

## Wellness Insights with Morgan Haenchen: Bearing Hope and Shedding Light on Infertility

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PRACTICES Crisis Management, Energy Litigation

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Morgan Haenchen Wellness Spotlight

National Infertility Awareness Week (NIAW) is this week, April 21-27, 2024. Studies show that nine percent of men and 11 percent of women of reproductive age experience infertility. It can be an isolating and painful journey, both physically and mentally, that many people do not speak openly about.

To mark this year's NIAW, Haynes Boone Wellness Manager Abby Read spoke with [Morgan Haenchen](#), a senior associate in the Crisis Management and Energy Litigation Practice Groups in Houston, who joined the firm in 2019. Morgan and her husband, Keller, married in 2016 and began trying to have a baby two years later. After three years of grueling fertility treatments, Morgan learned she was pregnant in May 2021. Her son, Henry (Hank), was born in early 2022.

Below, learn about Morgan's experience with infertility, from the isolation of failed treatments to the joy of becoming a mom, as well as her advice for people attempting to support their loved ones through similar

journeys. Our hope is that Morgan's story can raise awareness of the challenges of infertility that many at our firm may be facing.

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**Abby:** Tell me about your fertility journey.

**Morgan:** Each person's experience with fertility is unique, but typically, a doctor won't see you for infertility until you've been trying to conceive for at least one year. After one year and tons of tests, I was told that I had "unexplained infertility" and began treatment with IUI, which for us, was an interim step before IVF. After six months of taking various medications and having two failed IUIs, we began IVF. This was a 36-month process that required more medications, daily injections (at specific times) and blood draws, weekly doctor visits and various painful procedures and tests. Because we were going through this during the pandemic, I often had to go to the doctor and hear bad news first and alone. The experience took a physical and mental toll. After a lot of heartbreak and loss, we were overjoyed to learn I had a viable pregnancy. Nine months later, 10-pound "Hank the Tank" was born and changed our lives forever. He's a little older than 2 now and is hysterical, brilliant and most importantly, kind. He brings us such joy! I'm grateful every day to be his mom.

**Abby:** Can you tell me more about how you were feeling and what you were going through emotionally?

**Morgan:** This was a complicated experience because life doesn't stop when you struggle with infertility. I was fielding some stigma from others (who were mostly just ignorant), but the real kicker was how that trickled into my self-perception. For a long time, I woke up and went to sleep feeling less-than,

embarrassed, even jealous of my wonderful friends who seemed to have such an easy time at something that was so hard for me. Despite having an amazing personal support system, I carried a lot of these feelings in silence because I felt ashamed of having them. Things changed for me when I began pushing back on the narrative that comes along with infertility.

**Abby:** How were you able to cope during this very difficult period?

**Morgan:** I leaned hard on my people and protected my peace. I'm blessed and grateful to have a loving partner who I could share my deepest, darkest thoughts with, and who took everything in stride with me. He became educated about the infertility process, sat in parking lots outside of doctor's offices, gave me my shots every night and advocated for me when I was too tired or defeated to speak up. I also surrounded myself with other people who understood what I was going through and showed up for me—and distanced myself from people who couldn't do that. I took time away from social media's constant reminders of our struggle and replaced it with things that brought me joy: long walks, great books and soothing music. This perspective shift helped me feel like I had regained some control over the process.

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**Abby:** I can imagine that not having a lot of control in this process would be frustrating. How did you let go of that and let the process play out?

**Morgan:** As part of the Crisis Management team, we like to say, “Fail to plan, plan to fail.” But here, I couldn’t make any plans. In all honesty, I was quietly frustrated for years. But over time, I figured out what I could control and focused all of my energy there. I dug into my work and pushed hard to become a better lawyer to help build up my capabilities and ultimately, my confidence. I took a deep dive into literature on wellness in the fertility space and became more educated about my experience, learning more about my body and about my emotions—first naming them and then taking active, concrete steps to communicate and cope with them (visit [haynesboone.lyrahealth.com](https://haynesboone.lyrahealth.com) for more information). And I invested in my relationships: with God, my husband, my parents, my colleagues and my friends. I can’t say the process was any less frustrating, but having control over other aspects of my life gave me more patience with what I couldn’t control.

**Abby:** Why do you think this isn’t a more widely discussed topic, and what can we do to better support people experiencing infertility?

**Morgan:** We’re hearing more about infertility these days (in the news, online, even in court opinions), but there is a lot of misinformation out there that could be addressed with educated empathy. For example, many women, including myself, experience miscarriages and failed IVF transfers and show up for work the next day without being given the time to properly grieve that loss. In dark moments, I still think about conversations I’ve had with uneducated people who have said things to me like, “Maybe if you hadn’t chosen such a stressful and demanding profession, you wouldn’t have so much trouble doing what you were born to do.” Today, good-meaning people still ask me when we’re planning to have a second child, not knowing how hard this process has been and what it would mean if we decided to go through it again. Spreading awareness and pushing back on these narratives would make a great impact. And I’d highly recommend people don’t ask others questions about family planning. It’s deeply personal and for people like me, hard to answer.

**Abby:** Do you have any suggestions for how people can support someone experiencing infertility?

**Morgan:** Oftentimes, people experiencing infertility are on strict diets and regimens. For me, I cut all the good stuff: alcohol, caffeine, fun carbs and sugar, and I replaced it with a bunch of rabbit food, a huge amount of water, and vitamins. I wasn’t able to do anything overly strenuous, but I had to exercise (and gyms were closed during the pandemic). My greatest supporters were people who showed up and made the boring stuff less boring. Sometimes, that meant listening when I was having a bad day. But most of the time, that meant helping me feel less alone in my day to day: going along on the long walk, reading the same book or listening to the new record with me. Carry some of the burden for your loved one by just being there.

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**Abby:** Knowing where you are now, two years later, what would you go back and tell yourself during that time period?

**Morgan:** This hardship will shape who you are, much more than your victories. Give yourself grace and remember you are never burdened with more than you can handle.