

Up Close and Personal by David Talley, M.D.

Doctors who treat infertility are deeply aware of their patients' complex and often distressing emotions. They sense the frustration, anxiety, and sorrow and offer the best support they know how to provide; yet few can relate firsthand to their patients' circumstance. But I can.

As a urologist and male infertility specialist who has undergone fertility treatments, I understand exactly what my patients are thinking and am all too aware of their fears in dealing with infertility. My personal experiences in the area I treat have added an emphatic element of care that few others can offer.

Seven years ago, my wife Kathy and I began trying to conceive. We never suspected that we might be infertile, but after many unsuccessful months, we initiated a medical search for answers. Under the care of our physicians, each of us underwent the gamut of tests and medical evaluations that I, ironically, had been administering to my patients.

Like many couples, our results indicated "unexplained infertility." Learning this outcome was incredibly frustrating for Kathy and me. If we had had an identifiable problem, we were prepared to treat it, but our diagnosis left us with nowhere to begin. We intensified our search for the cause and solution and underwent more evaluations and lab tests and even had intrauterine insemination (IUI) and in vitro fertilization (IVF) all without success.

During the entire experience, we couldn't help but feel that, "This is not fair." The stress of the situation taught me to understand what I have always known in my practice: a couple's attitude toward treatment

and ability to depend on each other will determine whether or not the treatments draw them together or tear them apart.

When I counsel patients about the treatment process, I always recommend they set guidelines and seek outside support. I also point out that in our case, prayer played a supreme role in enduring and healing from the fertility process.



The Talley family

Once we accepted that having biological children was not medically possible, we were able to explore the option of adoption. Though we had many fears and trepidations about the adoption process, all of them were unfounded. After completing enough paperwork to merit Top Secret Clearance in the CIA, we waited for a birth mother to select us. One did, and on July 20, 1999, my son Bryce was born. Six days later, he came home to live with us.

Bryce is a treasure. I have met many people who fail to appreciate their children for the amazing gifts they are. But because of our experiences, we realize more than ever what a blessing children are and the unexpected ways they may come into our lives. 