

WHAT NOW

*A Companion Toolkit for After IVF Doesn't Work
Decisions, Difficult Conversations, and Small Kindnesses*

THE EMPTY CRIB

Picking Up From Here

If you've read "IVF Didn't Work For Me," you already know the first, hardest part: naming what happened. This toolkit picks up right after that — for the practical, unglamorous work of figuring out what comes next.

It's built in three parts. A worksheet for the decision in front of you, whatever it is. A set of scripts for the conversations you didn't ask to have. And a handful of small, doable acts of self-compassion for the weeks when getting through the day is the whole task.

None of this rushes you toward an answer. It's just structure to lean on when you have none of your own left.

PART ONE

What Now? A Decision Worksheet

There's no timeline you're supposed to be on. This is just a way to get what's in your head onto paper.

Where you're standing

Before weighing options, name what's true right now — no decisions yet.

What I have the capacity for right now (financially, physically, emotionally):

What I don't have the capacity for right now:

What my medical team has told me about my options going forward:

The options on the table

You don't have to choose today. Just write a few honest words under each path that applies to you — what draws you to it, what scares you about it.

☐ Trying again (same approach)

☐ Trying again (different approach or clinic)

☐ Taking an open-ended break

☐ Donor eggs, sperm, or embryo

☐ Surrogacy

☐ Adoption or fostering

[] Stopping and building a life without a biological child

One honest question

If no one else's opinion were in the room — not your partner, not your family, not your doctor — what would you want to do next?

PART TWO

The Conversations You Didn't Ask For

You don't owe anyone your full story. These are starting points — adjust the words until they sound like you.

With your partner, when you're not on the same page

TRY SAYING

"I don't need you to have the answer right now. I need to know we're figuring this out together, even if we land in different places for a while."

With family who keep asking "any news?"

TRY SAYING

"The IVF didn't work. I'll let you know if that changes, but for now I'd rather not talk through the details — I just need it to not come up every time we see each other."

With your workplace, if you need space or time

TRY SAYING

"I'm dealing with a personal medical matter and need to take some time. I'll keep you updated on timing, but I'd appreciate not going into detail."

With well-meaning comments that land wrong

For "have you tried acupuncture / relaxing / adoption?"

TRY SAYING

"I know you mean well. I'm not looking for suggestions right now — just support."

For "at least you can still travel / sleep in / etc."

TRY SAYING

"I get that you're trying to find a silver lining. This still hurts, and that's okay."

PART THREE

Small Kindnesses

Five small, doable acts of self-compassion for the weeks when getting through the day is the whole task.

The Permission Slip

Write down one thing you're giving yourself permission to do or not do this week — cancel plans, skip a baby shower, cry in the car. Permission granted, in writing.

One Kind Sentence a Day

Each morning, write one sentence you'd say to a friend going through this. Then read it back to yourself. Repeat daily for a week.

The Body Check-In

Twice a day, pause and ask your body what it needs — water, rest, movement, quiet. Give it that thing, even in a small way.

The Comparison Pause

When you notice yourself comparing your path to someone else's, name it out loud: "I'm comparing again." Naming it is often enough to loosen its grip.

A Letter to Six-Months-From-Now

Write a short letter to yourself, six months ahead. What do you hope has softened? What do you want that version of you to remember about right now?

There is no correct pace for any of this.

*Whatever you decide — to try again, to stop, to sit in the not-knowing a while longer — it
is allowed to be enough.*

You are not walking this path alone.

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