

I don't mean to offend you, but...

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You know those conversations that make you itchy. When you're pregnant you receive unwanted or [rude advice](#), when it's publicly known that you're trying to conceive, you get suggestions to [stop trying to so hard](#), to relax and take a vacation (like how are you supposed to do that when you have to work?) and when you're a parent, other [parents are out there judging your choices](#).

But what if someone really does want to help a friend or relative who's struggling with infertility, pregnancy or parenting? Is there any way a well-wisher can offer advice without seeming critical and offensive?

In response to my blog post [Behind Closed Doors: Trying to Conceive](#), one woman who had decided not to have any children, commented that as a stepmom, she watches her stepdaughters struggle with infertility. She wrote, "I know most of you are going to hate to hear me say this but I honestly believe stressing out about it and 'trying too hard' really does make it harder... I know [people] who had been trying for years and then gave up and as soon as they 'stopped trying' because they were going to start the adoption process or even adopted a child then suddenly became pregnant."



This stepmom asked, "Is there anything I can say to comfort [my stepdaughters]? Is there anything anyone has said to [anyone trying] that wasn't insensitive?"

Here's my answer (and I hope my readers will share suggestions too). First and foremost, if you are not in your stepdaughter's inner circle as a trusted confidant, then there is really no reason to involve yourself in this particular dilemma above all others. However, if she expresses sadness or frustration to you about her struggle trying to conceive, or if you are in her inner circle, then and only then can you say anything about her situation.

The best choice of words would be, "I wish I knew what to say to help make you feel better." Unless you've been in her shoes, there's no need to give specific advice about taking vitamins, exercising, changing her diet, taking a vacation, taking a break from trying, etc. You can be sure that she has studied every possible way to improve her chances of getting pregnant and there is no way you've spent even a quarter of that time looking into this issue.

Letting her know that you are aware of how hard this is for her, and humbly admitting that you are

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clueless in how to help her, is the best way to support her.

How would you answer this stepmom's question? Is there any way to give gentle advice to someone trying to conceive?