

serious medical problems can be a great way to stop a conversation dead in its tracks. There are times when saying something different can be helpful to you.

[See also: 'The last thing you want to hear' on page 178]

What is normal anyway?

It's funny, but we all seem to want to be normal by everyone else's standards. That's not something that's only the case with fertility issues – it's prevalent throughout society. Where do you think we get peer pressure from?

This book has been written to try and outline what is normal for people to feel who are struggling to conceive. It's normal to be confused. It's normal to be angry. It's normal to feel ripped off. It's normal to feel that you don't fit in with people.

Trying to be normal and fitting in with everyone else is a defence mechanism that protects you both – and there are several reasons why we all do it.

You may not want to invite people into an intimate part of your life

“What you try to do is pretend things are normal. Nothing's wrong and everything's fine. I don't go to the clinic with my wife, because I'm trying to pretend that nothing's wrong. I don't take time off work, I'm not late for work, because I'm just trying to be normal. If I'm late for work, I may have to explain where I've been.”

– James, 38

One very valid reason for trying to appear normal is that if you don't, you may actually feel that you are inviting people into a very intimate part of your life. If you're down and they ask you, you may be caught off-guard and feel pressured to tell them about your sex life. Or by saying 'we're having trouble, now leave us alone' also invites them into this part of your life because they now know you're having problems having kids. Plus, you run the risk of a host of other problems, from them trying to fix your problems for you to what they'll think of you. Or having them say 'poor Kevin and Trish' – which is pity you'd rather not receive.

And with the lack of understanding in the community, it can be a good idea to be cautious. So you open yourself up to the possibility