

## 17 Cycles of IVF inspired me to help others

Hi, I'm Donna Barnekow. I've been a member of Access for many years and used their resources quite regularly. Reading other people's stories, while inspiring, also made me sad because I wanted to be sharing my story with a happy ending. Finally it's time.

I'm someone who experienced seven years of infertility, being diagnosed with blocked fallopian tubes. My husband and I went through 13 cycles of IVF over 5 years. In that time, we only ever had 2 FETs, the rest were different variations of full stim cycles that never resulted in a pregnancy. Generously, our niece donated some eggs and we became pregnant on that 14th cycle and gave birth to our beautiful daughter, Isla (aged 4). We had no frozen embryos and with the insistence from our niece, she endured 3 more stimulated cycles for us to have our little boy, Archer (aged 2). Yep, she's pretty amazing!

I am a Midwife, having worked in hospitals for over 20 years, looking after couples during pregnancy, labour and birth and the postnatal period. This made doing IVF even harder as I watched others become parents so easily. Many people ask me how I was able to endure so many IVF cycles. For a long time, I was anxious, sad, frustrated and angry. It got to a point where IVF had taken over our lives and I stopped enjoying the things I once loved doing. I knew there had to be a better way to live through the cycles, the ups and downs, the hopes and bitter disappointment.

I was always looking at becoming pregnant with my scientific Midwifery hat on and this science side of me got curious and I started researching stress – the impact it has on our bodies and the ways we can manage it. I also did further study in the area. It helped me to open my mind and acknowledge there was more to us than just the science and physical side of things. I was always concerned with what I was eating, drinking, exercise, doing acupuncture, taking herbs and vitamins. But

emotionally, I was just ‘winging it’ and I was a mess.

Learning some tools and strategies to better manage my stress really helped me to persist through many more cycles. I felt better in my everyday life and became more myself again. I always felt I wanted to help others on the challenging journey of infertility and IVF and I wanted people to be able to learn simple strategies and techniques that are tailored to the treatment, techniques to put in place to feel more prepared and handle the ups and downs that infertility and its treatments can bring. Because these strategies helped me so much, I created The Conceiving Mind, a program and resources tailored to support women experiencing infertility and going through IVF treatment.

You can check out my website at

<https://theconceivingmind.com.au>

If you have any questions about my infertility and IVF experience or The Conceiving Mind please email me at [donna@theconceivingmind.com.au](mailto:donna@theconceivingmind.com.au)

I wish you all the very best on your paths toward parenthood

Donna Barnekow