

## **What's it about? Infertility is a situation of pain, loss and grief.**

It is worth emphasising that some people appear able to readily accept that they are not going to conceive children and adjust their lives to concentrate on other things without much emotional, mental and spiritual angst. When this is so the old advice of don't fix it if it isn't broke applies. Don't look to create a problem if there isn't one. Nevertheless, for many this is far from the case. Grief associated with infertility can arise from:

- Sustained failure to conceive a child - the menstrual cycle can be a constant reminder.
- Failure of any fertility treatments.
- Inability to have children unassisted. Fertility treatment may indeed ultimately lead to the birth of a child, yet this does not negate the grief that has been experienced before. In addition people can still experience ongoing or occasional bouts of grief even after having children by treatment or adoption.

Supporters should recognise infertility concerns real loss and relate to people who suffer as a result accordingly. There can be particular dynamics in this grieving:

- People are grieving something they have never actually had. It is a fallacy that you don't miss what you have never had.
- Grieving can be frustrated. There is lingering possibility - irrational as this might be - that a child might yet be conceived. As medicine advances the variety and potential effectiveness of treatment options can contribute to this by encouraging people to 'keep hoping and trying'. Perhaps this is not dissimilar to the experience of some people awaiting news of a missing person. Though most of the evidence would suggest they are dead, whilst no body is found hope lingers.