

“If it weren’t for the cost, I’d say go for it.” That is what the fertility doctor said to me and my partner when, after 7 failed IUI’s, we talked about trying IVF. “If it weren’t for the cost...”

I have longed for a family my whole life. Growing up, my own family was not able to care for me. From age twelve to eighteen, I was in and out of foster care, never finding the forever family that I so desperately wanted. Having built a good life for myself as an adult, with an amazing partner and a community of friends and chosen family, I thought that I would finally have the family I longed for. Never did I think that being intentional about family planning, waiting until my partner and I had stable jobs and a home, would nearly prohibit me from attaining the one thing I’ve wanted my whole life: a family of my own.

There was no explanation for why I struggled to get pregnant. No explanation for why I miscarried at 9 weeks. No explanation for why I didn’t get pregnant again after the miscarriage. No explanation why all the IUI’s failed. On paper everything looked good. But despite all the supplements, the labwork, the acupuncture, the specialist appointments, the many, many ovulation tests and IUIs, I still didn’t have a child. We knew we needed to choose a different path, but to be barred from that path because of costs was infuriating. I had a medical diagnosis and I needed medical treatment, but my own doctor told me, “If it weren’t for the cost, I’d say go for it.” No one should ever be denied medical treatment because of the financial cost of treatment.

Here we were, two loving, stable adults, who’d worked so hard to be ready to have a child, both of us giving so much to our community through our work— me caring for other people’s children as an elementary school librarian, my partner caring for our local watershed and teaching children how to do so as well— and despite all our hard work and despite all the love we had to give, we simply did not have enough money to try IVF. This also meant we did not have enough money to adopt a child through a domestic adoption agency or through international adoption, both options we also considered.

I am blessed, though, because although we could not afford IVF, we got enough financial help from friends and family to try embryo adoption. It took two embryo transfers before we were successful. Though it was a

long, circuitous, and painful journey, we were ultimately able to grow our family. We have an amazing daughter. We love the story of how she came to us. We love that she comes from love, and generosity, and being wanted the whole world over. And we would love for others to have options for growing their family, to be able to make decisions for medical care not based on what they can financially afford, but on what they need, and what they can physically and emotionally afford, because there is far more than financial costs when dealing with infertility.

Imagine how much burden would be lifted from families if they didn't have to start their family journey by getting into debt or begging for financial help. Imagine if treatment plans were based on science and not on cost. Imagine if people had a variety of choices instead of a variety of barriers. Imagine if my doctor had said to me, "There are many ways to grow a family. Let's look at your options to see what might work best for you."