

J's story of a single woman

I never imagined as a young person that I would ever have a problem having a family when I was ready. What that meant back then was that I would get married when I was 23, then have a baby at 25. Life doesn't always work out how you expect does it? I got married at 19 to the wrong person as it turned out for various reasons unrelated to this story. At 21, we didn't actually decide to have children but I got pregnant. Miscarriage number 1. Early the next year, I got pregnant again. Well, actually I didn't know I was pregnant, I did know that I got my period and it wasn't stopping. For four weeks I continued to bleed and didn't go to any doctor, believing that no one would listen (BIG self esteem issues back then, but that's another story!). I was sick at the smell of cooked food and wasn't eating much. Finally my workmates convinced me to go upstairs to the local doctor. She gave me some drugs to dry up my uterus she said. I don't remember what they were.

These made me even sicker, so when I went back the following day I could barely walk. She did a blood test which showed positive to pregnancy, and I was rushed immediately off to hospital for an ultrasound. This revealed that I had a pregnancy in my tube (ectopic), and they had to operate urgently. Back then they weren't able to do anything to mitigate the extensiveness of this so they just snipped out the whole section of tube.

Lovely scar similar to a caesarean. I asked the doctors would I still be able to have children. Yes they said but the chances were reduced. I felt damaged and I didn't know whether to believe it or not.

My husband and I separated and divorced. I was 22.

I met someone else almost straight away and I felt that I probably wouldn't be able to have children anyway, and not really thinking about this because I was young, and free, and I was starting a career. I got pregnant. Again the nausea which I thought was some virus because I still didn't believe I could get pregnant. Went to the doctor, test was positive. What did I do? This was not the time to be having a child and my partner was not really thinking about this either, nor very committed. I had a termination. I was 25.

Well, at least I knew now that I could have children and this made me more secure in the thought! I was single and moving up in my career. I was now thinking I would like to find the right person for a relationship, and that eventually we would do the acceptable thing - get married, have a family.

Didn't happen.

I moved interstate when I was 31. I later met a fantastic man. Things weren't great but they weren't bad either. I asked him if he would agree to have a baby with me. We didn't have much of a commitment but I was conscious that time could be running out. All the media hype about having children after you're 35, and the fertility rate being reduced, etc, etc really had me scared. I got pregnant. I was 35. Miscarriage number 2 happened after a flight across the country for work. I didn't know whether to blame it on that or something else I might have done. I was devastated but reasoned maybe there was something wrong with the baby. Lots of people have miscarriages. Still, I felt I had a handicap, having only one tube left. Would it happen again? I went into depression. The man left.

The year following the miscarriage, I met another man and we had a very short relationship. Not the marrying kind. While we were together I discovered that I had extensive uterine fibroids. It meant that I was having a period for almost 2 weeks of the month. Went to a specialist and he advised surgery to remove these fibroids. All I could think of was why me? Hadn't I had enough drama in this region already? What could have caused them? The surgery meant that I got a new caesarean cut a little neater, but longer than the last one. It also meant that I could never have natural child birth. My friends didn't understand that I needed to grieve for the loss of something I was hoping to be able to experience. It didn't help that everyone at work was having babies, successfully with few if any problems. I was 36. After recovering from the surgery I hoped things would get better. My "old" man came back into my life and I decided I would like to try to get pregnant again. We were not a couple - it was understood that I would be a single mother (yes, a financial one - no government handout required.) We tried for six months. Charting temperatures, looking at mucus, reading everything. I went to 3 naturopaths to help get things in as good a state as possible. I ingested horrible smelling herbs, took pills and modified my diet to include and exclude whatever they told me. It was hard, but I had a reason to want it. Time was passing, and I had only one tube, a scarred uterus with no fibroids in it, but no baby either.

Something weird was happening with my periods again. Back to the doctor. I was still 36. I had huge cysts on my ovaries now. No one could imagine the devastation I felt. I was single, with no support of a partner, I now had another fertility problem. I went into depression. Again.

I'm now 37. The progress on the cysts is that they appear to have reduced to almost nothing. Guess I was lucky there. There are still fibroids but they were too small at the time of surgery to remove. I still have only one tube. I'm still single, but I haven't given up the dream. I want to know why it is always possible for couples to have IVF treatment but in some States it is more difficult for single women? I feel sorry for single men who want to have a family too, but don't have the equipment. I'm not sure what can be done about that. The research is very quick to tell us that the fertility levels decline after 35, but no one is offering any solution to the single woman who for various reasons may not have met the right person to share this journey in time to beat the countdown. We are undoubtedly a minority, possibly not too many would want to do it alone if they had the choice. But I want the choice. I will do it alone. I want to be a mother to someone wonderful.