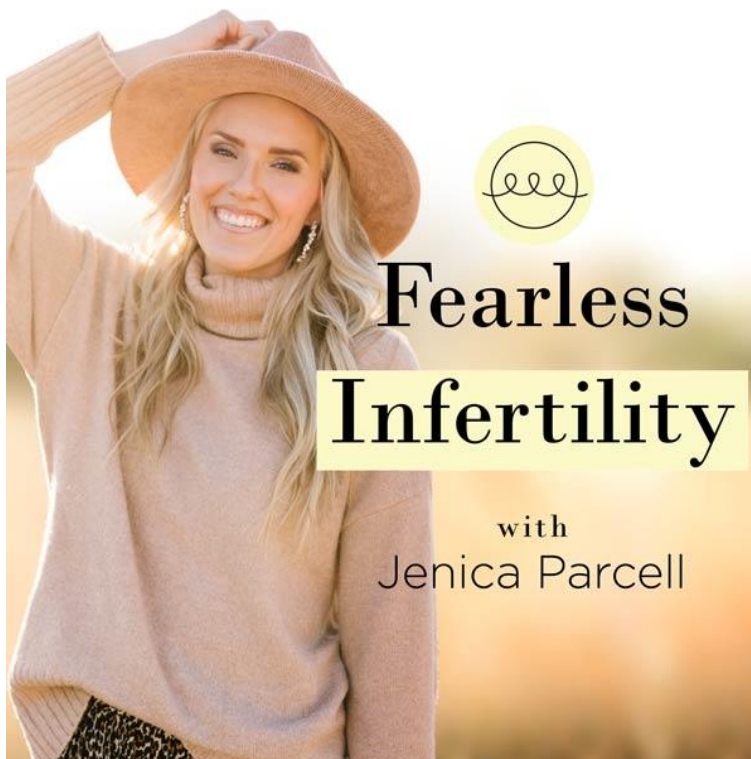


24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jenica Parcell

[Fearless Infertility](#) with Jenica Parcell

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

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 today that I get to introduce to you today Chloe Melas. I was introduced to Chloe through an article she wrote for CNN entitled Why Aren't We Talking About Male-Factor Infertility?

Chloe is an entertainment reporter for CNN and I read this article and loved it because I loved the bravery that her and her husband exuded in sharing about their infertility experience. And I love what they talk about frequently, which is that male-factor infertility isn't commonly talked about.

And males often feel that they can't share about it or there's shame or there's guilt around it. And I love that they're really opening up the conversation about male factor infertility and normalizing it so that others can feel less alone in their experience.

Like I said, Chloe is an entertainment reporter for CNN. She lives in New York. She's a mother to two boys, Luke and Leo. And I'm excited for you to get to listen to our conversation about normalizing the infertility conversation so that others know that they are not alone.

Jenica: I am so excited that you are here with me today. And whether you are doing laundry, or you are driving, or you are just cleaning your house, one thing that I love about Apple Podcasts is that you can listen to them while also doing mundane things that are totally boring and mindless but need to get done, like laundry. You can listen, and learn, and grow and honestly be really entertained while you do those super boring things.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

So I'm really glad that you are here with me today no matter what it is that you are also doing as well. And that you are taking the time to fill up your cup and use these tools to really take with you today and make changes to your life if you want to today to really live a more full, better life.

So before we get started into today's podcast interview with Chloe Melas, I wanted to share with you a couple reviews from Apple Podcasts. For those of you who are new here, I give away a pair of my pajamas and socks every single Monday to someone who left a review on Apple podcasts.

And the reason I do this is because there are many, many women who are experiencing infertility alone and they have absolutely no idea that I exist. They have no idea about these tools that are available to them to help them with their mind during infertility. And they have no idea that they have access to connect with you and this incredible community of women with infertility.

And leaving reviews helps the podcast become more discoverable to women like that. So it's important to me I appreciate those of you who have left reviews and please continue to do so.

The winner of today's pajamas and socks goes to username agkmccoy. She says, "The power of knowing I'm not alone. You hear through the social media grapevine of many women sharing about their infertility journeys, but there is something powerful about listening to this firsthand experience. I heard snippets of exact experiences and feelings I had during my recent miscarriage.

I had the overwhelming grateful realization that it is normal to suffer setbacks during this process. And I'm so thankful to feel the sisterhood of going through pain related to trying to conceive. Loved the positive reminder that all of it truly is a miracle. Thank you for sharing." Please email me at hello at theliceofsun.com with your size and address and we'll get your PJs and socks sent out to you.

[Fearless Infertility](#) with Jenica Parcell

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

Another review I wanted to highlight today was, I think the username is – Oh, here we go, liketoshop31. Girl, I love her username. I do too. She says, “The encouragement I needed. Started listening to this podcast during my first round of IVF. Jenica’s words truly gave me hope and encouragement on days where I want to give up. I highly recommend this podcast for anyone struggling with infertility or if you need some inspirational advice on dealing with negative thoughts.”

I love this, because while I direct my coaching specifically for women with infertility, I am super passionate and excited about, honestly, the fact that these tools can help you during any trial that you experience. So listening here and then being a part of my coaching program when it launches on September 1st will really help to attack any area of your life where you feel like it's a problem, or you need help, or you feel a little bit stuck.

I am so excited to be launching my coaching program on September 1st. And what we'll do is take these tools and actually apply them in your life. It's like the difference between telling someone how to paint and then actually creating a beautiful painting yourself.

And we will apply these tools and it's going to be such an incredible experience and I cannot wait to get to know you better. So make sure you're signed up for my newsletter. You can access that in the show notes. You can also go to thesliceofsun.com to be the first to know about the coaching program launch.

And I am giving out a couple of amazing freebies in the next month, including a checklist to do every morning to help you start off your day in a positive mindset. So that you can progress through any trial or problem that comes your way.

And then I'll also be doing a freebie where you can print out or give to those people who want to support you during infertility, but maybe perhaps have not experienced infertility themselves. And to help them understand what

[Fearless Infertility](#) with Jenica Parcell

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

you're experiencing a little bit more so they can then show up and support you in your experience.

So again, please sign up the sliceofsun.com or at the link in the show notes for the newsletter to receive all of that. Let's get into today's interview.

Jenica: Welcome back to Fearless Infertility, I am so excited to have Chloe Melas here with me today. Chloe was introduced to me by my manager actually, who manages some of my partnerships on my blog. And this was a few months ago and she said, "Hey, I would love for you to check out this article that Chloe Melas put out recently regarding male factor infertility."

And I read it and I thought it was so amazing that you had taken the time to spend your time and educating people a little bit more about it and normalizing it a little bit. And so thank you so much for being here with us today, Chloe.

Chloe: Thank you for having me, this is so exciting. I love your podcast so this is a real treat.

Jenica: Thank you. All right, so Chloe, I would love for you to start out and share with us, first of all, why did you decide to open up about your infertility?

Chloe: When my husband and I went through IVF the first time around for our son, Leo, we have two little boys, Leo and Luke. It was something that we kept really private. We didn't share it really with any of our friends or our family members. And there was so much stigma around it and we were embarrassed that we were having fertility problems, and we felt really isolated and alone.

But when we started sharing our journey in our inner circle, we realized that it is more common than you think. And by the time we got pregnant with our second son, Luke, with IVF we felt like we wanted to let people know that

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

what you see on social media is truly not— You see the end result, but you don't see the journey.

And we just wanted to share that we went through IVF. And it was a combination of a lot of factors. And we were completely overwhelmed, shocked, floored by the amount of responses that we got on that Christmas day that we shared.

Jenica: I love that. I feel like our situations, our experiences were a little bit similar because I had planned to share the success story at the end. And after three IUIs and two rounds of IVF it wasn't happening. And I felt like I was living this double life where I was sharing all the good stuff online and all the fun things and my life looked perfect, and then behind the scenes I was struggling with this big thing.

And after I had experienced a miscarriage on an airplane in China after our second round of IVF I was like, “All right, I'm exhausted from carrying this on my own and I'm just done.” And I decided to open up about it. And same thing, I was completely overwhelmed and shocked with how common it was.

I had no idea at the time and how many people reached out about it and were like, “Hey, me too, thanks for sharing.” And it just made me feel like I wasn't carrying the weight alone anymore.

Chloe: Yeah, when we decided that we were going to open up, we expected that people would be surprised. And I didn't really think about what the reaction would necessarily be, but it was so overwhelming. And also the amount of men that reached out to my husband privately and said, “Wow, your story really helps me.”

Because around that same time Brian shared that he struggled with male-factor infertility. I think in that same post, and then shortly after he wrote an

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

essay about it that you guys should all take a chance to read in Romper about dealing with male-factor infertility and the stigma around that.

And it was at that point that I was like, “All right, well, we've opened up about something so private, we're just going to keep sharing.” And we kept sharing and we just haven't stopped talking in the last two and a half years.

Jenica: Yeah. Well that's amazing. Okay, so let's rewind a little bit. And can you share with us what your infertility experience has been in starting and growing your family?

Chloe: Definitely. Well, I'm 35 now, my husband is going to be 37 in the fall. And when we got married we were young, I was 28 years old, my husband just turned 30. I'm from the south, I grew up in Atlanta, and I also grew up in Dallas, Texas. And I mean, just you go to college, you get married and you have kids, right?

Jenica: Right. Yeah, exactly.

Chloe: I mean you have a job too, but it's just really about when you're going to start your family. So my whole life I always knew I was going to be a mom, it was just no question. And for Brian, I mean, I knew he wanted to be a dad but it wasn't really something that we ever talked about seriously.

And about a year after getting married we decided to “start trying.” And we were just having unprotected sex. And after a few months, I'm very impatient, I went to my OBGYN and she did some blood work. And she said I was fine, but that if I was really concerned that Brian should go get a semen analysis. To which I was like, “Oh my God, he's never going to do that. It's probably going to offend him.”

And, of course, he wasn't thrilled to go get his sperm checked.

Jenica: Yeah, who would be, really?

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

Chloe: And of course he's like, "It's not going to be me. But, I mean, sure, I'll go do it." He's like the epitome of health, been on the cover of Men's Health multiple times. He's a stud, let's face it. And when you think about sperm and manhood and everything, it's so intertwined, right? Just culturally that like this is your manhood.

And so when Brian got his results back that he had all these issues with his sperm, he like ticked every single box, we started going to a fertility clinic. And at this particular fertility clinic they still assured us that we would be fine and we wouldn't need any fertility treatments. And they were just going to monitor my ovulation.

I would go in get blood work. They would make sure I was ovulating, and we would go home and have sex. And that wasn't working. And that was really stressful. And it was many appointments a month trying to, you know, as soon as your period is over get your blood tested, three days into your period get your blood tested, all these different things. And I hate needles.

So then, in the middle of all of this, after three IUIs I was like, "I can't do this anymore. I'm going to switch clinics." I found Dr. Reisman at Weill Cornell, in New York. He had worked with people from The Today's Show, and I'm a journalist and I was just like, "He sounds really cool. I'm going to try to go to him.

Begged for an appointment, got in. He was like, "Well, you guys are young, you seem healthy. I'm not going to say you need IVF, but let's do one more sperm check and let's do some more blood work." A week later he called and he's like, "You guys need to do IVF."

We were shocked. And I thought it was the end of the road. I was devastated. I was crying all the time. I was already like such a bitter, resentful person at this point because I felt like every human being on the planet was getting pregnant.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And you hear these stories of your friends being like, “We never have sex, and we got pregnant after one drunk night together.” And it's like or we got pregnant on our honeymoon. And you're just like, “This is so crazy.” And every time you're anywhere, at Starbucks or whatever, you see all the pregnant people. Or you're getting invited to baby showers.

Jenica: Right, you're like hyper focused.

Chloe: We were both so upset and resentful people, sadly. And so Brian and I jumped into IVF. I had to see a psychiatrist in the middle of it because I was just pumped full of hormones, so much anxiety. Really thought I wasn't going to get pregnant at this point because it had been a year of just bad news after bad news.

Our marriage s like basically falling apart and now we're having conversations about whether or not we should even be together, which is just crazy. Always fighting, so many tears, so much sadness.

And we luckily got pregnant after the first round of IVF. But as great as that sounds, we didn't have any embryos to freeze, not enough fertilized. And so we had four embryos fertilized, but on day three, we ended up doing a day three transfer, two embryos didn't look very good. So they just transferred the one that did.

I still will never know why they did a day three transfer and why we didn't just wait to see until day five. But again, I hear that at Cornell that they really like to do fresh transfers.

And then when it came time for Luke we just jumped right into IVF. We knew it worked. We did it a year later. And it did, it worked off the first try. But I have low ovarian egg reserve. So, again, this egg retrieval, less eggs less fertilized, this time only two fertilized. And only one “looked normal.”

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And just luckily, on another day three transfer, which I know to many people sounds scary because you can't genetically test the embryo, we got pregnant. And that's Luke, and there we are. I don't know if I'll go through it again. If we wanted a third, we'd have to start from scratch again.

Jenica: Yeah, so you have no frozen embryos at this point. Yeah, well, honestly, that truly is a miracle. I mean, really that that one embryo that was viable worked. That's amazing. And then she has two beautiful boys now, Luke and Leo. They're so sweet. I'm so happy for you.

Chloe: Thank you. I mean, I think that for Brian and I, it was the last thing that either of us expected, that we would have issues trying to build our family. And we had not ever experienced anyone in our family, or any of our friends, quite frankly I didn't even notice celebrities talking about fertility issues.

I feel like it's something that really in just the last few years more and more people have started speaking out and trying to normalize it. Whether it's miscarriages, or surrogacy, or through adoption, or whatever your journey may be. And I think that really hats off to my husband for being so vulnerable about sharing about talking about his sperm.

Jenica: Right? Yeah, and I think that that's a really good point you make too, is that I think that's probably why when those of us who are very surprised about our infertility, I was as well, my family hadn't experienced it, I had a few friends, but not a ton experienced it. And so I was not expecting it at all. And I think that's partially why it's so hard to deal with when it does confront us, because we're not even remotely prepared for it.

I mean, you think about all of the other things that happen in our lives, I mean, I wouldn't say all. I think that we have a lot of trials that come at us that we aren't prepared for. But I would say that most of the big things that happen in our lives are things that we've known will come and we can be prepared for.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And then when something like this happens, it's like, "Okay, where do I start? Where do I go? How do I get through this?" And, I mean, you can feel really lost through it all.

Chloe: When you're growing up, they teach you in biology or sex ed that if you have unprotected sex, you're going to get pregnant. And you need to use protection, or be on birth control, and you better be very careful. And that was always instilled in me, and I think in my husband too. And we grew up in different parts of the country, because he grew up in New York and me being down south.

But what we came to find out is that having children is very difficult and that you can really only get pregnant one day out of the month. So it's kind of like I lived my whole life in fear and nobody really taught us the true process of trying to get pregnant.

That's not to say that there aren't teen pregnancies. One of my best friends had a baby at 16. But again, the timing is everything. And I wish that someone had taught me growing up about ovulation and maybe learning to track my ovulation growing up, or knowing my body a little bit more. Because I had friends that would be like, "Well, I know when I'm ovulating." I'm like, "I have no idea." I mean, still, I think I know but I'm not sure.

Jenica: Yeah, I agree. That's such a good point. And I think that's something that I'll want to teach my daughter. Because I feel like just in the last, honestly, probably year really, I feel like I've gotten to know my body a little bit more and tracked my cycle better. I have an app on my phone that tracks it.

And it's interesting too, because I feel like my personality or my emotions are different based on what week I am in the month. And I've learned more about it where, for example, in ovulation you feel more confident. And that's like our body's way of like wanting to procreate. And in the times of your period you're a little bit more reserved and less like social.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And it's so interesting that instead of expecting myself to be the same at all times, and then when I'm not thinking there's something wrong with me, now I can understand myself better. And it's so much better emotionally too.

Chloe: I need to start tracking everything. And I need to learn more about myself. When it comes to Brian, I just wish that they taught young boys or adolescents about sperm and not have it be such a taboo subject. And not have it tied so much into like your manhood, so to speak.

And there's this really great company that my husband's actually recently partnered with called Legacy where Justin Bieber, The Weeknd, Orlando Bloom, they have all these celebrity investors, and they're trying to teach guys to get their sperm tested and freeze it. And it's like 100 something bucks, and you can just do it at home and just mail it in.

So you don't have to go to like a cold, sterile clinic, right? Which I think is probably some of the problem because people are embarrassed and there's shame and stigma around it.

So I think that overall just talking about all of these issues, people have been having fertility problems forever, since the beginning of time. But we need to just talk about it more. And I think that celebrities like Kim Kardashian, who has gone through fertility issues and had surrogacy. Megan Markel, talking about her miscarriage. Or former First Lady Michelle Obama talking about going through IVF.

All of those conversations, no matter what part of the journey it is, it's super important. I just would like to see a strong celebrity man come forward and share his vulnerable moments. We haven't seen that yet.

Jenica: Yeah, I love that. And I do love that in the last few years it has become more common. Something that I was reading in an article, I believe

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

it was People magazine that was included in there. You were on another podcast, I believe his name is Sanjay Gupta. I probably didn't say that right.

Chloe: But Sanjay Gupta.

Jenica: Sanjay Gupta, okay, thank you. His podcast, Chasing Life. Something that your husband said was, "I was shocked that something that we wanted to do, we couldn't do. Usually through our own hard work, and grit, and determination, we accomplish our goals. And this is something that I felt helpless about. It was out of my control really."

And I love that he said that because I think that really pinpoints to one of the reasons why it's so hard. Because, you know, you're very successful, your husband's very successful, and I think that with most things with grit, determination, hard work, you can get to be successful at the things you focus on. And with this, it's just different.

So do you feel like that's partially some of the reason why people feel so much shame and embarrassment around it?

Chloe: For my husband especially, he is so used to working hard and having a result. And so it was a huge blow to his ego to find out that he had issues with his sperm that really were out of his control. And that this fertility issue we were having was really due to male-factor infertility.

For me, I feel like a lot of the things in my life that I've really wanted, I've had to always work extra hard for. Whether that was getting into college, or finally meeting Mr. Right, I had to go through so many Mr. Wrongs. Climbing my way through this journalism industry, which is super cutthroat at times. I feel like everything requires so much grit and determination on my part, and I'm used to having failure and doors closed along the way.

I think that when it came to starting children, I was so angry and resentful because I felt like, "All right life, I've already dealt with a bunch of crap and

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

worked really hard. And now you're telling me that I have to try really hard to start a family.” And I just figured that that was just the one given. That I was just going to be able to have kids. That being a mom is just like a right. That I'm just going to have kids. I'm a woman and I want a baby, I'm going to have a baby.

So I wasn't angry at my husband ever. I was really sad, and super stressed. And I'm somebody that's always looking to find a solution. So I don't give up, but that's exhausting. And this fertility journey has been exhausting, because it's always like pick yourself up, dust yourself off, try again. But what is that? Is that another IUI? Is that finding another doctor? Is it another round of IVF?

I always felt like I was just constantly on this mission. So by the time I finally gave birth to my first child, I was able to let out this sigh of relief, because I had been holding my breath for so many years. So many doctor's appointments, so much fighting, so much sadness, so many secrets, so much drama.

It killed my marriage. It affected my job. I had all these doctor's appointments and I'm keeping things a secret. And I'm constantly thinking about getting pregnant, from what I'm eating to what I'm doing, putting on my body, where I am. I even stopped working out.

My body still has never gotten back to the way I want it to be because I stopped working out for so many years because I was convinced that running on a treadmill would affect me getting pregnant. Which is stupid, I know, but that's how paranoid I was living my life.

Jenica: Well, yeah, I think that's very common to change everything because that's the thing, it's so unknown on what specifically will help you actually conceive that month that you're willing to try anything. So it's very relatable.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

Chloe: I was desperate. I mean, I would just look back and describe the whole thing is just sheer desperation. And it made my husband and I stronger for sure. But even going through the second round of IVF a year later, after we had one child already, you would think that some of the weight would be off. But now there was this pressure I was putting on myself to give my son a sibling.

Jenica: Yeah. Yeah, it's a lot. And like you said, I think that hormones play a lot into it, too. I mean, you just don't feel like yourself when you're going through this because of all the injections.

I love that you mentioned about your marriage. Because I think that's something, I talk about that on my podcast, I think it's very common to have this be a strain on your marriage. If you were to tell yourself one thing in the beginning, like right when you guys first started to experience this, knowing what you know now, is there any advice that you'd give yourself, specifically in relation to your marriage?

Chloe: If I could go back in time, I would save my husband and I both the awkward, dramatic moments of scheduled sex and just tell myself that science is amazing and IVF is your answer. And we could have just kind of like sped it up.

Because that was one of the things that had the biggest strain was, "Okay, I'm ovulating. You need to be home at this time from work." And my husband worked in nightlife, and you need to come home in between meetings or whatever. We got to get in the mood, or you do what you got to do and I'll just meet you in there.

Which was kind of sad, you know, but I'm on this mission. And then sitting there with my legs in the air forever after, so stupid having him hold my legs up or put pillows under me. And then how sad it would be when you spend all this money on these expensive pregnancy tests and then they're

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

negative. I just put myself through so much drama. Or the expensive ovulation kits that are like digital, so much stress.

I wish I could just go back and just tell myself science is the answer.

Jenica: Yeah. Oh my gosh, okay.

Chloe: The good old fashioned way is not going to work for you.

Jenica: Yeah. Okay, I love that answer. What about in relation to maybe like how you supported your husband? And then maybe how you would suggest other women supporting their spouses through this. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Chloe: How did I support Brian through the process?

Jenica: Yeah, or maybe how would you, if you did it again, maybe what would you do differently knowing what you know now, right? Because it's like hindsight is 20/20.

Chloe: Sure. Looking back on my first round of IVF, the journey to create our first baby, Leo, I probably wouldn't change anything. Because I think that it just all worked out the way that it was supposed to.

But my husband, looking back, was very isolated and alone, embarrassed, and ashamed. And I wish that I had maybe stopped a little bit to think about how this was affecting him. Because although it was a male-factor infertility issue, we learned that I had low ovarian egg reserve. Which meant that the clock was ticking, and that each year that went by, I had less and less eggs I was going to be able to get.

And so that was the most stressful part for us. And I wish that looking back I could have just told my husband that I really am sorry that you're upset and you're going through it too. My husband felt incredibly responsible for our fertility problems because of his male-factor infertility issues.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

But see, I'm the one taking the shots. I'm the one having the surgery. I'm the one going through IVF. I'm the one getting pregnant. So it was kind of like, "All right, well, you have an issue, but it's all about me." And we haven't really been able to process his grief and his issues with everything until recently.

Jenica: Yeah, I love that you mention that because it definitely involves, obviously, it's like 50/50, it takes two to make a baby. And I feel like it is common because we are the ones that are doing the shots, we are the ones that are going through all the surgeries and all of that. So it does take a toll on men emotionally.

And I just think because of society, how we've normalized men being tough and not being able to share their emotions, that we just assume that that's the normal way. And I feel like through this specifically, and just through other trials we've gone through, I'm like, "Okay, my husband is a human being. He has feelings, he has emotions." And it's been good for me, I think, to like tell him it's okay to be sad, it's okay to feel like this is really hard.

And I feel like I didn't go into our marriage thinking that. And I think it's a lot of what I've been through personally just through trials, and then also just realizing that there's nothing bad with feeling bad for a day or two, or however long you need to. And there's nothing wrong with you when you do feel bad or sad, and that it's not my job to fix him, but it's my job to allow that space for him to be a human being and realize what he's feeling is totally normal and it's safe to feel that way around me.

Chloe: Well, and also, even if it's not male-factor infertility, the men are still a part of this journey. And IVF is stressful on every party involved. And when I started doing research for this piece for CNN about male-factor infertility recently, I was shocked that the Center for Disease Control has the numbers right there, 1/3 of fertility issues are due to issues with the

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

woman. The other third is men, male-factor. So then that other 1/3 is unexplained.

So if you think about it, men and women are carrying the equal weight of this fertility journey, yet the focus is still so much on the woman. And I think that that's something that we all just need— I think the only thing that's going to help any of us is just us talking about it all, just more and more. So that people have resources and places to turn.

Even now, if you start googling around, there's not that many resources for men. There's not like Instagram pages and support groups and stuff all over the place like women, we're finding our tribe. So I'm happy that my husband is out there speaking out, because even if he helps just one person who stumbles across an article or his Instagram or that podcast.

When I was going through my journey, I remember being up in the middle of the night reading old message boards from the early 2000s from people in Europe or in England. And I would be doing the numbers, and they were like, “13 retrieved, eight fertilized.” And I don't know why, I just was like obsessed with reading these message boards with what people were going through.

And now there's so many great resources with podcasts and articles and websites and celebrities talking about it. I did not find those things back in 2016.

Jenica: Yeah, I agree. I think it's very, very new. And I think that it really is so helpful because I think that, I don't know, I think we're very hard on ourselves and I think we're the first people to pick ourselves apart. And sometimes it's just nice to be reminded that what we're experiencing is normal. And that nothing's gone wrong really, like we're living the normal human experience and this is part of some of our stories.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And so it's just really nice to have that community of people that have gone through it, or are currently experiencing it to remind ourselves that we're not alone.

Another question I wanted to ask you is, are there any thoughts that you chose when you were experiencing growing your family that got you through or that were able to put you in a mindset to continue to move forward during this really hard experience?

Chloe: Was there anything in my life that prepared me for this?

Jenica: Any thoughts specifically, that allowed you to continue to move forward even on those days where you wanted to give up?

Chloe: And sorry, did you say like from my childhood? Is that what you said in the beginning? Or just in general.

Jenica: No, just in general. Yeah, just like during the process, were there any thoughts that you chose when you were experiencing growing your family throughout the thick of it that helped you to progress forward? Because you clearly had a some type of a glimmer of hope, if you progressed forward.

Chloe: I'm kind of just one of those people that, maybe you can call it competitive. But I never really played sports so I don't know if that's an accurate descriptor for me.

Jenica: I'm with you there.

Chloe: I'm definitely somebody that if a door closes, I'm constantly looking for that next door. And maybe it's that I don't take no for an answer, but I'm very persistent. I'm relentless. And that's why I'm good at being a journalist, because I am just good at digging, digging, digging, and just finding out the answer.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And so when it came to IVF, I mean, it was just another challenge. And it was a dark place that I was in. I wish I could tell you that, like I turned to God or had some verse I was reading. No, I really didn't. I actually was pretty angry with God, I got to admit. I did go to church a couple times and pray.

And I remember after Brian and I did our transfer we lit a candle and went to our church down the street where Leo ended up being baptized. But in a way it's almost like kind of unfair, because it was like I turned to God in that moment, but I wasn't turning to him the whole way. It's like you go in your darkest moments.

Jenica: Well, he understands. Yeah, and that's why I think it's so interesting you say that because I think that, again, that's exactly how you were supposed to show up in it. And I think that naturally we're harder on ourselves than we need to be. And exactly how you showed up was exactly how you should have showed up.

I just love that you mentioned that because I think that, I don't know, I just think he wants to celebrate with you and cry with you too.

Chloe: I was just a shattered shell of a person.

Jenica: Yeah.

Chloe: I mean, I get goosebumps talking about it. We were so broken.

Jenica: Yeah, and you were showing up exactly how you should have shown up at the time. And that's something, it's interesting, I had an interview with someone named Ashley Lemieux a few months ago. And one of the things that she asks herself every morning is, "How can I show up as my as the truest version of myself today?"

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

And I love the word truest instead of best version of ourselves today, because the best version of myself might be something that I can't give today. It might be something that it's just not possible for me, because it's like very high expectation. I know the best version of myself, but how can I show up as my truest version of myself today I think is so important to remember when you are feeling broken.

And you did show up. You showed up and you continued to move forward, even though you were feeling like you could barely take the next step. But you still showed up. And that was the truest version of yourself during that time, which I think is awesome.

Chloe: I love that, that's really beautiful. I'm going to steal that.

Jenica: Yeah, I love it too. I think there's a lot of expectation when you say best version. It's like, well, I mean, yeah, I could be really amazing. But who's the truest version of myself? I'm like, I am going to cry in bed today. That's the truest version of myself today. It adds a lot of grace, I think.

Okay, another question I would love to ask you is, is there any gifts that you experience now because of your trials in growing your family? Like do you feel like you're a different mother in certain ways? Or do you feel like you live your life maybe differently because you went through that?

Chloe: In both of my children's bedrooms they have the picture that I received the day of my embryo transfer. They give you a picture of the embryo at the hospital. And so that's framed, each of theirs in their room. And this journey is always going to be something that I'm going to share with them proudly.

And hard to say if I'm a more patient or appreciative mom because of what I've been through. But I can just only believe that I am more appreciative. But that's not to say that somebody who just gets pregnant on the first try is

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

less appreciative than me. But I sure have been to hell and back to have these kids and I do not take being a parent for granted.

Now, does that mean that I enjoy changing wet sheets when the kids leak through their diapers at night? Or having them constantly screaming and fighting and me still not getting sleep all these years later? No, I don't enjoy any of that. And I just got back from a vacation with my husband and it was glorious without the children. But that's just normal.

I just am so thrilled that I'm a mom. Because for a while, and I'm talking like a year after year I thought I'm not going to have kids or I'm not going to have my own biological children. And, look, for me that was really important. That's not to say that I wouldn't have fiercely loved a child that was from an egg donor or a sperm donor or adopted. I know I would have loved that baby just as much.

But I really, really, really wanted to just give it a hard try to create our own biological children. And who knows what's in store if we decide to continue to grow our family and how we'll choose to do that?

Jenica: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Are there any things that you do in your daily routine that you would say really kind of set you up to be the most successful, or the most happy, or put yourself in that mindset to where you feel like you can accomplish the things that you want to in this life?

Chloe: Well, now that my youngest is two years old I'm finally starting to take time for myself. Whether that's having a glass of wine or seeing my girlfriend's. I just got a Peloton bike.

Jenica: Me too, girl.

Chloe: So I've been doing my cycling and I really want to start feeling better in my skin because I think that just for so long it was hormones, and being pregnant, and then being postpartum. And, you know, just saggy this, and

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

saggy that, and just breastfeeding and all the pumping and everything. It's like I just need a minute.

And I've been working from home ever since the Covid 19 pandemic began. I'm going back into the office here and there. I just started traveling again for work, which I don't even do that often. But I was just in Los Angeles for work. And I don't really have a secret. It's all chaos all the time.

I'm wearing pajama pants right now. I have some makeup on because I did some TV earlier. But my office is a mess, I'm always just like – My son Leo interrupted my TV segment the other weekend. He literally came on, it's like live television. Because my husband decided to go for a run right as I was about to be on TV. And we've been doing this routine for over a year. And that's when my husband decides to go for a run. Really?

Jenica: Oh my gosh, that's too funny conversation.

Chloe: We had an interesting conversation after I was done.

Jenica: Yeah, I'm sure that was fun.

Chloe: But no, I just think that the harder I work, the crazier it all gets. And we have two cats, and a dog, and two kids, and it's wild at this house. And it's not a very big house, and it's totally nuts. It's quiet right now because Leo's in camp.

Jenica: Yes. Oh, I love you bring that up because I think that we have maybe these ideals in our minds of what our lives should be like. And, honestly, life is just crazy. It really is.

My house is an absolute disaster right now as well. And it's like today I woke up and I decided that this is just how it supposed to be today. And I think it just brings so much peace in just accepting the craziness of life. And

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

then continuing to move forward with your goals and dreams through the mess. Like just step around it, you know?

Chloe: Yeah, I'm just trying to pick less fights because I'm so used to just always being so type A. And I'm not apologetic for it, but I can't tell you how many times I tell my husband to take his shoes off when he comes in the house. And I can't tell you how many times he doesn't take his shoes off when he comes in the house. But I need to kind of start picking my battles too. Not everything has to be def-con 5.

Jenica: Yes, yes. I love that. It's such a good reminder. Okay, well Chloe, where can people find you if they want to follow along with your life and connect with you?

Chloe: Well, I read every single DM on my Instagram. But I don't even have that many followers so it's easy for me to do that. And Brian reads all of his to, so definitely find me at chloemelas on Instagram and my husband at Brian Mazza. And you can read my stories if you're into entertainment news on cnn.com. And you'll catch me every now and then on CNN and on our sister channel, HLN, every single Saturday and Sunday.

But if you want to message me, I promise you I will write you back. And I will even jump on the phone and give advice. Just DM me on Instagram.

Jenica: I love that, that is so generous of you. I appreciate that. I will link all of your information in the show notes so people can reach out to you. Is there anything else that you want to say to these people that are listening?

Chloe: No, I just can't thank you enough. I think that what you're doing is absolutely incredible. You are such a positive ray of light in this world.

Jenica: That's so kind.

Chloe: Just keep it up because you are doing very good things.

24. Deciding to Share About Your Infertility with Chloe Melas

Jenica: Thank you. Okay, everyone, we'll see you next week.

To celebrate the launch of the show I'm going to be giving away 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 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/podcast launch](https://thesliceofsun.com/podcast-launch) 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.