

A Guy's Perspective on Father's Day and Infertility

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We're fortunate that as word about ART of Infertility gets out, we have more and more men sharing their stories with us. This week, Kevin Jordan tells us a bit about his infertility journey. Thanks so much, Kevin, for giving us an inside view on what it's like living as a man with infertility.

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Running long distances, I work things out. I work out the sadness that I will never see my wife give birth. I work out the ways that I address co-workers questions about "when" and "if" we are going to have kids. I work out my own anxieties and frustrations that come with my wife and I choosing to live childfree. For me, running is my thing. My way of being a guy and dealing with infertility.

Two years ago, I decided to embrace my passion for running that developed out of my infertile frustrations. That Father's Day weekend, I ran my first full marathon in Northern Michigan. For anyone else who has run a marathon, you know that it is physically grueling. But running along the shores of Lake Michigan, navigating through the dense fog building up from off the lake, I found renewal and a spirit to continue to move on.



Running the marathon on Father's Day was also symbolic of a new view on life. To rethink how I may want to experience fatherhood – possibly not as a biological or adoptive father – but as a dog-father, an uncle, a better friend.

This year, as my wife and I move to a state where both our families live, we have had to renegotiate how to handle holidays like Father's Day and Mother's Day. In the past, living out-of-state, we simply would send a text or card. But this year is different, and this is challenging. We are expected to celebrate these events in person, expected to celebrate the dad's and grandfather's we have in our life. And while I appreciate and honor those men in my life, I can't help but question where I exist in relation to all of this celebration?



Overall, I think what's most trying for most of whom are infertile, it is being asked to do the same things, when you just aren't the same person. When we moved to Michigan five years ago, my wife and I were different people – not yet diagnosed with infertility. As we return to Wisconsin though, I have to admit that infertility has not just changed us – it has changed me. For example, I have two different family events where I feel like I need to put on a happy face and pretend that I'm on board with celebrating a holiday that explicitly reminds me of one of the hardest challenges I've faced in my life. This is hard and often leaves me feeling distant. Father's Day isn't about me. But perhaps even more frustrating, is the fact that talking about how Father's Day isn't for me is simply a conversation most men don't want to have.

But I've come to realize that not everyone is going to understand the distance I feel when participating in these family events. Some may say this realization is fatalist, but I actually think this realization is freeing. Getting to this point is a relief, because you transcend into a new space that only a certain group will ever get to, should they take the time to. And I encourage others – especially men – to take the time to be self-reflective, to think back on those frustrating experiences with infertility and to find a hobby to work out those moments. For me it was running, for others it could be skiing or golfing or fishing. Whatever it is, it should be *something* because men dealing with infertility have different needs and coping mechanisms than their wives. Taking the time to care for yourself is crucial. Without self-care, how can you care for your wife? How can you transcend into a

fatherly-figure? For me, I have gained much from taking the time to reflect on my infertility. I have found a new self-confidence that can be applied in other avenues of life. Try to look at this weekend as an opportunity to get to this place. You won't regret it. Cheers!

Kevin Jordan



Kevin lives in Madison, WI with his wife and three-dogs. His experience with infertility encouraged him not only to become an avid runner but also switch careers. He recently graduated with his M.S. in Medical Physics.