

Infertility has positively changed my life!

They say that 42 is the coming of age, the peak for leadership and understanding. At the age of 41 and 9 months I'm really looking forward to January but it wasn't always so.

My story starts about 5 years ago when I realised that despite my career ambitions, my biological clock was ticking and my desire for trying for a baby was growing, but nothing was happening. After a real emotional struggle I persuaded Keith that we needed to seek some professional help. In my experience the level of support and understanding for men in these circumstances is sadly lacking. Perhaps it's just me but one of the biggest challenges I faced was the 'man in his cave' syndrome; getting him to face the problem was as stressful as any other hurdle and incredibly isolating – admitting that my partner didn't want to face the issue made me feel even more inadequate and frustrated. There were further complications to come, based on Keith's diabetes and the fact that I was, as we were to discover, already peri-menopausal even at the age of 37 which meant that although I was still egg producing it was a hit and miss affair. Despite a lower than average chance we proceeded with ICSI for 2 cycles, fully supported

by the staff at the clinic. But it was not meant to be, both cycles failed. I had expected it to be the first attempt but was so convinced that all was going to plan on the second that I was inconsolable for several months. Finally a consultation with the clinic brought it all home as I was told I probably only had a 5% chance of conceiving...the tears streamed down my face!

But as one door closes another opens and my closest friend offered to be an egg donor. It took several months to prepare ourselves but once again the embryo did not implant.

I was literally at the end of the road – 5 long years and nothing to show for it except a feeling of hopelessness and despair and a strained relationship.

That was over 2 years ago. In that time I have come to realise that a new chapter of my life has begun. I now accept, albeit not always graciously that having children will not happen for Keith and I. But my infertility journey has forced me to take a hard look at my life. I value my relationship with Keith more than ever before. I can now spend quality time with my god daughter and spoil her as if she were mine, if only for a sleepover and midnight feast watching Scooby Doo! My garden has benefited from

my tlc and I get enormous pleasure watching it grow – it provides an outlet for my instinct to nurture. And most significantly I have chosen to pursue a different, less stressful but more fulfilling career. Getting to the end of the infertility road has been the catalyst to take stock – given me permission to consider my options and re-evaluate my life.

It hasn't been an easy journey – you soon get to know who your true friends are, in my case Debbie, Cathryn and Caroline who have provided support day and night, and Mitzy my faithful pussy cat who let me hug her like a teddy bear!. You realise that fellowship with others in the same situation is invaluable where you can pour your heart out and in this regard More to Life has helped me. I was also fortunate to receive fantastic counselling from Kate at the centre where I received treatment; once a counselling sceptic who thought it all 'fluffy mumbo jumbo' I am now a passionate convert.

In fact I feel more liberated now than any at other time in my life and that's why I'm actually looking forward to January and being 42. As Keith would say 'the world is my lobster!'

Sue ... aged 41 and 9 months!