

## My IVF Journey and How My Pain Became My Purpose

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My name is Monica Bivas, I am a Mindset and Holistic Fertility Coach, I am not a famous woman or an influencer, I am solely a normal woman and an IVF warrior with a story to tell and the aim to inspire other women that are struggling to conceive. My story had a lot of ups and downs, and tears, but thankfully took me to the beautiful place I am right now, and I want to share it with you.

My journey to motherhood started right after my marriage, exactly 17 years ago.

I was in my 30's and wanted to start my family with my husband, but after a year of trying to conceive, I realized that something was not right. My husband had a little girl from a previous relationship, so I started putting into question my fertility.

I decided to visit an OB-GYN (first time at this doctor) to perform a primary fertility evaluation.

He prescribed me the ovulatory stimulating drug, Clomid, right on my first visit. For two months I was taking Clomid but was not seeing any results, other than being very depressed (something that I never experienced) - luckily, my husband was incredibly supportive and my number one motivator.

After two months, the OB-GYN decided to do blood tests to check my levels of follicle-stimulating hormone and so many more. Surprisingly, everything came back normal, and my hormone levels were amazing, so the next step on this fertility journey was to get a hysterosalpingogram (HSG) to check my fallopian tubes and my uterus.

Finally, my OB-GYN found the reason why I was not able to get pregnant.

The HSG has revealed that both my tubes were blocked, and later on, we discovered that I had Endometriosis, which was not allowing the embryo to travel from the tubes to the uterus.

I could not believe what I was hearing. I left that medical office destroyed and cried all the way home, once again my incredible husband was by my side and made me realize that there was still hope on having a baby, so we decided to follow my OB-GYN recommendations and consult a reproductive endocrinologist.

In November 2004 we decided to visit a reproductive endocrinologist (RE) in NY.

The RE ordered further tests and we decided to perform a laparoscopy surgery to try to open my tubes and have a chance to get pregnant naturally. But unfortunately, the procedure was not successful, and my tubes remained blocked, so IVF was our only chance to conceive.

I have never heard of IVF until that day and was not aware of how a procedure would take place, but I decided to trust the doctors.

We had a very successful first IVF cycle.

My first cycle was exceptionally smooth and the RE retrieved 24 eggs, being 14 fertilized, and we decided to transfer 4 embryos.

One of those became my now 15-year-old Elijah, which was astounding for a first cycle, as many of the first IVF cycles are not successful.

After 5 years of having our first daughter, we decided to conceive again with the help of IVF. because my first IVF treatment was successful, I was convinced it was going to be equally easy to conceive this time.

My second cycle was canceled due to a mistake from the clinic.

In 2009 during my second IVF cycle, the nurse mixed my charts with another patient and gave me the wrong medicine amount which resulted in me being extremely sick with Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS), and my cycle was canceled. - The clinic assumed the responsibility and offered un another cycle for free.

After this incident, I decided to inform myself more about IVF treatments and the entire procedure. So, for my third cycle we requested Preimplantation genetic testing (PGT), also called chromosomal testing. The test found out that one of the five embryos had Chromosomic issues, so we decided again to transfer all 4 embryos (3 male and 1 female). The female embryo, which was developing slower comparing to the other three, was the one that attached to my uterus and developed into pregnancy.

I was thrilled for having another girl.

The pregnancy was perfect and healthy, everything seemed normal, and doctors never suspected anything wrong either with me or the baby during the consultations.

But unfortunately, I was developing an undetected blood clot in the umbilical cord (Umbilical artery thrombosis, which is an extremely rare complication during pregnancy), and at 39 weeks, just three days before my delivery due date, my little baby Isabelle dies inside my womb.

I had to deliver my stillborn baby anyway, and this changed me forever.

Losing my baby at 39 weeks was devastating, I could not stop feeling guilty and just I wanted to die as well.

It was a very painful event. I felt so empty that when against all the medical recommendations and did not even wait 3 months before going for round four of IVF. I got pregnant straight away again, but I was still grieving and enormously in pain, the stress furthermore the fear of losing another baby, all combined with other personal things (my marriage crumbled, and we almost got divorced, but love always wins), I miscarried at 7 weeks.

We decided this would be our last IVF treatment, regardless of the result.

This emotional rollercoaster had not only affected me but also my family and particularly my marriage was turning apart. I knew that I had to take a break from IVF and focus on my family.

After giving myself a year and a half break from IVF, I worked on my mindset and started being grateful for what I already had (an amazing husband, a beautiful daughter, and a wonderful stepdaughter).

This mindset shift has tough me to be more conscious about myself, my health and specially to accept whatever it comes. I decided to go easy on myself and with the help of mindfulness meditation and coloring therapy (mandalas) I learned to relax, and this resulted in a positive pregnancy test. My miracle baby Maya is now 7 years old, and I honestly believe she is the soul of Isabelle.

IVF inspired me to help other women thrive this journey.

I cannot say that infertility and IVF were an easy road for me, but it was all worth it, and I would do it again if that meant becoming a mom. This journey helped me with self-discovering and in particular to find my true passion, which is what I do today. and help other women walking the same path to have support and love around them.

My fertility journey inspired me to also write my book *The IVF Planner*, and now I am working on a fertility coloring book, that will be launched in November, the month my first IVF girl was born.

I truly hope my story and my experience can help others and assure them that no matter how difficult this road is, it can teach us and brings us some joy in between the pain. Like the popular saying: "The pain that you've been feeling cannot compare to the joy that is coming".

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