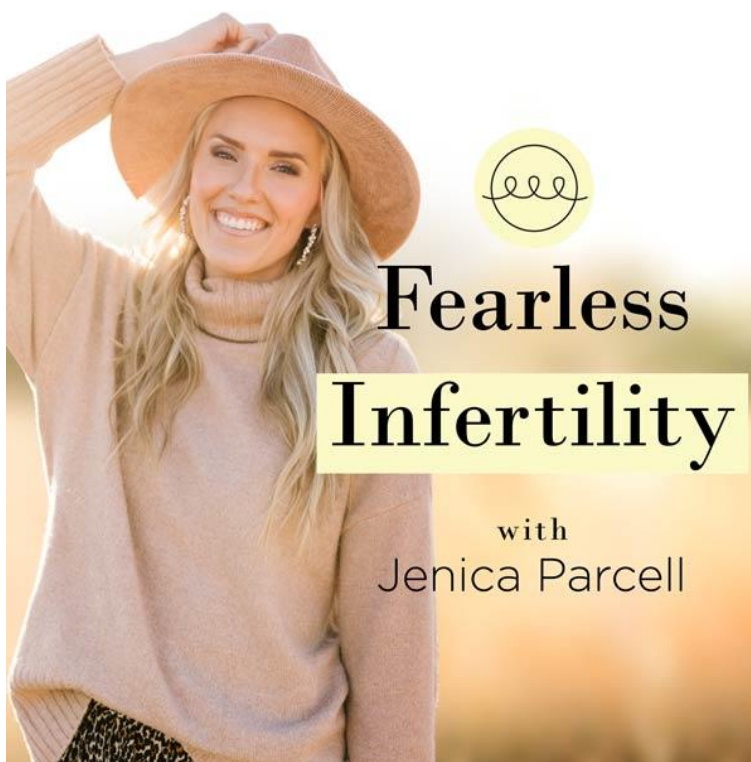


## 30. Infertility YOUR Way with Monique Farook



### 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*. This week's episode is an incredible conversation with Monique Farook about experiencing infertility your way. And that might be completely different from anyone else that you've seen. Really trusting your gut, trusting your spirit and what you need in the moment. And navigating it in a way that allows you to love your life, even if it looks different than anyone else's experience.

I sell the most cozy, comfortable, best fitting pajamas on the planet that are made of bamboo on [thesliceofsun.com](https://thesliceofsun.com) specifically designed for women with infertility to where to remind themselves that they're not alone in infertility. A portion of every sale goes back to a nonprofit that also supports families experiencing infertility. And I love to give away a pair every single week to a reviewer on Apple Podcasts.

And the reason why it's so important for me to encourage you to leave reviews is because there are many, many women that are experiencing infertility and they feel completely alone. And when you leave reviews, it helps my podcast become more searchable and show up more easily when they are trying to find it.

So this week's winner is Katelynn Degraw. She says, "Changing your mindset. I have only been trying to conceive for a little over a year and I'm on my second round of IUI. Until I found this podcast, I was feeling sorry for myself, super angry, and had the mindset of why me? What did I do to deserve this trial?"

But listening to Jenica and her guests and the stories they have told I have completely changed my mindset and feel like I can finally breathe and live

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my life and be happy while also going through all the fertility hormones. Thank you, Jenica.”

Thank you, Katelynn. Please email me at [hello@thesliceofsun.com](mailto:hello@thesliceofsun.com) with your address and size.

I am so excited to get to introduce to you all this week's podcast conversation with Monique Farook. I started following her on Instagram. She has an Instagram called Infertility And Me Podcast, because she started a podcast after her own infertility experience. She has a four and a half year old son who was born very prematurely after also experiencing all the ups and downs of infertility.

And one of the reasons why I was drawn to her is because she's absolutely hilarious. I discovered that one of my ways that I cope with really hard things, including my infertility experience, is through humor. I think laughing is incredibly therapeutic. And she does such a really great job of being hopeful and thoughtful and empathetic for all of us experiencing infertility while also bringing in the humorous times to ease that tension. I loved our conversation today.

Before we get into that, I want to make sure that you download the free Morning Mindset Magic checklist if you haven't yet, on Instagram, which is [thesliceofsun.infertility](https://www.instagram.com/thesliceofsun.infertility). I'm currently doing a 30 day check in with you every morning after we complete our Morning Mindset Magic checklist.

My Morning Mindset Magic checklist is something that I created for you for free after experimenting with a lot of different morning routines. And these are the items that I continuously do every single day, especially when I don't want to do them. Because they put me in a mindset to be able to conquer my day, to win my day, to be able to accomplish the things that I want to do. And to also give me the most power throughout my day.

So I'm doing a 30 day challenge. Go download that for free, the link in profile. You can also get the like in profile on Instagram, also on my

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websites. And download it and come check in with me every day on Instagram stories and we can be each other's accountability partner to really tackle these incredible morning mindset routines that can change your life.

All right, let's get into my incredible conversation with Monique.

Jenica: All right, I have my friend Monique here. I started following Monique, her Instagram handle is @infertilityandmepodcast. And I connected with her a few months ago and I love following her on Instagram for many different reasons.

I think that she provides a lot of people a lot of hope and she has the most beautiful way of expressing herself and the infertility experience. But also, she's hilarious. And she's so much fun just to follow because she really brings the humor and the lightness to it.

And before the podcast started, I was telling her that that's one thing I really discovered in myself is that something that I figured out when we experienced infertility is that humor is one way that helps me cope with those really hard moments. And I feel like that's probably the same with her because she does a great job at it.

So hello, Monique, thank you so much for being here today.

Monique: Jenica, girl, it's my pleasure. And thank you for having me and taking time out of your day to record with me as well. And letting me speak to your family that listens every week.

Jenica: You're amazing. Okay, so Monique, will you give us a little bit of a background on your experience with infertility and how you got to be so passionate about helping others in this space?

Monique: I'll give you guys like the short summary of it all. But it started when I was 29, in 2012 I was 29. It's like once you get a certain age you stop counting, right?

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Jenica: It's so true.

Monique: The closer I get to 40 the less I care.

Jenica: Yes, thank you.

Monique: I'm just trying to keep my family life in order. But yes, so it started in 2012 when I was 29. And I had never been pregnant in my entire life up until that point. I had always been the woman that was on birth control to control when I wanted to have children, if that was going to be the thing that I wanted to do. Because I'm very selfish, I like to go at my own time and do things when I want to do it. So I was that woman that was on birth control for a very, very long time.

And a year prior to meeting my husband I took myself off of birth control completely because I was starting to get that feeling like, "Yeah, maybe I could have a kid. Maybe I could do that." You know what I mean?

And so we got married December of 2010. And so in 2012, it was about two years and some change after we got married. We were like, "Okay, let's do it. We can do it, we got the money, we got the house, we got all the things." And so it just wasn't happening naturally once I got off the birth control. And like I said, I had already been off of it for a while. And so it was quite devastating.

And being still very young and everyone around me and family not having any complications with becoming pregnant and having multiple children. Some of them a lot of them actually. And both of my grandmothers birthed a lot of children, one had seven and the other one had four. Each of them had experienced miscarriage, but it only happens like once or twice maybe at the most. But they had a lot of children living earth side. And aunts the same way, uncles.

I mean, my family travels all the way to the west coast back onto the east coast, north and south. Very large on my dad's side and quite small on my

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mom's side but there was never any issues. So I didn't have any reason medically that I knew of that would prevent me from being able to have children naturally, other than the synthetic hormones of birth control.

I didn't have any medical issues, like PCOS that could have started as a teenager and adolescent and such. And so I got the diagnosis and it was right tubal blockage. The right fallopian tube had a little tissue stuck in there or something from the radiologist's appointment.

I had one unsuccessful IUI. And then we didn't go back and return to fertility treatments for four years. We both really wanted it, but at the same time my husband was like let's— He's a very A type man and so he's done a lot in his short life. And so for him, it was like that masculine energy of, "We can do it, we got this. I've done this, this, this in my life, there's no reason we can't do this," type of mentality. And I was like, "Okay, I'm with you, whatever, that's fine."

But at the same time, I just like had this inclination that it wasn't going to work. Like it's not going to work, we've been together for four years, married for two and we've never popped up pregnant, never. And so I just rode along with it.

And the four years went by, go back in 2016 got another diagnosis of hypothyroidism, having some issues with my thyroid levels staying consistent. And then I had uterine polyps. I had cervical polyps too, but I had had them for a while and they didn't affect my fertility or anything like that.

So I just had the uterine polyps removed. And then I had to be on levothyroxine for three months to control the thyroid and help elevate those levels to bring them up to a normal position so that it would create a viable environment for an embryo and sustain pregnancy long term.

And so after the polyps were removed from the uterus then we had what's called natural cycle IVF which is a less invasive form of IVF. There's less

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medications involved, it's cheaper, and you have to be under 35. And you have to pretty much you have to be a candidate for it, like you got to be under 35, you can't have like PCOS or anything really extreme or endometriosis or really anything real extreme.

And so on the second attempt is when we got pregnant with my now four and a half year old boy. So that's the brief, five minute journey. I know I was talking fast you guys, I'm sorry.

Jenica: No, I love it. And it's so funny too, because it's like when someone asks me to share my story, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, how do we condense it?" Because there's so much and there's so much emotion. The up and down emotions of the entire thing is just so much to convey in such a short amount of time.

So there's a couple things I want to go back to. One, I think something that is so relatable is the fact that I think a lot of us are used to controlling what goes on in our lives. We graduate high school or whatever it is, the path we choose in our life. And we move on to our education or working or whatever it is. And most of that is pretty controllable. We do certain actions and we get certain results.

And I love that you mentioned how your husband is that way, like most of us are, where he's like, "Well, we've done all these other things in our life that have worked and we've just kind of consistently tried our best and it ended up working out." But this isn't that way. How would you say that that impacted your marriage at that time, when you were trying and hadn't conceived a child yet?

Monique: It was very difficult, honestly, Jenica, because I believe in medicine and I believe in science. But I'm also a very spiritual person. And so I understand that you can manifest things. And I understand that you can do mindset growth activities and use tools to manifest the things you want in your life.



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But I'm also a realist. And then I'm also a Libra. So I'm always trying to find balance, like how can we do this? And how can we make it through this and it satisfy you and it also satisfy me too? And so that was always the battle, like, "Okay, I get it, you've done this, this, this in your life. But this is something that you cannot control because my body is not doing what it was essentially created to do."

And so I think that was very hard for him. Because the parts are working, his parts were working and mine opened up for him, you know what I mean? So he's like, "This is this is crazy." And he's really big on manifestation, like from a spiritual perspective. And so even though he is very analytical, that's the other side of him as well.

And I think, because when you are like that you struggle with the balance. And so for us, it was a lot about struggling with balance, trying to fulfill each other's needs, and then also trying to be true to who we are. Which creates a strife because I feel like I'm talking to a brick wall. Like this man is being stubborn, he doesn't want to. Come on, like, come on, we need help.

And he's just somebody that doesn't like to be told no or that he cannot do something. I'm telling you guys, he's like, very, very A type. Way more than I am.

Jenica: Yeah, which I can totally relate to. And I think that's probably served him very well in many ways in his life.

Monique: Exactly, exactly. You just hit the nail right on the head. And I think that's what becomes the most detrimental part of fertility issues for the man or the woman, whoever has a diagnosis. It's because you are so used to getting what you want, one way or the other. And for him the solution was to keep trying naturally for such and such amount of time, because I've just got to make sure that we can't. I just have to make sure that we can't do it on our own before we do it this way.



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And it was never the money issue for us. He was always willing to spend the money. It was just more so for him and the ego, to say that he got his wife pregnant without the help of a doctor, you know what I mean?

And I think that, in hindsight, I could have nurtured that a little bit more, that issue he was having with it. And reassuring him like, "Look, it's not your fault. It's not either one of our faults." Because you go through that too like, well, what is it that you did in your past that caused this? Or such and such and such and such.

But the thing was, is that in 2016 when I went back, the blockage was gone.

Jenica: Oh, interesting.

Monique: So what I found out from the second radiologists that I went to, because it was in a different state and new doctors all the way around. And what I found out is that sometimes women, the tissue from our menses gets stuck in our fallopian tubes. It doesn't pass through the cervix during menses, sometimes it gets stuck. It floats around, you know what I mean?

And so because the fallopian tubes are so small, these things happen. A lot of times we don't know that it's happening. But it's just that I had that at that time in that moment when I had the water scan for checking the uterus and the fallopian tubes and such with the HSG.

So I was like, "Okay, well, that's debunked," because it was like this whole thing like where it was my fault. You know what I mean? Because there are like hydrosalpinx, where water gets stuck and causes damage to the fallopian tubes. And sometimes it's caused by previous STDs. But I had never had any STDs.

But I think that we go through this process as a couple, like try the process of elimination, basically.

Jenica: Right. Yeah, we just want answers.

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Monique: Yeah.

Jenica: Yeah, I can totally relate to that. And even now, because I'm a very spiritual person as well and I rely on God a lot to guide me in my life on what to do. But even then, there are still so many things in my human experience I don't understand because they don't have that understanding that he does. And it's such a fine line between doing what I can do and also trusting what I don't understand.

Monique: Exactly, exactly. A lot of people go through that, especially people who are deeply religious. I see it all the time on Instagram in the community. People that are deeply religious, and whether I agree with what they say or not, it doesn't matter. That's their belief system and that's the core of who they are. And that's what guides their life. And I believe that we all should be able to believe in something and have faith in something, whatever that may look like for you.

And there's no shame to anyone for what they believe in, but it is a very fine line. And, again, I'm very spiritual but I also believe in medicine and I also believe in science. Because at the end of the day, if the Creator created us, then he created these things and these possibilities to take place, right?

And he gave people the minds, and the hands, and the drive and the ambition to make these things happen. I mean, of course, in the wrong hands, it could go very dark. We know this. But I believe that reproductive assistance is an act of God. Because on earth side, let's remember that God is not going to interject in the way that you think that he will, or whatever entity you believe in.

We have free will here on earth, on this side. And so we are given the opportunity to do things and we can do go with it or we could do evil with it. And I think that reproductive assistance is something that's filled with a lot of positivity. And it gives people the chance that 100 years ago, we wouldn't have had the chance to do.

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Jenica: Yeah, I agree. It's miraculous. That was so beautifully said, thank you.

So you became pregnant and you gave birth to your son in January of 2017 at 24 weeks gestation. Can you talk to me about that?

Monique: Oh my gosh, there's so much I could say because it is the most unreal thing you could experience after going through infertility. And fighting through that and then having to fight to save your life as well as the life of a very small, underdeveloped baby. And, I mean, it was just a lot of crying. It was a lot of crying and worry.

And I think the part that was hurting me the most back then was not the possibility of him transitioning and not surviving being born so early, but how that would affect me. How that would affect my husband and our marriage. Some people don't come back from those types of things. And they become very ill mentally and emotionally and they never return and they're never who they were before and they don't want to help.

And so I was really concerned about myself and my husband, because he's been through some tumultuous, tumultuous things in his life. And so you don't know how it's going to affect you until it does.

Jenica: Yeah, it's scary. I mean, that's really early. So how long was he in the hospital? And is he, I mean, I'm assuming he's doing well now. But fill us in on that experience.

Monique: Yeah, it was slow. When I think about him now, it's like golly, four and a half years flew the heck by. He'll be five in January, less than six months. But at that time, time was slow. It's just like, it feels Covid.

Jenica: That's a great comparison.

Monique: It's just one day, one minute, one second at a time. And you don't have a choice but to be patient because you have to watch this baby daily, second by second, moment by moment, night by night. Call every night

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before I go to sleep. Fighting with whether I want to stay home or whether I want to go to the hospital. You know what I mean? And trying to have some normalcy and trying to still be your wife and all those things but everything in me just wants to be with the baby. You know what I mean?

Neglecting my pet, you know what I mean? And neglecting family and going to the hospital, to be with my son rather than spending a birthday, 59th birthday with my mom, you know what I mean? So there's just so many things to balance, so many things to juggle, so many emotions.

And he was in there for 129 days, which is four months in a week. His original due date was May the eighth, around Mother's Day. He was released from the hospital on May the 25th. And so they kept him in there longer at our request, because I didn't want him to come home with oxygen machines and further creating more anxiety. Not just for being a new mother, but for a mother of an underdeveloped baby.

And luckily for us, he came off of oxygen about a month and a half or so before he came home. And so he didn't have to come home with anything. And then by the time he came home, he also was doing things like lifting his head, being very alert, sucking his thumb.

And the process to watch him grow from 24 weeks gestation to a four month old baby, it's just really truly miraculous how the process, being able to see the process in his little incubator and such. And watching him fight and giving me low cues like, "Mom, I'm here, I'm going to be okay."

And the funny thing is, is that with premature babies, anything can take a wrong turn. You don't know if they'll have good eyesight, because eyesight is an issue. And a lot of times you'll see babies, infants with glasses, and there's a good chance they may have been born early. And that's a common effect of being born so early, is having terrible eyesight, unfortunately.

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And he didn't have any of those things. He didn't have any mental delays, he didn't have any physical delays. I mean, he started walking at 13 months, which is in the normal range of a child born to full term. And he is in the 81st percentile of his height and weight. And he reads at a second grade level.

So we were very blessed in that our lives weren't disrupted after he came home, in the way that it could have gone, in the way that it does for so many other people.

Jenica: Yeah. So how did you manage that all emotionally? Because, immediately for me, I kind of think to myself, and maybe it's because I have had a personal experience recently where we decided to start trying again for a third baby. And I was surprised by the resentment feelings that came up because I thought in my head, "I've done in fertility, I deserve to have a normal pregnancy now." And actually, my twins were born at 32 weeks, which was quite a bit later than—

Monique: Yeah, still considered earlier.

Jenica: Yeah, and so they were in the NICU for five weeks. And surprisingly, I didn't think a whole lot about it then. But looking back, I'm like, "Wow, that was really hard. I did all these infertility treatments, had been through infertility for years, and then I have this terrible pregnancy and this terrible birth experience."

So did you have any feelings then of resentment? Or how were you able to continue to move forward enjoying your life when the hits kept coming?

Monique: Yeah, you know, I resented the fact that I didn't get to experience a 10 month pregnancy, like going into the third trimester. Even now, I would love to be pregnant again, but I don't want the responsibility of another child.

Jenica: I feel you on that, it's tough.

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Monique: I'm weird, okay, you guys? I want to experience pregnancy again, but I don't want the responsibility of another kid. It drains me thinking about it.

Jenica: Oh yeah, motherhood is the hardest job on the planet, even though you've experienced infertility.

Monique: Yes. And honestly, before all of that I was not a crier. I was not an emotionally driven woman. And I much more am now, having been through all that and also experiencing motherhood the way that I have thus far.

It has helped me to tap more into my emotional wellbeing. And also just increasing my emotional intelligence and saying, "It's okay if I want to cry right now in this moment, like literally." And I have taught myself to do that. And if I didn't, then I would probably be a very angry person right now. Very, very angry for many different reasons.

And here's the thing, see, they tell you very quickly, very briefly, when you go to the reproductive endocrinologist that having assisted reproductive care can increase your chances of giving birth early. And then, listen, I'm a Black woman. That's a double edged sword for me, because not only are our rates of infertility almost just as high as our Caucasian sisters like you, but then we have more premature births, we have more miscarriages. And Latina women as well.

So, there was a moment I was like, "God dammit, this is BS because I'm Black, so I got all these other issues I got to worry about. And I have freaking infertility. "And it's like when you talk to other women of different races it's like, "Doggone it, we can't win. We're a minority for being a woman. And we're a minority for this, this, this and the other." And so it's kind of like that feeling of always having to prove or to fight or to be strong.

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So I did resent being a woman for a while, like they have it so easy. And they don't, but they do in certain ways, you know what I mean? So I struggled a lot with that.

And then being able to heal, it was therapeutic for me to cry because I wasn't a crying type. So crying, for me, was very therapeutic. And then allowing myself to be vulnerable with my husband in a way that I had never done with any man. And he helped nurture me through that. He's really good at that.

So yeah, it's really hard though, you guys. So whatever you're going through, know that it's like this for everyone, truly it is. And me saying that is not to discredit how you're feeling. But whatever you're feeling, someone out there has felt it, was in the same position as you.

And you just have to find what works for you. And you have to try many different things, forms and tools of healing. And sometimes it takes 10 at the same time. Let's be honest, sometimes one way is not enough and you need multiple sources and tools.

Jenica: I love that you bring this up too, because this is something— I feel like our stories are fairly similar in what we experienced with getting pregnant. I had polyps in my uterus as well, and I have hypothyroidism as well. And it's so interesting, it sounds like similar experiences and what we have learned through this.

Which is, for me, I think that as human beings and as women we are taught, with the best of intentions, to look for the bright side and be happy and not really complain. And I think that that can be great a lot of the time if it serves you. But for me, I didn't allow myself to experience all the emotions.

And so when something negative would come up for me in infertility, and even as a mother after experiencing infertility, I would allow myself to feel it for a minute. And then I would say like, "You're not allowed to feel it. You



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have all of these other amazing things that are happening for you so you're not allowed to be sad."

And I think that that was so detrimental for me because I just stuffed those awful feelings that no one enjoys feeling, but that we all have, into the closet. And they were still there, I just wasn't processing through them. And I would think that there was something wrong with me for feeling a certain way.

And now I just let myself, like you said, I let myself cry. And I let myself be sad without the judgment of like, "There's something wrong with you. You've done something wrong, something needs to be fixed." Now I just realize that it's just part of being a human being.

And it's so interesting too, I didn't understand what people meant when they said process the emotions. And now I get it, you just move through them, you feel them, you allow them and then you carry on with your life. And there's going to be those hard emotions and those more comfortable emotions that we like experiencing. But I love that you said that we all have them, there's nothing wrong with you when you're experiencing them.

Monique: Nothing wrong at all. But society doesn't normalize, has only started, I'll say, society has only started normalizing mental health therapy, mental health healing, racial healing, maybe in the last five years it's become trendy. And now everybody is talking about they're getting mental health therapy, which is great. It's fantastic and all those things.

But back when we first had our children before that and leading up to the point of having those children and getting pregnant through assisted reproductive technology, it wasn't normal. And especially in the Black community, it's still very taboo. And although a lot of celebrities are pushing it and help push the narrative and coming out, like I've been in therapy for years, girl. Still in therapy.

Jenica: Yeah, it's incredible.

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Monique: And it's encouraging people, and unfortunately it just wasn't that case seven, eight years ago in the midst of it all. And before getting pregnant, and even after I got pregnant, I never thought to go see a therapist. And I think because I have always been so very independent, that's the other reason I never thought about it. It's because I have always dealt with things on my own or with the help of my spiritual practices.

And some of us aren't just made that way, that we can help heal ourselves and we have the capacity to do that. But the majority don't.

Jenica: Yeah, I don't think as human beings, we're necessarily meant to do it on our own. And I think God gave each of us gifts that other people don't have. And with those gifts we can help each other. But we can't get that help from others unless we open up. And I think that's such a hard thing, is being vulnerable.

And also going back to what you said about you being open with your husband about the help that you needed, I am such an independent person as well. I was just born like that. And I think that it scares me to have to rely on other people because I don't like that—

Monique: Giving away, it feels like power, right?

Jenica: Yeah.

Monique: It feels like giving away a piece of yourself and a piece of your power. And you feel like you're being diminished in a way, but it's not really that, it's just help.

Jenica: Right. Yeah, exactly. And I think that it's like I trust myself, but it's so hard for me to trust other people, I think. For whatever reason, I mean, who knows, I'm sure there's a lot of reasons. But to open up and be vulnerable that we need help. And it's been such an eye opening experience for me in doing that and then feeling the relief flood in.

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And the truth that I was never meant to do it alone all along is just like the biggest, beautiful freedom. But it takes that courage to be vulnerable to get to that place.

Monique: Right. And did you have times where you were taking a shot or something like that or you needed to get to an appointment or something like that and like your husband was trying to be supportive, and you're like, "No, I got it. I got it. I freaking got it"?

Jenica: Yes, we can all relate to that I think. And like you said, as a woman in childbearing specifically, it does— I guess I can accuse myself of thinking thoughts in the past that have been unhelpful, that made me feel resentful that I'm like, "Really? I basically carry 99.9999% of bringing children into the world." And so yeah, I think that's probably another aspect of it, where you're like, "You couldn't possibly understand."

But I think that it's important to bring your spouse into those moments because, yeah, they don't understand through personal experience, but they can help you through it with the gifts that God has given them.

Monique: Exactly. I mean, that's the beautiful part about masculine and feminine energy because it serves a purpose and we each carry both dualities. And I think that it's a beautiful thing when a man can tap into the more feminine side of himself and use that when his wife is being more masculine.

And with the experience of the feminist movement and women doing things on their own in the way that society is set up now, whereas like women don't have to get married and have children if they don't want to. And the dependability that used to be when women needed men to survive is so much different now. And I think that's where a lot of it comes from.

And then we have grandmothers and aunties telling us like, "Don't do what I did, don't depend on no man." And it's always like men are being made to be this villain, like they're not here to help and to work with us, you know,

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what I'm saying? Or vice versa. And I think, unfortunately, we just have to reprogram ourselves when we realize it.

And I still struggle with it, Jenica, I'm not even going to lie to you guys on the line today. I really still struggle with that. And I've come a long way but I still have so much to do. And a lot of it is because I am not a very girly girl, feminine woman in the sense of the way I operate in a momentary or daily basis.

A lot of who I am is very masculine driven, unfortunately. And as much as I love being in my feminine energy, it's still very difficult when you're innately independent. And I'm an INTJ. So it's like the worst kind to be for a woman because we are very analytical. I don't know if you guys have ever taken that test.

Jenica: I haven't, no I've heard about it but I haven't taken it. What's it called?

Monique: It's the Myers Briggs test for personality. And I came out as INTJ, which is intuitive— I forget what the acronym means, but for me, basically I'm very analytical and very masculine.

Jenica: Summarizing.

Monique: Yeah, it's really, really hard for me. But I do find that when I focus more on my spiritual life, that it drives me to be who I was created to be from a spiritual perspective. Because worshiping something bigger than yourself outside of this realm of reality, brings you back to self. And I think that we have to find what that is for us if you don't have it already.

Jenica: That is so beautiful. And I feel like I'm having an aha moment right now. As Oprah says, her aha moments. Because I am feminine in the sense that I like girly things. Like I love getting dressed up, I love makeup, I love heels. But I can very much relate to the masculine energy. And I feel

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like you're helping me learn a little bit more about myself right now. Because I would say that in general my energy is quite masculine.

Monique: It works in business though, doesn't it?

Jenica: It does, yeah. Yeah, I get a lot of stuff done. I mean, I just make it happen. But that's such an interesting perspective because I never really realized that about myself. Because outward characteristically I just like the girly things. But I don't think that that has anything to do with the actual energy of how I approach my life. That's so interesting.

Monique: Yeah, it's real. It's really, really real. And that's what happens, I know it's like way off topic, but that's what happens a lot of time with the LGBTQIA community is that they have this energy within them that's different than who their physical selves are. And so a lot of them, you know, you hear all the time a lot of them say, "I just feel more masculine," or "I feel more feminine."

And so I think we just have to find balance in who we are. And who you are in the midst of fertility treatments, before, and after are three different people, because they're three different points in the process. And three different people and three different transitions that you go through. Because if and when it does become successful, however it comes successful, whether it's through adoption or being a foster mom or dad or something like that, or having a surrogate, however it happens, that's another transition into another phase of who you are as an adult.

And so don't beat yourself up for not being who you were before this. Because when you become my mom, all of who you were before goes to S-H-I-T. Like friends, who are they? Where are they? Do I ever remember their faces? What do they look like? What do they smell like? What does it feel like to be in an adult social environment? You know what I mean? And so it's just so much that you have to adjust to.

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And so I always preach a lot about like just give yourself some grace, friend. Don't look for the person of who you were. Figure out who you are now, what you want your life to look like going forward, and how much you really have the capacity to endure. Because if it's to pause for a minute, we hate that word in the community, to pause or to walk away. It doesn't have to be permanent.

It doesn't have to be forever, it could just be for right now so that I can get myself back on track mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in a healthier place and giving your body a break from all the hormones and all the intrusiveness of reproductive care. Like come on, you guys, think about. It's very simple. But we forget when we're in the midst of it because we are obsessed with this bundle that we're hoping that will come to us.

Jenica: Oh my gosh, I just love that. And I love that you mentioned to give yourself the grace. Because I think that the words should and shouldn't come up frequently. Like I should have been this way or I shouldn't. Well, no, you shouldn't have because you were exactly who needed to be in that moment. And we grow and develop into the people that we need to be now.

And I think something also that's so kind of like mind bending is to think about— What I've tried to do lately is I think about different ways, for example, I want this podcast and my coaching to reach any woman who needs it. And, I mean, getting from here to there is a very interesting road that is not defined for me yet.

But something that I can ask myself is the person that reaches thousands and hundreds of thousands of women with infertility, who would she need to be? What decisions does she need to make? What routines does she have? What thoughts does she believe?

And asking my future self those questions is so interesting and for me it's been very eye opening and I've gotten the answers that I've needed. Where I think confusion is a lie, and so for me approaching that from future

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Jenica versus right now, she knows the answers. I don't right now, but I am who I need to be right now and I can ask her.

Monique: Yeah.

Jenica: Kind of interesting.

Monique: And then you also find like, especially for you who has created a coaching business from the struggle of, I'm not saying that we all need to do that, that needs to be your silver lining. If you even want a silver lining. Really, let's be real about it. And isn't it funny how you kind of sort of got to be flexible in this thing.

Because if you are not flexible, anytime and every time that there's an issue that arises with your protocol, if another health issue comes about like OHSS, the over stimulation of the ovaries.

Jenica: Yes, which happened to me.

Monique: Yes, and it's very painful physically too. Or if a cyst forms, which is something that I have right now, some dermoid cysts.

Jenica: I have a cyst too. I feel like you and I are like—

Monique: That's all so crazy.

Jenica: How are our lives so similar?

Monique: Yeah.

Jenica: Wow.

Monique: So it's like you have to find a way to be flexible. And oftentimes what I did, especially during the four year wait when I had to wait for this man to give me the green light to go back to a reproductive endocrinologist to have this baby that he desperately wanted, right? And that I just really obsessed about day and night.

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And I learned to be flexible. Because of my personality, I'm very rigid and I like routine. And I like having steps in a system that's going to get me from point A to B. And I have learned to be more flexible. Before I would be like, "What do you mean? No, this is what we said we're going to do. This is what we need to be doing at this time. No, this is not the plan."

And so you have to be really, really flexible along this path if this is your story, after you get your diagnosis, male or female. Because if you are not, you will go completely and utterly crazy because things change so quickly with our bodies and dealing with these hormones that we're injecting into ourselves, anything can happen. And anything can happen with a pregnancy. We have to be more flexible with ourselves and what our lives. We have to be more flexible.

Jenica: How would you say you've gotten to that point where you're able to be more flexible?

Monique: I really just tapped into a different part of my spiritual self. And I use the term go with the flow, but I think that has a negative connotation. Because society doesn't want you to go with the flow. Society wants you to do where they want you to freaking do. And we have a lot more control over our lives daily, monthly, weekly, yearly than we give ourselves.

And I think that when you start thinking about your life like, "Look, I'm going to live it the way I want to live it and on my own terms, based on my own belief systems, spiritually and or carnally." And that gave me a sense of power back. Because I was like, "Well, no, I don't have to do it that way. You're absolutely freaking right, I can do it this way." And I'd tell him and I started speaking, and words have power. Words are like spells.

And so I started telling him, I was like, "You know what? At the end of the day it doesn't matter. Nobody lives here but us. Nobody helps us pay these bills, but us. Nobody's going to help us raise this child more than, maybe my mom or dad, of course, but you know what I'm saying, but us on a daily

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basis. Nobody's going to drop everything if something happens. And we need to do A, B, C, and D.”

And so your fertility cycles and stuff, do the treatment, get through the month, see what happens. Maybe take a break off the next month and then go back. You don't have to do it repetitively or consecutively. You can take breaks, giving your body rest, giving your mind rest, giving your relationship rest.

And staying connected to your partner intimately, and intimately doesn't mean sexually or however you guys do it. It can be whatever you need it to be. It could just be going on dates every week or having times of the day where there's no fertility talk. And putting a schedule on or something, like, “Look, when we're home and it's not between the hours of nine to five, we're not having this discussion.”

And for me, it was really important because I also worked with my husband before we had Omar Jr. And he's a software engineer but he also had owned some restaurants. And so I was helping him manage the day to day operations of those restaurants. And so it was very important for me, because we did live and work together, in finding balance.

And again, like I said, I'm a Libra. So I'm the lady with the balancing beams in the picture. So I'm trying to find balance in everything I do. And so I think a lot of who I innately am helped me get through it, because I wasn't seeking therapy, like I probably should have. You know what I mean?

And so you definitely have to listen to yourself. And you can't do that with a lot of noise around. And sometimes it's just having a 2am conversation with your spouse about what you're thinking and what you're feeling and just laying there and just talking in an intimate way. There's so many different things.

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Even knowing that you can do it the way you want to do it can be maybe empowering for you. And I hope that it is, and if not, finding what gives you your power back.

Jenica: I love that. And I think that's such a beautiful recommendation for everyone. Because, for example, for me, and I guess I didn't really even know there was another way but when we went through our first infertility experience to get our twins I did back to back three IUIs and two rounds of IVF.

And I was really really sick physically and mentally after all that. I was exhausted and I didn't even think to take a break. It wasn't even an option for me. And then after that I got to the point where I was had to take a break because I was just so physically ill from all the hormones and injections that we took a break during the summer. And then we did it again and did it IVF again that fall and ended up getting our twins.

But that's one of the things that I've really tried to pay attention to this time around is like, for example, in July, or maybe it was June of this year, I had a polyp removal surgery. And we were supposed to go right in to do IVF again. And we had planned on it, but they found an inch sized cyst on my right ovary that was producing hormones that would interfere with the medication.

And they told me to call in the next month and see if it had gone away. And one of the things they wanted to do was put me on birth control. But for me, that made me feel like an absolute psychopath. Just those hormones just did not work for me. And so I was like, "You know what, that's just not an option for me. I'm not going to do that."

And they were like, "Okay, well, what you can also do is just kind of wait it out. Sometimes the regular hormonal fluctuations in your body through your monthly cycle will make the cyst go away, because they're fairly common." And so I was like, "Okay, that feels so much better for me. That feels more true for me and taking care of myself."

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And this was back in July, and I haven't called them back yet. And I just still need a break. And it's been so good for me, but also it's only good for me when I don't think about what other people think about my experience to growing our family. Because it can be very—

For me, I don't know what it is, I think I'm a people pleaser by nature. And I'm really working on knowing I can't control the way that people feel. And it's typically I've considered it a good thing because I want people to be happy. I want people to feel good around me. But I think that that just makes it so I don't take care of myself as well as I should.

And so, for me, this time around and choosing when I move forward despite what other people's opinions are about growing our family has been really freeing and just has felt so much more true to myself this time.

Monique: Yeah, that's great. That's fabulous. Yeah, and I've heard it other times as well on my podcast, women being forced to take that break. And I'm an advocate of don't wait until it's too late. Don't wait until your body shuts down on you essentially, or you mentally shut down on yourself.

And it's okay, whatever you decide to do, it's okay, friend. Don't worry about it. That's probably like the worst line ever, don't worry about it, but you guys know what I mean.

Jenica: Totally. Yeah, don't worry about what other people are thinking about your choice.

Monique: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. And that's why social media is such a double edged sword. Because we are constantly comparing, we are constantly looking and seeking validation for our decisions and our choices instead of just listening to our spirits and listening to higher source and going with that.

A lot of the decisions I make now, I do it and make it halfway happen before I even put it out there, if I even put it out there. Because if it doesn't

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work out and or it doesn't look like the way I thought it was going to look like, I don't have anybody's pressure saying, "Oh, look at you" pointing their finger and things like that.

So you have to be really intentional about who you connect yourself online with in the community. And let's face it, everybody in the community is not there for the same reason as you. Some of them just want to gain a following and turn it into a business. And some of them are really there to truly help people.

Unfortunately, it's become tainted the way that other areas of social media have. And it was bound to happen eventually, but there's a lot of good eggs out there in the midst of all of that. And when you're in the midst of all of this it's really important that you have people around you, whether it's virtually and or in person, that support what you decide to do, no matter what you decide to do. And that is the bottom line.

Jenica: I love that. Okay, Monique, is there anything else that you want to add before we end our incredible episode together?

Monique: Just get to know you again, man. Just get to know you again. And get to know your relationship with your spouse for what it is now. And don't continue in treatment if your relationship is being strained. Because it's no good having a strained relationship and then hey, treatment does work this time and now you're pregnant. So instead of focusing on healing the relationship, now you have to focus on maintaining your pregnancy.

So when will the relationship heal? A lot of people divorce after infertility whether they have a baby or not. And it's really sad when it happens after they've had the miracle baby. And I've seen that happen a couple of times in recent years when people who have been through infertility treatments and they end up divorced because they never dealt with the issues before the baby.

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Jenica: I love that, that's really great advice. Because I think that, I mean, I always tell— Well, I guess I don't say this out loud a ton, but I think to myself a lot that my kids will not always live with me, but my husband will. And so that relationship always comes first. And even when you don't have children yet in your family, that relationship is the most foundational relationship of the family. So I think that's beautiful advice, thank you.

Monique: Yes. Yes, it definitely is because if that's not right, nothing else in the house flows. It starts at the top with the mom and the dad or the husband and the wife. And remember that you're already a family, children don't make you a family. The family becomes the day you say I do to one another.

Jenica: I love you. You're literally the best human, I'm so excited that I get to introduce people that don't know you yet to you so they can just soak in your goodness like I've been able to. What is the best way to get more of Monique? How do people find you online?

Monique: Infertility And Me podcast on social media, I'm still very active there. I produced 100 episodes of the show, Infertility And Me podcast. But at the moment I'm not producing any more episodes there. I'm very busy right now in other areas of life, but I am still very active on social media.

I started creating more content again now that I'm settled into my new home. And so that will always be home for me, no matter what I'm doing, wherever you see me at, I'm always on Instagram.

Jenica: I love that. And people can still listen to her podcasts as well. It's still up even though there's no new episodes. There's 100 and, what did you say? 102 or 103?

Monique: Something like that, I lost count.

Jenica: Yeah, there's a lot of incredible things to listen to. So thank you so much, Monique. You are just honestly truly a light and you have so much

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wisdom. And I feel like you have the best, most peaceful energy. So thank you so much for being here.

Monique: Oh, thank you, I appreciate it. That means all my hard work isn't going to waste.

Jenica: It's not, it's definitely not.

Monique: Sometimes it makes me feel like a maniac sometimes in mom life, and life, and trying to run businesses. And sometimes you're like, "Oh my God, am I even doing any of this right?"

Jenica: Girl, yeah, I had a moment like that this week where I was like, "I'm quitting everything. I'm done. Goodbye everyone."

Monique: Yeah, just shed a tear and kiss it goodbye.

Jenica: Yes. Okay, well, thank you so much. And we will see everyone back here next week on Fearless Infertility.

I truly believe setting yourself up for success and managing your mental and emotional health can be so much easier when we set ourselves up with great routines. So I am so excited to share with you my free Morning Mindset Magic Checklist that I have perfected over the last several years.

Throughout my own battle with infertility these seven simple morning habits have helped me regain control over my thoughts. They give me power over my feelings and emotions. They clear out shame, guilt, and anxiety from my mind and prepare me to win each day, no matter how tough things get.

You will learn how to make sure you start your day on your own terms without any hint of negative comparison or shame. Where you should go first after getting out of bed to clear your mind and prepare for the day. My magic trick for accessing the uplift I need to make my day great on my own terms. How to get the direction and support you need to get through even the toughest days when everything seems to go wrong.

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The do it first happy chore you should always finish as soon as possible to give yourself momentum. It literally takes about 20 seconds but nothing gets me ready to conquer the next thing and the next thing like getting this done first. How to keep your momentum going once you complete tip number five. It sounds super simple, but trust me, once you add this to your routine, you're telling your mind that you're in control.

And why checking in with your gut each morning sets you up for success. You can easily get messed up if you're not careful with this one. Make sure you listen closely to your body as you follow tip number seven. Head to [thesliceofsun.com](http://thesliceofsun.com) and click on Morning Mindset Magic to get the free checklist.

Thank you for listening to *Fearless Infertility*. If you want more tools and resources to help you during your infertility experience visit [thesliceofsun.com](http://thesliceofsun.com). See you next week.