently became acquainted with online. That's why I love the internet. It's a two-edged sword because it's going to be a crazy, crazy

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place, but I think it's also a really beautiful place where we can connect with people that we normally would never meet.

And so I am very excited to introduce you Eli to you today. He is a therapist. And I love that we have him on the podcast today because he can share the male perspective. And this podcast and The Slice Of Sun is specifically for women, but men go through infertility as well, obviously, right?

I think there's not as much feedback or as much perspective from men. So I'm very excited that he's so willing and open to share about it. So hello, Eli, thank you so much for being here.

Eli: Hi, thanks for having me. I'm really, really so excited. You know, your podcast does great things for so many people. And I think it's important to have all sides because there are two people involved in the infertility process. Whether they're both diagnosed with infertility or only one is, it's still part of the loss of a potential family for both of them. And it's sad and it's scary.

Jenica: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for stating that, I agree. And I think that it's a partnership and a support system. And it's important that we support each other through infertility. And I think that as men and women, we experience it differently perhaps. But I also don't think that one is better or worse than the other. I think it's like, it's different, just like all of our life experiences are different.

So I would love for you to start with giving us a little background on you and your wife's infertility experience.

Eli: Yeah, so my wife knew that she had PCOS because it runs in her family. But like we found out, and I'm sure a lot of your listeners know that PCOS doesn't look the same for each person. And just because it might cause someone to be infertile, it might not cause someone else to be infertile. And the symptoms are different.

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So for us, we tried for about a year, year and a half or so. Just a regular natural way, not expecting that anything would have to come out from it. And it wasn't working. So we didn't wait, we didn't ask, we just went right to a specialist and found someone who took our insurance, which is really important so we can afford it. And we found out that both of us had infertility issues.

And it was an interesting thing for me because I always assumed as someone who was never involved in the infertility world, that it's a man's issue as well. I'm like, "Oh, a woman gives birth, it has nothing to do with me as a guy and as a husband."

Jenica: Yeah, that's a good point.

Eli: And then it was the long journey of the shots, and the tests, and the scratches, and the extractions, and the implantation. All the things, the words and everything that we did, back and forth and back and forth, early appointments.

And really, my wife, I have to give kudos to her because she's a warrior. Early mornings, late at nights, on her way to work, on her way home from work, really took the brunt of most of being prodded and stuck with needles. And it was a hard experience. We had one failed transfer and we weren't sure if we're going to keep going with it. Of course we wanted to, but it's very hard to do all that.

And now we have an almost two-year-old baby. And we're still infertile, like we still have infertility issues, it doesn't go away. And we're still starting that process and thinking about well now timing, shots, this, that, the other thing, it's still very, very, very pertinent to our lives.

Jenica: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's so interesting that you say that too because recently my husband and I, we have five-year-old, well they're almost five. And recently, I feel like kind of like of our head is above water now. I feel like for a while there just raising little kids it was like, "I don't know if we're

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ever going to do this again.” But recently we've kind of opened up our minds to maybe wanting to try for another one.

And I was very surprised, honestly, by my reaction to it. When I would tell some of my friends or open up a little bit about it to our family, I would just get a lot of anxiety and I would feel anxious, and I would just want to cry. I'm like, “Where is this coming from?” Because honestly, it surprised me even.

And I kind of traced it back to this thought that for me I was like, “Oh no, I've experienced infertility with that, check it off the list and now I get to have kids normally.” And that's not how it works unfortunately. And I wish it was that way.

Eli: That would be great.

Jenica: It would, yeah. But I think it was this like thought that for some reason in my mind I was like, “Oh, I've been there, done that, moving on.” But yeah, I mean, it's still here, right? It's like, when you want to grow your family again, it's still there.

Eli: Yeah, and it's a hard thing to get back on that horse and to deal with the ups and downs of emotions and the late nights of shots and the pain and suffering of loss. And it's a very hard thing for me as a husband, I'm dealing with my own stuff. And then I have to also be there for my wife, which is a pleasure and I love her to pieces.

But at the same time, it's just that support system is very limited. It's kind of taboo sometimes in certain communities. I'm a religious Orthodox Jew and people don't really talk about it that much. So the fact that I realized through the course of my infertility, my wife's infertility, the importance of men, and women, but for me as a guy talking about what it's like to go through infertility, and the struggle of wanting a family, and how that can play with your mental health and emotions. And it's very hard.

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But that's what drives me to post about it more, to talk about it openly, to talk at conferences. And now that I'm a therapist I can talk about the mental health side with a lot of training and expertise behind it.

Jenica: Yeah, I love that. And I think that the internet is such an amazing thing because I think when I first experienced infertility six or seven years ago, I didn't know a whole lot of people who had. And I love that it's becoming so much more common to talk about.

And it's so interesting too that for some reason there's a lot of thoughts that surround infertility that cause people to feel very shameful about it. And so I love that as a male, you are very open about it. Because for some reason, you know, I've reached out to people asking them to share their story as women and they're like, "Yeah, I would love to but my husband doesn't want me to really talk about it." Can you speak to that a little bit as why you think that there's so much shame around infertility?

Eli: I think there's a stigma of men sharing feelings in general. Whether it's mental health, whether it's any feelings in a marriage, they're more closed off when they have feelings or struggling with something, it's kind of like they become a turtle.

And so to put that out there, the ego of I couldn't produce a child or it didn't work for us, very intimate things can be very hard for men to share. I think women are more ingrained to look for support. To find emotional support. To find support groups and feelings. To talk about them openly with not as much shame compared to men.

Whether it's a societal issue, or just something that we've learned over the years, I don't know. There are plenty of studies that talk about that, that I don't know offhand. I do talk about that kind of issue of society and what we've learned from watching or told as kids, to suck it up, to deal with it, to man up, to grow up, all those things. The be a man mentality. But I'm not like that.

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So for me I was searching for that support that my wife had bundles of and I did not, because there are not a lot of men talking about it. So I was like, if men are not going to talk about it as much, now that they don't, there are a select few that do on social media, I'm like, "I'm going to talk about it."

And I'm part of a support emotional support team as a therapist for an organization that deals with infertility. And it's always the female therapists get the calls. I don't get any calls. And they're like, "Oh, my husband wants to talk to you." And we talk for 10 minutes and they never call back because it's scary. It's a very scary thing to admit and talk about your feelings as a guy.

Jenica: Yeah. Which is such a sad thing for me. And I'm glad that we're talking about it now. Because as a wife, and as the women listening to this podcast, I think that it really is this messed up thing that we've created for ourselves in society where like, why should men not be able to freely feel comfortable talking about their emotions?

Like genuinely I feel like society looks at that as weak. And it's so ridiculous to me, because it's like, we're all humans. And we all experience hard things. And I think it's so unhealthy to keep those emotions inside, because I've done it myself, and it was not healthy at all for me.

Eli: Yeah, and even if you look at just like the business side of the world, if you have a woman boss and they share their feelings, they're looked at negatively sometimes. As if a guy says something emotional, "Oh, he's so powerful. He's such as a leader." You know, while a woman is looked at as negatively. In the mental health and feeling world women sharing is so supported.

Look at social media, how many female accounts are there for businesses? And yourself and other people out there killing it, doing amazing work, but there are not a lot of male accounts about emotional intelligence, about emotional support, feelings, about growing, and inspiration and motivation. There are a handful. There are a lot of workout people, and business, and

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money, and finance people that are men on social media, but not the other side of the world.

So it is a sad thing, because this needs to be discussed. You know, this is a grief, it is a loss. It is a loss of some sort. Infertility can create a loss. If you never have a family that you dream and want, that's really sad and it's really important to talk it out with people and to have the support of your spouse and partner. To be on the same page, to be there for each other, as well as find individual supports is key.

Jenica: Yeah, I love that. And I think that segues perfectly into I was going through your Instagram, and you said something about how it's so toxic to always have – And I'm going to probably not say this as well as you did.

Eli: Go for it, paraphrase it.

Jenica: He said something about how it's basically toxic to always believe that being happy and positive all the time is a good thing. Can you tell me about your thoughts on processing all types of emotions, both good and “bad” emotions?

Eli: Well, I love that you added the “bad” because toxic positivity is this concept of like, “Just smile, you're fine.” Or like, “Wish and dream and everything will go great.” And I think there's a place for that, right? It's really important. I'm a big dreamer, I'm a big smiler, I love to be happy. But it doesn't mean you can't be sad because you can't be 100% happy because that's not physically possible.

And there's this mentality in the world that if you show some “negative” emotion and not be fully human, you're bad. But being human, like you said earlier, is feeling the spectrum of emotions. Just angry and sad, happy and joyful, there's so many in between. Irritated, right, disgusted, frustrated, annoyed. There's levels of happiness that are different, levels of sadness and anger that are different. And it's okay to have all them in the right balance of life.

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Being all angry is not good, being all happy is not good because then you don't feel what it means to actually be human. You're just a one show pony, you're not a real person, you're not fully a person. So this toxic positivity of just be a positive person and everything will go away, is not practical.

Jenica: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I totally agree with that. And I think it took me so many years – I'm in my 30s now – and it took me so many years to really understand that. I think that theoretically I was like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, I understand it.” But I didn't really take it to heart and I think that it's because we do it to ourselves.

We have all of these thoughts that layer on drama to our, again, “bad” experiences, where we're not allowing ourselves to be a human. So I've shared about this on my podcast before, but after my twins were born, I didn't really allow myself to admit that it was really overwhelming and exhausting being a twin mom, because I was so grateful. I had experienced infertility and I was so grateful to have them here.

And in a lot of ways it helped me because I really truly was able to enjoy a lot of the moments that I probably wouldn't have had I not wanted them so badly. But there were other times where I couldn't just allow myself to be sad for a minute and admit like, “Hey, you are going through a really hard time, you're really tired. It's exhausting being a mom of newborn twins. And just like let it be.” Versus thinking that was bad to think that way and doing things to cover it up, which is called buffering.

I would like eat some candy to feel better and do all these things that temporarily make you feel good for a few minutes and then adds on just more problems. Instead of just saying, “Hey, I'm a human being, this is how it's supposed to be.” And letting myself process them.

And then I also think you can't truly feel joy and happiness unless you do have those really low moments. It's just like you said, you would be like this monotone robot. And that's not what we came here on earth to be.

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Jenica: Yeah, and I love that you shared that. When my daughter was born, because of all the pressure, and the emotion, and the build up of this hope of having a child because we were infertile, having her was this explosion of emotions. It was an emergency C-section, it was all craziness. I ran to the bathroom and vomited after because I was so overwhelmed with emotion, and joy, and worry at the same time in one fell swoop.

I actually had my first panic attack about a month and a half, two months into her life. Because it was just every buildup of the infertility process, everything being pushed aside for my wife to be okay, for my wife to be okay, for my wife to be okay.

As a therapist I was so focused on her with postpartum and pre-partum, and all those things that are real, legitimate things. I didn't focus on myself. And then in the end it smacked me right in the face. And I think it's really important that we take our emotion seriously. And our feelings are really important.

As parents, there's so many ups and downs. As humans there's so many ups and downs. So to say that one is better or worse, and one needs to be the be all and end all of life, that's not healthy because we need to embrace our feelings all across to be able to heal and feel and be okay.

Jenica: Yeah, I love that. And it's so true. Once you truly, genuinely believe that and take that upon yourself it's the most free feeling. Because you can truly just accept yourself as a whole human being and not beat yourself up when you are having these emotions that aren't ideal emotions.

Eli: Yeah, exactly.

Jenica: So as a therapist, I know this is kind of a big question.

Eli: I love big questions.

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Jenica: Good, you came to the right spot. So as a therapist, what would you say would be a few of your tips in really embracing ourselves and loving ourselves?

Eli: So I think the first thing is really identifying who you are and who you want to be. Not what social media tells us. Not what we see on TV and movies. Not what we see around us in our communities. But what we want to be and envision for ourselves. That's all that matters, right? If our family loves us, if we love ourselves, that's really what it comes down to. Whether I have the best curated pictures for social media and I look "perfect" or I have the right outfit for a certain picture is not going to create the life that I really want or need.

And it's really about actualizing that and making a list. What am I good at? What do I enjoy about myself? What attributes are really positive about me? Yeah, of course, write the bad ones too, the things that you don't enjoy about yourself. That's also part of who you are. It doesn't mean that you're any less, it makes you who you are and that's beautiful.

It doesn't mean that you have to be proud of all the things, it doesn't mean you have to like all the things that you might "think are negative" but it doesn't mean that you're unnatural or crazy, so to speak, to have those bad things about you that you might not enjoy. Whether it's your body, whether it's your emotions during a certain time of when someone says this, that, and the other thing, whether it's how you are as a business person. All those things that make you who you are, [inaudible] who you are, and that's wonderful.

The second thing is have the support group that you need, find that community. Whether it's friends, whether it's a partner, whether it's that bestie from when you were younger. Whoever it is that when you need someone, you can call someone, no matter what, no questions asked. Because we all need that person in our corner.

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And it doesn't have to be your partner, it can be anyone. And that's really important so that you feel the love, whether you love yourself, you know that someone else gives you that love whenever you need it if you're not at your fullest to appreciate yourself.

Jenica: I love that.

Eli: Just a few things, a few things.

Jenica: I love those. Those are amazing. And while you were talking it made me think about another question that I have for you. And you said to reach out for support and to get the support system that you need. For me, this coaching program that I have done has helped me immensely with this because I am, I mean, I'm a self-proclaimed control freak. I would love to just control everything because in my brain I think that everything would go much better. It wouldn't, but I've convinced myself many times that it would. And me trying to control other people in a way that I think is a good thing has not worked out well for me. And primarily what I'm talking about specifically is people pleasing.

And so I've seen this amongst my community where they don't want to feel like a burden for people. Which is honestly a form of people pleasing where they think they can control how other people perceive them. And they have this trial of infertility and they want to talk about it for so long. Or I guess they feel comfortable talking about it for a certain amount of time. And then in their minds there's like a limit to them annoying people or being a burden to people? Do you have a perspective on people pleasing and trying to control how others perceive you?

Eli: 1,000%, I'm part of that as well. I think as humans most of us want to be liked. We're social beings, we want to interact with others. And I always talk about this as a joke that if I had a superpower, it would not be flying. It would be being able to read minds to hear what they're thinking about me, because it would make me so much easier. I wouldn't be as on edge, I wouldn't be as worried, "What if I say this? What if I do that?"

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So we all go through it. And I think it's something that's really hard, because 9 times out of 10, maybe we'll drop it down to 8 out of 10, the person is never thinking about the things that you think they're thinking about. They're probably not even noticing the thing that you think that they're thinking about or wondering about.

And I think there is a thing of going through infertility and feeling like a burden. Or, "Oh, here we go again, they're talking about it." And the worries about tiptoeing on eggshells, trying not to hurt someone's feelings who might be going through a rough time. And that's impossible because everyone's going through something. If it's not infertility it could be a loss in the family. It could be a mental health issue. It could be they just got fired. It could be an internal thing or external thing; we have no idea what someone's going through in their everyday life.

So we have to be as sensitive as possible and we have to realize that we cannot please everyone. We might try to limit who we please, maybe our core circle, or maybe ourselves. But in the end trying to please everyone is impossible. There's always going to be haters, you can post a puppy picture and someone who's a cat lover is going to hate you. I mean, you can't win.

Jenica: It's so true, yeah.

Eli: And that's okay. You don't have to win life is not about winning, it's about being okay with what you have and doing the best that you can with it, end of story. And if you please some people, good. And if you don't, you have to live with that uncertainty and worry.

Jenica: Yeah. Yeah, and I love that, really, I've been really trying to ingrain this in my own brain the last few months because I've really, truly learned that I cannot control, no matter what I say, what you are thinking about me. It's like your reaction is based on the thoughts that you're having. And so I do know that a lot of people in the infertility community are concerned about that. And I think that's an important message to just reiterate, that no

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matter what you do, it's the right thing to do. Because we can't control the thoughts that other people think about us or infertility specifically. And, yeah, it's a hard one, I think.

Eli: It's a hard one. And I would say I had a friend of mine who did something very interesting. They went through infertility for like 10 years. And in the Jewish community people have kids early, young, a lot of kids. Whether it's two, whether it's six, who knows, it depends on the family and what circle and where you grew up.

And they created an email for their best friends and circle to give them a heads up when they were giving birth, or to let them know so that they can deal with their feelings of infertility. And then still be able to give love to their friend when they saw them in person without having that gut reaction of frustration and annoyance that they didn't have a kid.

I thought that was genius because we can all navigate our emotions and feelings in this world. And sometimes it's hard to ask for that. Sometimes it's hard to ask for help from friends. Like, "You know what? I really wish that X, Y, and Z would happen." And someone's like, "But it's not my life. I don't care." But it doesn't hurt to ask because if you never ask for help the answer is probably going to be no. But if you ask it could be a yes.

And I think the ability to be able to reach out to people, remember what their issue is, and share how you're feeling about it, I think is so important. And with infertility you need that support, because you can't go it alone. You can't do it alone. And there are so many communities out there right now that give so much support to infertility, it's unbelievable and beautiful.

Jenica: Yeah, it really is. I agree. Okay, so my next question for you is what is a thought during infertility that helps bring you back to a place of peace?

Eli: That I'm doing all I can. You know, I'm a very spiritual person and I think that I have a lot of hope and faith that things work out. When my wife – Well, I'm getting a little tingly and emotional right now. My wife, when the

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transfer failed, she was extremely distraught. I mean, to the point of crying and screaming on the floor, and I couldn't console her.

And she knows about this. We've talked about this on my podcast together, so I have permission to talk about it. It was one of the lowest moments that I've seen her at. And it was very hard for me as a husband to see her go through such a struggle. I had no idea how to handle it, and I'm a trained therapist. But that wasn't the hat I was wearing, I'm there to be a husband. Not the therapist, which is not a word, but I love it. And to be able to truly be there was just to sit there with her and hold her and cry.

At that moment, when we [inaudible] do this again, it was hope that I looked at my wife, who is, like I said, a warrior and a powerhouse of a human being. And I truly believed that we could do this together. And I think the infertility process has made us a stronger couple. We are stronger together because we had to get to those deep, dark, emotional places that we probably would have never gone to unless someone died in our family. Which hopefully doesn't happen for many years.

But this was a place where we truly connected together on emotions versus before. And it wasn't happy go lucky emotions like love and marriage. It was really scary and some hard places that we had to discuss about who we were, what we needed from each other, and how we can be there for each other. And that was the thought reminding myself that if we do this and continue to do this, hopefully we will have a kid, I hope it works out. But if it doesn't, I know I have the best person next to me to help me through that. And that was the really big key thing for me.

Jenica: That's amazing. And that really is such a gift that infertility gives us our situations like that, that we wouldn't have otherwise like that beautiful relationship.

Eli: It's gratitude.

Jenica: Yeah.

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Eli: I'm grateful for my wife. I'm grateful that I have a daughter. A child that I might not have never been able to have. So like I told you before we started recording, she's been sick and it's been really hard. And I've been dealing with the brunt of it because I'm home as a therapist working. And there are moments where I have to sit there and remind myself, "I love my daughter. I have a daughter. I have a child." Because some parents don't appreciate that as much. And not that you don't appreciate your children, I'm not saying that, but the sense of gratitude that I have at a level that I might not have ever been able to get to because of the infertility process.

Jenica: Yeah. And that's like, honestly, a priceless gift. I completely agree with you there. I don't think everybody needs infertility to get to that place as a parent but I think I did. Because, I mean, truly, it really is the best gift in those hard times where it just softens the edges a little bit where you really can be grateful for the moments that aren't ideal, when your kids are sick.

My daughter was throwing up last night, as I shared with you, and like it didn't really faze me as much as it probably would have had I not experienced infertility because these are the moments where you're able to help your precious little ones that you prayed for for so many years. And it's so interesting because, yes, it's easy to look back and say I'm grateful for my infertility now. But the hard part is finding like the silver linings while you're going through it. And I think one thing that you pointed out that listeners who don't have kids yet can hold on to is that relationship building experience with our spouse currently.

Eli: Yeah. And it is something that, well if you don't go through infertility, I wouldn't wish that upon anyone to go through infertility. But in the end, it's about the person next to you. It really is the support, the ups, the downs, the laughs, the cries, the shots, the holding each other, the being there for each other. That's what matters. That's your rock. That's your support system. And if you can come together, you'll get through it, whether you have a kid or not. Whether it's one person's infertility, or both of yours

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diagnosis, you will get through it together. That's the biggest key, because you have to. Because it's your future, it's not one or the other, it's your future. And that was really what connected us.

Jenica: I love that. Thank you. I want to ask you another question regarding when you had a panic attack after your daughter was born. I teach in my coaching that it's always about our thoughts. Our thoughts always cause our feelings that cause our actions that are causing our results. Can you share with us some of the thoughts you were having during that time? And then tell us maybe thoughts that you should have or maybe – I shouldn't say should, I don't have to wear should because it basically goes against reality. But maybe that you wish you would have had that would have prevented you from getting into a place of not processing your emotions.

Eli: Yeah. Well, first of all, that's an amazing thought process for you as a coach, that's CBT therapy right there. That's the cognitive behavioral therapy of thoughts connected to feelings, behaviors, and actions. How our thoughts impact our daily life. So great job.

Jenica: Awesome, thank you.

Eli: Good for you. No, but in the end one of the two things that I regret from those moments is in the middle of night pulling my hair out thinking that I'm dying because I'm having a panic attack was beating myself up. I'm a therapist, I should know how to deal with this. Come on, get it together. You shouldn't be this way. All the shoulds, right?

Jenica: Yes, the should word or the shouldn't word.

Eli: And I didn't embrace what we discussed before, that I can have a "negative emotion." I don't have to be perfect; I don't have to be all together. I can be Humpty Dumpty sometimes and be broken into pieces, it doesn't mean that something's wrong with me or that I'm a problem. And there was a lot of beating up, self-criticism, of, "Come on, get it together.

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You got this. You got to be there, be better. Stand up, show up.” All those things that were not embracing the anxiety I was having.

The second thing was that there's a psychologist, Dr. David Burns, who has a book on anxiety. And he talks about the idea of like cleaning your room. If I asked you to clean your room and you take everything and put it under the rug, or under the bed, it looks clean but it's really not. The dirt is still there.

So I never really, through the beginning, or even during the pregnancy I never processed that I was going to have a kid. Because the women or whoever is carrying the child, it's growing inside them. They are processing that feeling, they can accept that. It was one day I wasn't a father and the next day I was. And it was a huge change.

And I never talked it out. I never cleaned my room. I never looked into what was bothering me and shared it with people who I cared about, who were my support. So that's what I would look back in, is to get that support earlier and not let it build up to where it did. And not try to handle it alone and try to be the strong one. But to feel my feelings and go from there.

Jenica: I love that, that is such good advice because most of the people that listen to this podcast are women. And so I think it's important for all of us to know, like for some reason like we talked about in the beginning, in society you just don't think to ask these types of things to men.

And I have had my relationship grow so much more because of one of my other friends, Mike Lemieux, he has an Instagram account and he opened up about some of his problems that he was experiencing after him and his wife had experienced a miscarriage. And it really kind of for the first time opened my eyes a little bit to asking my husband how he was doing. And not even necessarily in infertility. I know we focus on infertility, but in everything. Like with work, and like when are you scared, and tell me about times when you're frustrated. And really, I could tell he appreciated it so much.

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It was like a breath of fresh air for him because I think that he was so used to society telling him that he had to be strong all the time, and to have me give him permission to tell me about his fears and tell me about the times where he's not strong, and then know that I don't expect him to be strong all the time, it was like it opened up this whole new door into the depth of our relationship that we hadn't experienced before.

And we've been married for like 13, I don't even know 13 or 14 years. I'm starting to lose track. But I mean that's kind of a long time and to be able to grow our relationship even further, it's been so amazing for us.

Eli: But you're talking about something that's so important for a lot of people. You know, I make this joke sometimes about Friends, Friends the show. When Rachel is with Bruce Willis, or whatever, Jennifer's with Bruce. I just mix and match the two names. And she wants him to open up and not be so strong. And she does and he cries the entire episode, like a child. And she's like, "I can't handle this, it's too much. I opened the floodgates, what do I do?" It's a very funny scene, it's very humorous. That's not going to happen to most people.

So to give a space, a safe space, and to say, "Hey, how are you feeling?" It has to be built on trust and respect from the other side for the person to feel safe to be able to say, "They're asking it without using it against me. They're asking you out of love. They're asking me because they want to know how I'm doing. And whatever I tell them, they're going to love me anyways, and respect me and care about me." For men to be open they just have to feel like it's comfortable and safe so they don't jump into their turtle shell, like I said earlier.

And for the women out there who might be afraid to ask their men because they might turn into Bruce Willis on Friends and cry like that, it's probably not going to happen. But it doesn't hurt to ask. And if it does end up there, maybe he needed to do that, and that's great.

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Jenica: Yeah. And I think it all starts with really accepting first ourselves and really like internalizing the fact that there's nothing wrong with us when we're feeling sad. Because then we can then give that grace to other people. Like I don't think my husband's broken when he's feeling sad, or when he's feeling fearful because I don't think that I'm broken when I'm feeling sad or feeling fearful.

Eli: Love that. Love that.

Jenica: Yeah. All right. Well, Eli, I thank you so much for coming on the podcast today. Where can my listeners find you and connect with you?

Eli: Well, thank you for having me. And I'm on social media mostly. I'm on Instagram, it's EliWeinstein_LCSW. I have a podcast called The Dude Therapist, where I'm a dude and a therapist, and that's the name.

Jenica: I love it.

Eli: Surprise. And I actually have a private practice that just opened where I work with people in New York. I'm an LCSW which means I'm a therapist and taking clients all the time. And if you have any problems or issues reach out anytime. I'd love to help you or help you on your journey to find wellness however that is, anytime, anywhere.

Jenica: Thank you so much, we appreciate that. And I will link all of his resources, his website, his Instagram, and everything in the show notes if anyone wants to access those. Again, Eli, thank you so much for being here and we'll see you guys later.

To celebrate the launch of the show. I'm going to be giving away a pajama and sock sets from The Slice of Sun that I have personally designed. They are the most buttery, soft, delightful things you'll ever put on your body. And I'm going to be giving away five bundles to five lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you love the show. I genuinely

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want your honest feedback so I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value to you who are experiencing infertility. Visit thesliceofsun.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter and I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

Thank you for listening to *Fearless Infertility*. If you want more tools and resources to help you during your infertility experience visit thesliceofsun.com. See you next week.