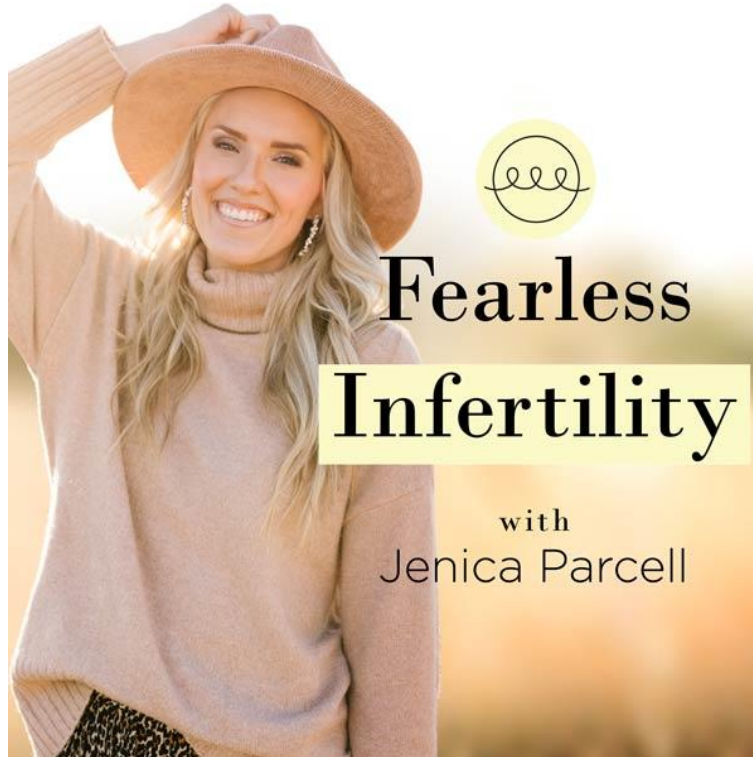


38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jenica Parcell

[Fearless Infertility](#) with Jenica Parcell

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

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.

Congratulations on making the best choice of your entire life and showing up here on *Fearless Infertility* today. I'm so excited that you're here. Truly, truly today's podcast guest is incredible.

Kelsey Nixon made me cry a couple of times, not really, it wasn't her fault. But it was just such a touching beautiful conversation with her about the loss of her son, the meaning that she is giving it in her life, and the way in which she was able to grow her family through surrogacy. It is the coolest interview. I'm so excited for you that you get to listen to it, so let's go.

Hello my friends. It has been a great week for me so far. And I was thinking about why and I think partially it's due to the fact that we're having so much fun over on Instagram. If you're not hanging out with me over there, please do so. I'd love to get to know you better. My Instagram handle is @Jenicaparcell.

And I am doing a Morning Mindset Magic Checklist Challenge with everyone over there and you can download the free checklist on fearlessinfertility.com. And it's the seven things that I do every single morning, especially when I don't want to because I know for a fact based on a lot of research for myself over the last couple of years on what will happen with my mindset when I do these things and when I don't. And there's certain things that I absolutely always do and there's certain things that I absolutely do not do.

So if you want to join us, I would love to have you. We are keeping each other accountable over on Instagram stories, so join us there. And I think it

[Fearless Infertility](#) with Jenica Parcell

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

will honestly change your life. It genuinely has changed my life so I'm excited for you to participate with us there.

And I wanted to ask you if you are interested in applying these tools so they are 10 times more effective in your life. Because there's one thing to listen to really great things, right? Things that you're like, "You know what, if I applied that, that would really help me a lot." And it's a whole different thing to actually apply them in your life and have someone to be accountable to and a community to be a part of to help you in achieving your goals and making the changes that you want.

So if you love what you're listening to on the podcast, you love what we talk about, and you want help in actually applying these tools to your life and making them 10 times more effective in loving your life during infertility, getting rid of shame and anxiety, and helping you have better relationships among a few of the things that we do. Doors to Fearless Infertility are closed right now, but great news, they open on November 22nd.

So if you have any questions or want to learn more, make sure to register for my Ask Jenica Anything call. This is the first call I'm doing of this type and I'm really, really excited about it because I'll just be able to answer all the question that you have about the program. I'll be able to help some of you in solving some of your problems. And any questions that you have for me, I will be able to answer on that call.

So it's November 23rd at 11:30 Mountain Time. You can register at fearlessinfertility.com/webinar. And if you can't make it live, no worries. I will be giving a really, really amazing bonus on that call that you can apply within 24 hours, but it's not a problem if you can't make it live due to work or other obligations. Make sure to register anyway and I'll send out the link to the recording. And if you apply that special gift, you can do so, it's active for 24 hours.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

So I'm really excited about that, and it really helps me solve the problem to being able to connect with you guys better because I receive a lot of direct messages and a lot of correspondence comes my way that I would love to be able to respond to. But if I did that, I would literally only be doing that.

And so I can't respond to everybody through direct messages and things like that. But this is a really great way if you need my help with something or want to talk with me, then please jump on the webinar and we can get to know each other and I can answer the questions that you have and be able to help you love your life more during infertility.

And then that's the week that the doors open to Fearless Infertility again. And I'm excited about December's workshop because we're going to talk about being best friends with yourself for a happier life and I think it's going to be awesome. So please join us, register at fearlessinfertility.com/webinar and we'll see you there.

So the podcast review I'm going to be sharing with you today is from username TallKnar, I think is it. She says, "My spirit is renewed. I'm so thankful that I found Jenica's podcast. I have been struggling with infertility for the past five years with recurrent miscarriages.

After listening to her first podcast and now halfway through to almost new ones I have been so encouraged. My spirit is renewed and I am hopeful again. I now have the tools to bring me out of my sadness and speak truth to myself, is this serving me?"

Thank you so much for sharing your review. The reason why I love your reviews on Apple Podcasts is because it helps those who have no idea who I am or this community and the resources that are available to them in infertility to help them through and realize that they're not alone and they're in control of so much more than they truly could possibly know. They have no idea who I am.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

So when you leave a review on Apple Podcasts it makes this podcast more visible, so I give away a pair of pajamas and socks every single week. Make sure you leave your review to be entered to win. And to also help bring more incredible women into this community is the real, real goal behind it, but why not get some PJs and socks in the meantime?

So thank you for your review, email me at hello@thesliceofsun.com with your address and your size and I'll get those sent out to you.

Today's podcast episode, oh my gosh, you guys, I have been wanting to interview Kelsey for years, even before I had a podcast, I wanted to interview her. And so the fact that I was able to jump on this call with her is honestly a treat for me personally because I benefited so much from it.

I love her perspective, she's been through a lot in growing her family. And she just has this light about her, just this joy that she shares so easily. And I know that that's come through a lot of work. That has not come naturally, she has intentionally created this for herself and her life.

So in doing that I am very excited for her to share her thoughts on how she's been able to get that after being through so much and so many hard trials that she wouldn't and nobody would wish on anybody. But the fact that she's been able to create an amazing life despite those trials and make meaning from them is truly miraculous and I think it's something that we can all benefit from.

So without further ado I will introduce you to Kelsey Nixon. You guys are going to love this interview.

Jenica: Okay, hello, everybody and welcome back to *Fearless Infertility*. I'm so excited to get to introduce to you Kelsey Nixon today. And I feel like the way that I got to know Kelsey a little bit was actually through my husband

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

Tyler. When Kelsey went to BYU, she did a show, it was called Kelsey's Kitchen, right?

Kelsey: That's right.

Jenica: It was so funny. So Tyler and I have been married like 13 years, but for the longest time he had this shirt that said Kelsey's Kitchen. And so him and his friends would go support her during her recordings and so I started following her on Instagram. And I've loved following her journey and I'm so grateful that you're here today, Kelsey.

Kelsey: That makes me so happy that that shirt made it out of BYU. And I totally remember, I actually think Tyler was part of a testing team that I had where I was testing recipes on boys.

Jenica: Yeah, I'm sure they appreciated that.

Kelsey: Which is so hilarious, right, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

Jenica: Oh, yeah.

Kelsey: But no, I have a very vague memory of making these shirts and yeah. Anyways, but Tyler's great, you'll have to tell him I said hello.

Jenica: Okay, I will. And I'm sure he loved that, he was the type of guy that would go to Costa Vida and have that for breakfast. Or maybe not breakfast, I think he probably skipped breakfast, but had Costa Vida for lunch and dinner. So I'm sure this was like the highlight of his college career. So thank you for keeping him well fed him, I'm sure.

Kelsey: That's so funny. You got it.

Jenica: Okay, Kelsey, so start, if you would, by filling us in on your story in regards to infertility. I know that it is just a lot of emotional ups and downs,

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

and you've experienced a lot of what Infertility can include. And so will you kind of start at the beginning and take us with you on that journey?

Kelsey: Sure. And I will try to not be terribly verbose, but like you and like many women who probably listen to this podcast, it was long. It was a really long time so it's kind of a long story. But I may actually be one of the only guests you have who never technically had an infertility diagnosis. But it took me a lot of infertility treatments to grow my family. And so I will do my best to explain.

So my issues actually were rooted in really complicated pregnancies. So I never had trouble getting pregnant. I had two pregnancies and no miscarriages. And both pregnancies I got pregnant within the first month or two. So getting pregnant wasn't the problem for me, staying pregnant was the problem for me.

And so with my first son, he came at 28 weeks, weighed two pounds. I know you have experience with NICU babies, and I had something called HELLP syndrome, which is a rare form. It's within the pre-eclamptic family but it's not good. And basically my liver started to shut down and the only cure is to deliver the baby.

So I had Ollie at 28 weeks. He ended up doing fine, wonderful actually. He's gone on to live a completely normal life after 66 days in the NICU. I thought that was one of the hardest things I'd go through. Little did I know that was a cakewalk compared to what we'd go through with our next pregnancy.

So after my first pregnancy with my son Oliver, I sought out a specialist. We were living in New York City at the time and so we had access to really great doctors, but someone who specialized in HELLP. And I just wanted to make sure it was responsible for us to get pregnant again, because it was a pretty traumatic experience.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

And once we got what we felt was like the appropriate information to make the decision about pursuing pregnancy again, we decided to try and have another baby. I got pregnant with another boy. And unfortunately, this time, my symptoms started earlier and right at about that viability mark at 24 weeks, I went in and the baby was severely growth restricted. And I was starting to develop those symptoms of HELLP syndrome again.

So there was all sorts of— It was like an episode of Grey's Anatomy, it just was so traumatic. But Leo ended up being delivered at 25 weeks and he only weighed 15 ounces, which is 450 grams. And when they tell you your baby's weight in grams, you know it's probably not a very good sign.

But he went on to kind of beat the odds and he lived for about a month. And the neonatologist told us if he lives past the first 10 days, then he's likely going to live but buckle up. There's a very good chance of cerebral palsy, or brain bleeds, or all sorts of complications.

So we had kind of gotten the mindset of we're going to be parents to a special needs child. This is what our family is going to be. But unfortunately, he got an infection in the NICU and his teeny tiny body just could not withstand it and he passed. And it was awful and terrible, and I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy.

And in addition to grieving Leo and his life, we were also told after that pregnancy, we were highly advised against pursuing any future pregnancies. Because not only were my pregnancies resulting in these micro preemies and these really premature deliveries, but both times I had gone into a critical state. And so it's really dangerous for me.

And my maternal fetal medicine doctor felt that when she sees this pattern, it just tends to get worse with subsequent pregnancies. And we barely made it to viability this time around. So we had decided it was not safe for us to pursue future pregnancies.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

And at this point, the first thing I thought about was adoption. Because we knew we wanted to grow our family and I think that's the first place your mind goes. But I was so broken, like I was so unbelievably broken, and the thought of pursuing adoption at that moment when I felt so fragile, and giving somebody else all of the control, I wasn't ready for that.

And it was actually at Leo's funeral, Robbie had— Robbie is my husband, and one of seven. And so he's got a nice big family, three sisters, and one of his sisters approached me and said, "I know this sounds crazy, but I have a really good friend who was a surrogate for her sister, and I've seen it done before. And I would love to carry a baby for you guys." And Robbie laughed, and he was like, "Oh, that's weird. We would never do that. No."

And I thought, "Oh, we never could afford that." That was my first thought, is that surrogacy is so expensive. There's no way we could ever afford that. But then when I went to my six week follow up appointment, my doctor said definitely no more pregnancies, but you're a great candidate for gestational surrogacy because there's nothing wrong with the quality of your eggs or your embryos. It is all tied to the uterine environment and the placenta. I had abnormal placentas with both pregnancies.

And so between Betsy, my sister-in-law, organically offering and my doctor suggesting that we were good candidates for this, we thought, "Well, maybe we should look into this and learn more about it." And so we did, and then that's when I found myself in the waiting room of a fertility clinic.

Which was just a wild experience that, I mean, you know and so many of your listeners know, it's just a heartbreaking place to be. To look around and think about all these people that want something so good, and for some reason it is so difficult.

So we started that process. And we were living in New York City, my sister-in-law lives in Idaho. And so we were dealing with not one fertility clinic, but

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

two fertility clinics across the country from one another, so much distance. But that started the process of egg retrievals.

And I had kind of felt like, you know, God owes me one. I wasn't good at pregnancy, so I'm sure I'm going to be good at IVF, like this is going to be no problem.

Jenica: Yeah, it would seem logical, right?

Kelsey: Yes, it turns out I wasn't very good at IVF.

Jenica: Yep.

Kelsey: I didn't respond to the meds well, and so I had a couple of— They had one canceled egg retrieval, you know, cysts and fibroids, like all this stuff. There's so much that can go wrong. And I just felt like, “Man, he is kicking me while I'm down. How come I cannot get these embryos?”

Anyways, so I believe we did two cycles and got three embryos. We transferred two to Betsy, she was totally up for that. And it failed. And I felt like, same thing, wait a second, I've already been through the hard thing. This is just supposed to work now. I can't believe this isn't working. I also feel like not enough people say there's a really good chance your first transfer won't work, and that's okay. I just thought it was going to work.

Jenica: Yeah, same. I actually wasn't even that worried about it, to be completely honest. I was like, “Oh, no worries, we can't get pregnant on our own. So this is going to work.” I wasn't even that stressed about it, I was just like, “It works.”

Kelsey: I had this added thing in my head where it's like, well, I don't have fertility problems. I just have carrying problems, and so this is definitely going to work. And Betsy had had six successful pregnancies, no

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

problems. I mean, she was an ideal candidate as a carrier. And it didn't work.

And so we made that decision, we had one embryo left. And it's like, well, if this next transfer doesn't work and we want to do more, we might as well do another egg retrieval now. So I went back and did another egg retrieval.

Jenica: Oh, so is that three egg retrieval?

Kelsey: Yes, yeah.

Jenica: Oh my gosh. And for me, personally, I mean, I'm sure that different people experience different things. But for me, that was the worst part of the entire process.

Kelsey: Oh, awful. And just like the waiting where it's like, okay, we're going to count your follicles. And it's like, you have this many. And oh, they count the eggs that are a certain size. And I just feel like every time I went, I was failing a little bit more. The numbers were never as good.

And I remember sitting in that room after the retrieval when they come and they tell you how many eggs they got. And I remember hearing the woman next to me, and then hearing my number. I think each time I got six, like we're talking not very many.

Jenica: And these are the eggs, right?

Kelsey: Yes, and we're starting with six.

Jenica: Yeah, that's a little low, yeah. That's so heartbreaking.

Kelsey: Anyways, I just want to empathize with women who feel like, it feels like everyone has better numbers than me. I felt like that. And anyways, we ended up getting more genetically normal embryos, two more. So we have three total at this point.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

We do another transfer of two, and one takes and we are so thrilled, like beyond thrilled. Betsy carries the pregnancy. Of course, it couldn't be a normal pregnancy, we had all sorts of complications. She got, what is it called? The itchy— What is it called when they itch? Do you know what I'm talking about?

Jenica: I can't remember, but I know what you're talking about, yeah.

Kelsey: I cannot believe I'm forgetting this stuff. This is all I thought about for years. It's actually really great that I'm forgetting this.

Jenica: It is, yeah. It feels good to kind of move through it.

Kelsey: Yes, yes. So she was, I mean, it's awful when you think about someone going— It's not awful, but it's really challenging when you realize that someone's going through all the uncomfortable things of pregnancy on your behalf. And then they begin to itch 24/7. And I just can't think of anything worse.

Jenica: That's a lot of emotional weight for you, because you're so grateful and you probably also felt so guilty at the same time.

Kelsey: It's so challenging. And for anyone that finds themselves in a situation with a gestational carrier, I think one of the hardest things is like how much do I do? Do I show up with dinner every night? Betsy's kids were a little bit older, so I wasn't as worried about childcare with her. But if they have young kids, do I send a babysitter? What can I do to make this easier on you? And it's a really tricky thing to balance.

Jenica: So what did you do?

Kelsey: Well, it's a great question. With Betsy I would say the thing most tangible was meals. Like sending dinner, that felt like the thing when she was— And she had kidney stones. Oh my gosh, it was so awful. She ended

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

up in the emergency room once because she was so terrified that something was going to happen. We worked so hard for this baby and heaven forbid something happened to it. And so meals was probably the biggest thing I did.

Jenica: Okay. And did you ask her? Like, "Okay, will this help?" And she said yes. What would you recommend?

Kelsey: Most of the time she would just say I'm fine. I don't need anything. I'm fine. I'm fine.

Jenica: Like a lot of us do when we're struggling. We're like we got this, we don't need help.

Kelsey: Exactly.

Jenica: Even though we really would I appreciate it.

Kelsey: And one thing that's really important about just gestational surrogacy in general, it's come a long way in the past couple of years and anyone who enters into a relationship with a gestational carrier, whether that's a family member or a stranger, there are reproductive attorneys and it's really important to have everything set up so that everyone is protected.

And I mean, you and your partner, your baby, and your gestational carrier, and their family as well. And so actually a lot of this stuff is spelled out in the contract, which is really crazy. But it's great in that, like there's specific clauses about if your carrier is required to go on bed rest there's sometimes childcare or extra compensation or whatever it may be to help support them.

Jenica: Oh, good. Yeah, that's amazing to have it all set up beforehand so there's no question.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

Kelsey: Exactly, exactly. I mean, you answer crazy questions too, like what happens if you and your spouse are tragically killed while your carrier is carrying your baby? What happens to your baby? And I think a lot of people are surprised to learn like in our situation, that baby would have been born and gone to my sister, because that's where my other kids would go. I think a lot of people assume, oh, the carrier would just keep the baby.

But I think when it comes to misconceptions about surrogacy, most of them are rooted in the emotional state of a carrier. Where I think people maybe make the assumption that they have a hard time, I even hate to say the phrase because it is so not this, but giving up the baby.

They're not giving up the baby, they never intended for this to be their baby. The reason they are doing this is not to have another baby. But that's why that contract and that attorney is so important to make sure everyone is on the same page. And I think, yeah, if you're in a reputable fertility clinic, they don't even work with carriers who don't meet a very strict set of criteria to be an ideal candidate for a carrier.

Jenica: Yeah, don't they do have like a psychological evaluation beforehand to make sure that they can handle it emotionally?

Kelsey: Yep, both the carrier and their spouse have a psychological evaluation, and then the intended parents. So me and my husband also had to have psychological evaluations. And then the carrier needs to be done having their own family because heaven forbid they are carrying for you and they intend to have more kids and something tragic happens in the pregnancy and they lose their uterus, and they're not able to complete their family. So things like that.

A lot of clinics have income requirements, meaning that between the carrier and their spouse or partner, they have to make a certain income level so that it detracts women from doing it simply for making money. And let me tell you, I think surrogacy has this stigma of it being so expensive and so

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

out of reach. And I think it's because you hear of big fancy celebrities doing it.

But what we learned is that surrogacy, oftentimes, is more affordable than adoption. Especially given your adoption options. If you're doing a private adoption, for us, in some ways it would have been more expensive to do a private adoption. So we also and I'm just going to address the money thing, because I think that it's like a little taboo.

Jenica: Yeah, for sure, I'd appreciate that.

Kelsey: We had two experiences where we worked with a family member who didn't want to be compensated. So my sister-in-law, Betsy, we did not pay her a fee to carry our baby. Spoiler alert, we have my daughter, Nora, and then we go on to use our last embryo with a separate carrier, who we did compensate through the more traditional form.

So we have experienced both of those things where we paid a surrogate and where we worked with a carrier who did not want to be compensated. And so it can happen both ways. So if you are in a situation where you're finding that a carrier is your best option, especially if you have a family member that's willing to do it purely for altruistic reasons, that actually can be quite affordable within the fertility world.

And anyways, I just think that's something interesting that not a lot of people talk about.

Jenica: Yeah, that's really good to know because I think everyone, including myself, just assumes that it's completely outrageous and you have to be really rich to be able to afford to do that.

Kelsey: Right.

Jenica: So that's good to know that it's manageable.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

Kelsey: The other thing that's really important to know is that carriers have kind of like standard rates in different— It's like based by state. So a carrier in the state of California is significantly more expensive than a carrier in the state of Idaho. And our carrier for my daughter, Penelope, who was born 18 months ago. Her name is Megan, we love her so much and she lives in Idaho. And Idaho just happens to be one of the most affordable places to do surrogacy.

That wasn't the main reason we sought Megan out there. Megan actually happens to be a really good friend to my sister-in-law, Betsy.

Jenica: Amazing, wow.

Kelsey: That's how that relationship happened. But we're talking like a third of the price in Idaho versus like a standard carrier rate, or at least when we did it was somewhere between 25 and \$30,000 in Idaho, whereas in California you're looking at like \$100,000. So it's really, really substantial.

And I also just want to point out the fact that both times we did not live in the same state as our carrier. When we were pregnant with Nora, we lived in New York. And when we were pregnant with Penny we lived in Oregon. And I think that there might be an assumption that it's really important to live in the same state as your carrier.

And we actually had our psychologist who did our psychological evaluations, she actually pointed out that sometimes it's better to not be in the same state, because it's not so much that, “Oh no, I know they've been dealing with morning sickness today. Should I go over and take her kids?” The distance kind of helps separate the expectations a little bit. Does that make sense? It creates more definitive lines.

Jenica: Yeah, absolutely. And then you can help where you can, and where they would appreciate it without overstepping their boundaries.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

Kelsey: Exactly, because that's the other thing is, I don't know that people want to be smothered either. I just want to make sure I make this clear as well, that even though we compensated Megan for that pregnancy, Megan was so much altruistically driven to do this as well.

Jenica: And honestly, I will have to confirm that because even though I don't know her I'm like, you could never pay me 25 or 30 grand to carry a child. It would literally have to be like in the millions of dollars because it's like— So absolutely, I mean, I can see that.

Kelsey: There are like, I mean, I don't know, I hate the money thing attached to surrogacy. But I think it's important to talk about because it's the thing that people wonder the most about. But there's easier ways to make \$25,000.

Jenica: 1,000,000%, I can list like 50 of them right now. Yeah, for sure. So, of course she had your best interests at heart. And honestly, as you're talking I kind of got a little bit emotional thinking about how amazing your family is. Because not only do your kids have you two, but it's like all of this love and generosity that brought them into the world is just so beyond touching.

Kelsey: Exactly, and Megan is— In fact, the way this whole story happened is my daughter Nora was born thanks to Betsy. And for any women listening that might find themselves in my position, where they're not able to carry safely, it was devastating to me to not be able to carry my own child. But it was what it was.

But let me tell you what was amazing, was delivering my child. And the experience of Nora coming into the world, I have never felt heaven closer on Earth. And it was the most joyous. And this is pre-Covid and we had the most wonderful doctor. And he just he made a joke that it felt like Mardi Gras in the room because there were so many people in the room.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

But Betsy was so open and she just kept saying, “I just wanted to be like it would be if you were delivering the baby.” So I was there, my husband was there. It's not weird, I promise, when your baby's being born, you forget about— My husband was there, her husband was there, my mother was there, her teenage daughters were there. It was seriously, it was— And to have my daughter born into my arms was just, it was so amazing and so incredible.

Jenica: Well, I'm literally like choked up right now because just imagining the love in that room, I mean, that is just like— I can't even think about it without crying.

Kelsey: Yes, Heaven was palpable. It really was so amazing. So anyways, but Betsy, so we had this remaining embryo. And it'd been pretty clear from the start that Betsy was up for doing this once, but probably not future pregnancies. Because lots of times a family will work with a carrier for more than one baby. But we knew that wouldn't be the case with Betsy. And we were totally fine with that.

And to be quite honest, we were so grateful to have gotten Nora here, we could have been really happy with just our two living children in our family. But we had this remaining embryo. And this is another thing that I don't think enough people address in the world of fertility, is when you have those remaining embryos, what do you do?

Jenica: Yeah, I get asked that frequently actually. And I'm like, I don't know what to tell you. It's such a personal decision.

Kelsey: It's such a personal decision. And so we had kind of come to terms with the fact that if we come across someone or a situation that feels like it's meant to be for someone to carry for us, then we would like to try. But we don't intend to go do more egg retrievals and going down that path. And we only had one embryo left and it took four to get Nora, so the chances of it actually working probably aren't that great anyways.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

So our process at that point was— And this is the advice I give people who reach out to me about surrogacy, we just decided to reach out to our close family and friends and say, “We have one embryo left. We would like to try and use it. If you know anyone who's ever expressed interest in being a carrier before, will you just let us know?”

Because for me, I really like the idea of being connected to this person in some way as opposed to just a complete stranger. And I don't think there's anything wrong with working with a complete stranger. But it just felt better to me to have a connection to whoever this was. So Betsy received her email and she thought, “I'll think about it.” And she was at Chick fil A of all places.

Jenica: Where dreams come true.

Kelsey: Truly, where dreams truly were. And Megan and her husband, Brian, were there with their young kids. And Betsy said something like, “Do you think you're going to have any more kids?” And she was like, “No, I think we're done.” And she was like, “But I'm really thinking about being a gestational carrier.”

And she mentioned it to Betsy because Betsy had done it. And she said, “Do you think Robbie and Kelsey would ever do it again?” And Betsy had just received this email from us and was like, “Oh my gosh, they're totally looking for someone, you've got to call her.” And so that's how Megan and I got connected.

And then, because Megan and Betsy are such great friends, I think that Betsy could be a really good resource to Megan throughout the process from the perspective of a carrier because it's a really different experience, obviously. And then with Megan's, it's just so crazy. With the birth of Penelope, who was carried by Megan, she was born in April of 2020. So we were like right in the middle of Covid craziness.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

And so it actually only ended up being me and Megan in the delivery room. For a minute there was going to be no one allowed in the delivery room. But Megan had to make a really challenging choice where she got one support person. And if she had wanted her husband to be there, I would have totally— I mean, she's the one giving birth, it is our baby, but these are some of the things that you have to think about in a surrogate relationship.

But it ended up being me and Megan and I also delivered Penny right into my arms, and a female nurse and a female doctor. So it was like the ultimate girl's night out like.

Jenica: Oh my gosh, that is so special.

Kelsey: It was a roomful of females doing this really incredible thing together and it was really amazing.

Jenica: That just touches me, I can't even think about these experiences without getting choked up because it's so special.

Kelsey: It really was very special. And when I lost my son, Leo, and when I received that news that future pregnancies were not advisable, I was just the lowest of low. Those words don't even do it justice for the grief that I felt for both the grieving future pregnancies and grieving the loss of my son.

And for a while the thing I just couldn't get over is I just didn't understand why Leo would have been born and died after 30 days. Because all that happened in those 30 days was suffering, honestly.

I couldn't hold him, I wasn't able to hold him for those 30 days. He was so fragile that, I mean, occasionally I would be able to stick my hand in through the isolette. But I couldn't hold my baby, he was suffering, it just felt like so much suffering. And I didn't understand what was the purpose of it.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

And hindsight is so interesting and it really was just one of the most profound lessons I've learned in my life. That now I look at Leo's life and I believe so much that his short yet meaningful life, the purpose was to get his sisters here. Because there is no way we would have ever pursued something like gestational surrogacy had it not been for his life, and his death, to be quite honest.

And so when I look at these beautiful girls that I love so much, and so many of your infertility mamas know, that I don't care what anybody says, when you work so hard to get your children here, there is just a level of gratitude for their lives. I just don't know that it compares.

And so when I look at these girls with so much love, I think of Leo. And I think about that baby who is waiting for us on the other side. And I am so grateful for that experience and for his life because I wouldn't have these girls if it weren't for him.

And so, at the time I was shaking my fist at God and saying, "How dare you?" I honestly have this memory in the hospital with Leo where— So after I delivered Leo, I got something called C. diff, which is like this infectious disease. It's so ridiculous, it just felt like it was piling on. And I'd had a C-section, and I was vomiting, and I was like, "How is this happening?"

And I remember shaking my fist at God and saying, "Stop it. Stop it. I cannot take any more. I cannot do this anymore. And to think of my heavenly father on the other side thinking, "Be patient Kelsey, this is the way it's supposed to be." I had to stop myself for saying this is for a reason because I hate the saying that things happen for a reason.

Jenica: Yeah, this is how it was supposed to be.

Kelsey: This thing is just as it's supposed to be. This is just as it's supposed to be. And little did I know that his life would kind of kick off this chapter of life for me that would probably be a period of time where I would grow the

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

most as a human being. And when I am an old lady on my deathbed, I have no question I will look back on my life and be so grateful for that unbelievably challenging experience that helped me get my family here.

So, just for anyone in the middle of it, it is so hard, it is so awful. And nothing feels more important than building a family. But for me, I have learned on the other side of it, that it happened just as it was supposed to. Even though it was so hard and so challenging along the way, I wouldn't change anything about it.

Jenica: That's amazing. And what a beautiful perspective. I can't even think about it without crying because to think about— I love the way that you think about that. And to think like, “Okay sisters, this is what we're going to do to get you guys here on this earth.” Just like the sacrifice, and I mean, I believe that a lot of the stuff that we experience here on this earth, we knew beforehand and we agreed to it.

And I think what a beautiful thing that he's like, “All right, this is our family. This is the way that we're going to get all of us there and back home again.” I mean, are you kidding me? I just want to witness that reunion when all of us are back in heaven again, I would love to witness that reunion, and be like, “We did it.”

Kelsey: Yeah, for a while, like the first couple years of my grief with Leo, and Leo would be six now. But for the first couple of years, it just made me so angry to think about it and I felt like I had been robbed. And honestly, now I am in such a great place.

When I think of him, I do not feel sadness, I feel gratitude. I feel gratitude and happiness. And I am so spoiled to have these physical daily reminders of these girls that this was his gift. Like this was all because of him.

So anyways, but it was years. It was years of sitting in the suck, of sitting in the why is this not working? I think we were doing infertility treatments for

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

about 18 months before we got Nora. Which I know many people do it for much longer. But just like I say about a NICU stay. A short NICU stays just as bad as a long NICU stay. Honestly, I think that they're both challenging. And I think that the length of time you deal with infertility, it doesn't take away, it's not like you deal with it for—

Jenica: Right, I agree. Absolutely, I don't think that it's helpful to compare whatsoever.

Kelsey: No.

Jenica: Because then people who have done it for a long time might not validate those who have not gone through it as long and then vice versa, people who have not gone through it as long might not validate themselves in feeling certain ways. And I think that however your feeling is exactly how you should be feeling.

Kelsey: Exactly, exactly. So it's been a wild road, but we're all here. The gang's all here, there are no embryos left, there are no more future pregnancies. And let me tell you, that's a great feeling too, that I never thought I would get to. I kind of always thought that I'd always wish that I could have more because it was so challenging to get them here. But three is a great number for us. We are at max capacity. It is great, yeah.

Jenica: That's amazing. Well, and I also love that you said as well, and for those of you listening who have never experienced pregnancy, had I not experienced it, I would feel the exact same way. I would desperately want to know what it's like to feel that growing baby in your belly with the aches, the pains, the nausea.

And so I really want to validate those of you who have not gotten to experience that, that absolutely that's hard. For me, I did get to experience that and my twin pregnancy was an absolute nightmare because I ended

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

up getting pre-eclampsia, I delivered two months early. I mean, it was just absolutely awful.

So I don't look forward to getting pregnant again. But I'm also so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have done that. And I completely validate those of you who are like, "I'd give anything for that."

Kelsey: Totally. And my experience was— My first pregnancy up until 26 weeks was amazing. In fact, I remember making a joke about the fact that oh, God must want me to have a lot of kids because this is a breeze. I didn't get sick.

And then, little did I know and then because I had a traumatic delivery, that second pregnancy I was so anxious and so anxiety ridden throughout the whole pregnancy that it was awful. It was awful.

But once again I want to validate, even with that, would I take having my own child over working with a carrier? Absolutely because there are complicated feelings there where even though you adore this woman who's doing this incredible thing for you and you are beyond grateful, I want to feel that baby kicking in my belly. I want to be the person who has the silly appointment on my calendar to go and have my blood pressure taken.

I don't know, I definitely had some pings of— I don't want to use the word jealousy because I feel like jealousy is a word with a negative connotation.

Jenica: Maybe even longing. Like you're just longed for that,

Kelsey: Longing, that's so much better. And yeah, anyways, but it happened just as it was supposed to happen. And for anyone listening that might be at a point where their medical team is recommending gestational surrogacy, my experience was fantastic.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

I feel like if you're not hearing about the super rich, famous celebrities that are doing surrogacy, you're hearing about the crazy stories where the surrogate wants to keep the baby. And as someone who has become part of this surrogacy community, I don't know anyone who that has happened. I think that is such a small majority.

And if it's handled appropriately, in the same way you'd handle an adoption appropriately, it's a wonderful experience for everyone involved. And I feel 110% confident that if we had Betsy and Megan on this call right now, they would tell you that it was one of the best experiences of their lives. In fact, Megan is doing it again for another family.

Jenica: Oh my goodness, if she'll be on I would actually love to speak with her. That would be amazing.

Kelsey: Yes. So Megan had such a positive experience, she's doing it again. And as you get to know women in this surrogacy community, that is a really common thing. It tends to be such a positive experience that people do want to do it more than once. I mean, think about it, you're giving someone the world's greatest gift, and the euphoria that comes with that.

And even Betsy, who obviously we're close to because she's my sister-in-law. Nora is almost five, she's the same age as Goldie and Harris, but it is so gratifying to her to watch Nora grow up and to watch her watch us enjoy Nora so much. I mean, I just can't think of anything better to do for somebody.

Jenica: Yeah, I mean, honestly, you can't even describe that, that gift. And then I love that you talked about their perspective in watching you appreciate it so much. I mean, there's no greater gift, truly. That's amazing.

Okay, so for those listening, I was going to ask— I almost called you Betsy. I was going to Kelsey a question regarding her thoughts, but I just want to

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

point out some thoughts that she already gave us that have helped her move forward.

So as she's been talking, I've kind of noted, one, I love the perspective that she has on her son's passing and his purpose. And that is something that she's choosing to believe in. No one is forcing her to choose that, that's something that she's choosing intentionally. And it's helping her find so much purpose and peace.

And then another one that you had said was that this was all supposed to happen this way. And that's a thought, again, that no one's forcing her to choose. And if that's a thought that you choose that comforts you, that no one can take away from you either. You don't have to prove that to anyone.

These are two thoughts that are really helping her to continue to move forward with peace and joy in her life and to be able to appreciate what she does have and then look forward to what's to come. So I don't think we necessarily need to ask her that because I feel like you did such a great job of really—

Kelsey: Well, and I want to point out it took me a while to get there. It took some work to get there. But I'm in such a great place now. And I feel relieved that I don't have to carry— Everyone grieves differently, right? So if someone grieves and carries a sadness with them throughout their lives, then by all means, if that is how they feel close to the person they lost.

But the fact that I genuinely feel so happy when I think about him, and I can confidently say that, oh, it was so hard. And it does give me pause, like if I could have written the story differently. But no, I learned so much. I grew so much as a person and I would not be the mother that I am today had I not gone through what I had to go through to get these babies here.

So yeah, those are certainly thoughts that are comforting to me and make this challenging experience of life tolerable rather than living with anger,

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

and frustration, and this attitude of why me. But I certainly felt that way for a while.

Jenica: Yeah, well and also forgive me if I'm overstepping my bounds a little bit, but I love that in the way that you look at him and his life, that it's really honoring his life. It's not thinking his life was a waste, or it shouldn't have been like that.

I feel like as a mother, the best thing that you can do is honor your children's purpose. And I feel like that's exactly what you're doing. So as him looking down, I would just think that he's like, "Thank you mom for seeing it for what it is versus thinking it's a waste." I mean, that's such a beautiful thing, to honor his beautiful life.

Kelsey: Yeah. In fact, Nora, up until like two days before— It was a scheduled induction. Cholestasis, that's what it's called, the itching condition. But because of Cholestasis there's an increased likelihood of stillbirth so we scheduled an induction. Anyways, so we knew what day Nora was coming.

And before I even started to try and get pregnant, you know how you always have a name. Our name was Penelope. We were going to name a daughter Penelope, I was going to get pregnant with a girl first, I had it all mapped out.

That clearly did not happen. But we thought all along that, in fact we called her Penny throughout the pregnancy to Betsy. And just before she was born, I thought that is not her name. And I wanted it to have some sort of purpose and meaning surrounding Leo. And so Nora actually means honor and light.

And I never really thought of myself as someone who would pick a name based on a meaning or something like that. But I just felt so strongly, no, even though my entire life I thought I'd have a daughter named Penny, this

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

baby needs to have a name that is representative of her brother. And yeah, Nora means honor and light and so that's why she was named Nora. And then we got our Penny later.

Jenica: I love that, that's so beautiful. Okay, so last question for you is I always ask everyone that's on Fearless Infertility this because I think that I always respect and love those who have on my podcast. So obviously, that's why I asked you and I feel like those of us listening can really learn from your story and your perspective.

So I would love for you to kind of go into a little bit of detail on the things that you do every day, actions that you take to help you to be active in your life versus reactive. Because it's easy to be reactive, this world is crazy.

Really crappy things happen to us, always, all of us. And so are there certain things that you do in your life that helped to put you in a more proactive mindset to be able to control how you're feeling and give you the life that you love?

Kelsey: Yes. So the thing that comes to mind, and this was actually a skill that I learned from a therapist that I was seeing after we lost Leo, was when life feels overwhelming, which when you are experiencing infertility it often does. And when it just feels like too much to handle, you hear the phrase oftentimes, one day at a time.

And this therapist said to me, "Forget about one day at a time. Forget about one hour at a time. I want you to take it five minutes at a time. And I want you to break your day down into baby steps. And if things are feeling too overwhelming, I want you to think about what you can do in that five minute block to make yourself feel better." Or to be productive, whatever it may be.

And that really helped me when I was really struggling and being active as opposed to reactive, where it's like, "Okay, I just got to think about the next five minutes." And whether that was something as menial as doing the

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

dishes that were in the sink or answering one email for my job. Or it was taking five minutes to intentionally play with the child I did have right there.

Those five minute blocks of productive focus and time were really, really helpful to me. And I still use this skill now because even once I got through the infertility and the building the family, life is still hard, right?

Jenica: Absolutely, yeah.

Kelsey: So I really just think about taking like bite sized moments of time to be active and not reactive was really helpful to me.

Jenica: That's so helpful. And I love that too, because I get anxiety very, very easily. And I think it's always because I'm future focused and worrying about what could happen. Or just, I mean, you name it, I could be anxious about it.

And so I absolutely love this too, because really breaking it down makes it so much more doable for me. I'm like, "No, this whole day is a long time. But the next five minutes, yeah, I can do that. I can go do something productive that I know will serve me versus hold me back." And I love that. That's such a great suggestion.

Okay, amazing. Well, thank you. This has been such a beautiful interview. I'm so grateful for your time and for your story. I just feel so honored to get to listen to it myself and to get to share it with my listeners. So thank you for being here, Kelsey, today.

Kelsey: You got it. And best of luck to all of your listeners who are either supporting someone going through this or going through it themselves. Keep going, it's so hard, but I'm so happy to see more resources of support in this community and so grateful that you are a voice for so many.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

Jenica: Thank you. Okay, and then last thing, I know people will want to come connect with you and follow along so where's the best way to do that?

Kelsey: The best way to do that is through my social handle just @Kelseynixon or you can check out my website kelseynixon.com as well.

Jenica: Okay, amazing. And also give us a little insight, I didn't even mention this at all. So give us an insight to what you do professionally because it's really cool.

Kelsey: Yes, I work in food television, food media. So I posted cooking shows for years, I've written a cookbook. And now I share daily recipes on my social platforms that help getting family dinner on the table more manageable for people.

Jenica: I love it. I appreciate that so much. And I love your energy and I just feel like you make the world a brighter, better, more easy to live in place.

Kelsey: You're too nice.

Jenica: So thank you for your presence. And everyone else, thanks for listening. I know that you're leaving this podcast interview just feeling a little better than when you came. So thanks for being here and we will see you next week on *Fearless Infertility*.

I know how tough it is to struggle through infertility. If you're ready to get ahead of the pain and frustration, the best way is to create an ironclad mindset. That's where it all starts. I have the best free download for you, you're going to love it. It's my morning mindset magic checklist. You'll get the seven tips I use to create my mindset each morning so I can create a life I love despite my challenges.

38. How to Cope When All Seems Lost with Kelsey Nixon

You will lower your anxiety and increase your peace. I spent a couple years of trial and error and finally came upon this list of actions I take or never take every morning, even when I don't want to because they work every single time. Download for free at fearlessinfertility.com/mindsetmagic.

Thank you for listening to *Fearless Infertility*. If you want the best infertility support and community on the planet visit fearlessinfertility.com. See you there.