

The Rocking Chair Women's Wellness Center Tackles Infertility

Infertility affects an estimated 10 percent to 15 percent of couples of reproductive age. For affected couples, the extraordinarily difficult experience of diagnosis and treatment can take an immense emotional toll. For Jews, those facing infertility are confronted with the additional strains inherent in the community. Children are central to many religious customs and gatherings. Even something as simple as going to shul, where people are surrounded by youngsters and pregnant women, can be painful for a childless couple, who may, as a result, feel additionally isolated.

According to psychiatrist Dr. Naomi Greenblatt, medical director of The Rocking Chair, a women's wellness center in Englewood, women who are faced with the stress of infertility may greatly benefit from the variety of approaches offered by her facility to deal

with infertility and its emotional impact. A significant focus is on integrated mind-body programs.

"Scientific research involving participants in mind-body infertility programs has demonstrated both a statistically significant decrease in physical and psychological symptoms of stress, as well as a 44 percent increase in pregnancy rates within six months of completing a mind-body infertility program," says Dr. Greenblatt.

Program

In May, The Rocking Chair, which is housed in an elegantly designed 200-year-old historic building at 60 Grand Avenue, will offer a ten-week mind-body program for infertility. The program's goal will be to assist and support women who are experiencing difficulty conceiving and, as a result, emotional issues as well.

"Among our many goals are to improve the physical and emotional symptoms of stress and depression associated with infertility, and hopefully increase conception rates during this process," says Dr. Greenblatt.

Issues addressed by the program will include increasing a sense of control during this difficult time as well as decreasing the symptoms of emotional distress, which can include physical symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, and fatigue.

Couples communication strategies will be taught as a way to help reduce isolation from friends and family.

"Through this program, women will learn to enhance their sense of wellness and quality of life thereby improving the opportunity for conception," says Dr. Greenblatt.

One-Day Retreat

On Sunday, May 3, The Rocking Chair will offer a one-

day retreat for women who cannot commit to the ten weeks and who wish to sample the program. The day will include yoga for infertility, naturopathic and nutritional tips to enhance fertility, relaxation techniques, group support, and a meet-the-experts question-and-answer session.

A spa dairy lunch will be served that is kosher and *cholev Yisroel*.

As a member of the Orthodox community, Dr. Greenblatt says she feels a responsibility to be "specifically sensitive to the needs of Jewish women in all the areas of reproductive psychiatry that I practice."

She says that, when necessary, she often discusses treatment plans with the couple's rabbi.

Mood Symptoms

According to Dr. Greenblatt, the stress of recognizing the inability to conceive coupled with the strain caused by various treatments can lead to a

wide array of mood symptoms, including depression, anxiety, and anger. The stress may also lead to marital problems and social isolation.

“Couples with this problem often experience a sense of loss, stigma, and a diminished sense of self-esteem,” says Dr. Greenblatt, explaining that while some studies have shown that depression can lead to higher rates of infertility, other studies indicate that it is infertility that can lead to higher rates of depression.

“This puts women and their spouses in a Catch-22 as they are left with very little guidance as to how to manage their mood symptoms during this very exhausting and challenging time in their lives,” she says.

The Unexpected

Her mission at The Rocking Chair is to enhance the different stages of a woman’s life and to help each woman maximize enjoyment and fulfillment of her unique life.

“Even when life does not go as planned and one is confronted with unexpected challenges, obstacles, and hardships, The Rocking Chair provides support for reflection, coping, and helping to formulate a plan to move forward,” she says.

Issues addressed by the center include premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), depression during pregnancy, post-partum depression, perimenopausal symptoms, and eating disorders. The center also addresses the stress

and emotional toll experienced by women undergoing cancer treatment.

Integrated Approach

“In all these areas, we take an integrated approach, providing services ranging from psychotherapy to medication management, naturopathic approaches, nutrition, and fitness. Our team is committed to working with women and their families,” says Dr. Greenblatt, adding that she believes Jewish women set “the emotional and spiritual tone for their households.”

“Therefore, it is essential for women to get help in staying emotionally well and grounded. That is the key to keeping the family well,” she says.

She sees The Rocking Chair as an important vehicle to destigmatize issues that, in the past, have been difficult for the Jewish community to face, such as infertility.

For more information on the center as well as its infertility program, Dr. Greenblatt can be reached at 201-308-5325, ext 201, or by email at ngreenblatt@therockingchair.org. The center’s website can be accessed at www.therockingchair.org.

“When women come to The Rocking Chair, they are immediately put at ease and recognize that we focus not only on symptom-based treatments, but also on maintaining emotional wellness,” says Dr. Greenblatt. S.L.R.