

### ***So WHAT'S IN THE TOOLBOX?***

***Listen*** to what your partner actually says. It may be that she just wants to be heard. Perhaps she just wants to know that she's not alone, that you are sharing in her experience. Can there ever be a solution at the end of any conversation like this? More than likely, not an instant one anyway. It usually takes time and processing for solutions to emerge; for decisions and choices to be made.

***Be honest.*** To quote Billy Joel, 'tell her about it'. Tell her you're angry, upset or frustrated. Tell her you've been looking for the answer to your problem, but you haven't come up with one yet. The chances are at the end of the conversation, you'll be able to talk further because you have begun that conversation. Your partner more than likely wants to hear what you are genuinely feeling, so if that is 'I feel overwhelmed and I don't know what to do to help you', then try saying that.

***Ask questions of each other*** so that you are not guessing what the other one is thinking or feeling. Or if you are making a guess, then be open about it and use that as a starting point for your questions.

Guessing may be helpful in the short term, but can lead to feelings of distance between the two of you. It may also be the wrong guess! You will be a stronger team if you construct a shared vision, not just about how many children you want, but in the light of this fertility problem, the best way to deal with things for now. For instance, making a joint decision about the next step is keeping you more strongly connected in a process that has the potential to sideline the man's view.

***Set some goals together.*** You may make a decision to go full steam ahead into medical treatments; you could decide to take a break from medical investigations and make plans for a holiday during this time. You could decide that you can really only do this one month at a time at the moment and will have a review 'meeting' over dinner once a month; or you may decide that you are not going to even try to get pregnant over the next three months.

Whatever decisions are made in the short term, making them together results in easier negotiations as the journey