

About the counsellor

Hayley McCann

Higher Professional Diploma in
Counselling

Member of:

- British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)

How can I access the counsellor?

Please telephone the Fertility Clinic on 0115 970 9238 and they will arrange an appointment for you.

Your counselling session will last one hour.

Further information and support can be found at:

British Infertility Counselling Association

www.bica.net

Fertility Network UK

www.fertilitynetworkuk.org

Donor Conception Network

www.dcnetwork.org

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

www.hfea.gov.uk

National Gamete Donation Trust

www.ngdt.co.uk

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

Freephone: 0800 183 0204

From a mobile or abroad:

0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301

E-mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk

Letter: NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS,
Freepost NEA 14614,
Nottingham NG7 1BR

www.nuh.nhs.uk

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patientinformation@nuh.nhs.uk or phone 0115 924 9924 ext 67184.

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

Counselling

Information for patients

Fertility Unit

This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

Fertility Unit
Queens Medical Centre
B Floor, East Block
Nottingham NG7 2UH
Tel: 0115 970 9238

This leaflet is for individuals and couples having fertility investigations and treatment. It explains what the counselling service is and why it could be helpful.

What does the counselling service offer?

The Fertility Unit aims to treat the whole person and offers free supportive and therapeutic counselling. Counselling sessions are confidential and you can come as a couple or individually at any stage before, during or after treatment.

In the counselling sessions you can talk in confidence about issues that concern you. These could be directly related to the treatment you are having; difficulties in other areas of your life; or experiences you have had in the past that continue to trouble you.

Counselling is a positive process aimed at increasing our personal power and sense of control in life. This can be particularly important when we're going through a treatment programme that can make us feel powerless and out of control.

The counsellor will not judge or advise. By talking through our thoughts and feelings, we can often gain more understanding of why we are feeling the way we are. Then we can explore ways of changing, or responding differently to, those things in our lives that are distressing to us.

What do people say?

- 'I think I must be going mad.'
- 'I can't see a future without kids.'
- 'Everyone keeps asking when we're going to start a family.'
- 'I need to find ways of coping with the stresses of having treatment.'
- 'I just feel so desperate.'
- 'I don't think anyone really understands how I feel.'
- 'Sometimes I hate people with children and then feel so guilty.'
- 'I feel so isolated.'
- 'I can't seem to stop crying.'
- 'I thought that having a baby would make the infertility go away – but it's still there even though I have a child now'.
- 'I can't face getting out of bed in the morning.'
- 'All our friends have got kids now – we feel so out of step.'
- 'I can't bear my partner touching me any more.'
- 'Our sex life is non-existent now.'
- 'I can't decide whether to have any more treatment.'

What kind of issues do people bring to counselling?

Human beings have complex emotions and our feelings cannot be neatly packaged into separate compartments. We're influenced by our past experiences as well as by all the things that are going on in our lives in the present. When we find out that we are infertile we frequently experience feelings of shock, anger and grief. We might go through a period of intense mourning.

Losing our fertility is by any standards a huge loss. If we cannot be parents, we cannot be grandparents, so it's like losing our future too. We're denied the joys – and the heartaches – of nurturing children and can feel excluded in a society that puts so much emphasis on families.

We may find that lots of feelings from the past are churned up again. Feelings of grief about past losses that we thought we'd dealt with can be triggered. This can leave us feeling confused and scared because we don't really understand what's going on.

People bring a whole range of issues to counselling, including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Unresolved losses from the past
- Relationship problems
- Family problems
- Eating problems
- Issues around childhood abuse – physical, emotional and sexual
- Suffering from panic attacks
- Fears of losing control and going 'mad'
- Suicidal thoughts or feelings
- Loss of self-esteem
- Sexual problems
- Bereavement
- Specific feelings around being infertile or having an infertile partner
- The stresses of fertility treatment
- Coping with the failure or success of fertility treatment