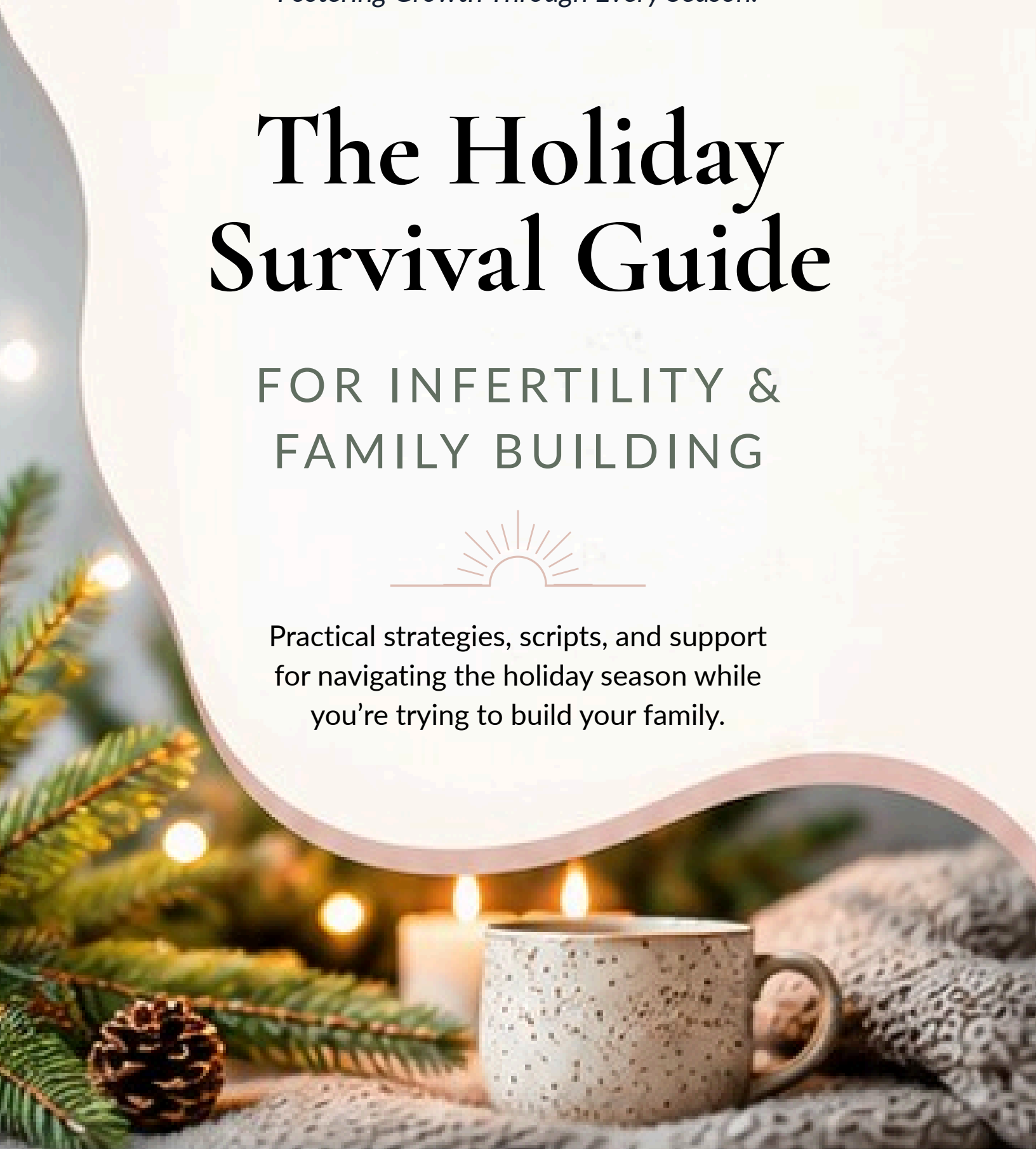
THERARISE
COUNSELING & CONSULTING

Fostering Growth Through Every Season.

The Holiday Survival Guide

FOR INFERTILITY & FAMILY BUILDING

Practical strategies, scripts, and support for navigating the holiday season while you're trying to build your family.



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You're Not Alone

The holidays can be complicated when you're trying to build your family. What is meant to be a time of connection and celebration can also bring up grief, anxiety, comparison, and a deep sense of loss.

You might be navigating family gatherings, pregnancy announcements, questions from relatives, children everywhere, or the weight of another year passing without the outcome you hoped for.

Whatever you're feeling, it makes sense. There is no right or wrong way to experience the holidays while facing infertility or family building challenges. This guide offers practical strategies, gentle reminders, and supportive scripts to help you navigate the season in a way that feels aligned with your needs and values.

You can care about your loved ones, participate in traditions, and still protect your emotional well-being.

1 Before the Gathering

DECIDE WHAT YOU ACTUALLY HAVE THE CAPACITY FOR

There's no universal right answer when it comes to holiday events. Some people find comfort in being with loved ones, while others find it too painful. Both are valid.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- ☐ Do I want to attend this event?
- ☐ What part feels the hardest (e.g., questions, children, pregnancy announcements, certain family members)?
- ☐ Would a shorter visit feel more manageable?
- ☐ Do I need my own transportation so I can leave if needed?
- ☐ Who will be there and how might that impact me?
- ☐ What would make this feel more manageable?





You don't have to say yes to every invitation, and you don't have to justify your decision to anyone.

2

Handling Questions

SCRIPTS FOR CONVERSATIONS YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE

Well-meaning family members and friends may ask personal questions about your fertility, treatment, or family plans. You are not obligated to answer questions that feel invasive or uncomfortable. Here are some scripts you can use or adapt to fit your style:

"We're keeping that private right now."

"Nothing to share at this time, but we'll let you know if that changes."

"We're focused on what's right for us."

"I'd rather not talk about treatment today."

"Can we change the subject?"

"Thanks for asking. It's a sensitive topic for us, so I'm going to pass on discussing it."

3 Pregnancy Announcements

HOLDING COMPLEX EMOTIONS

Hearing about someone else's pregnancy during the holidays can bring up a wide range of emotions—joy for them, grief for yourself, anger, jealousy, sadness, or numbness. All of these feelings can exist at the same time, and none of them make you a bad friend, family member, or person.



It's okay to be happy for someone else and still feel sad for yourself.

SOME THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP:

- Give yourself permission to step away if you need to.
- Plan ahead for how you want to respond.
- Have a support person with you.
- Remind yourself that it's okay to feel what you feel.
- Consider what you need in the moment (a break, a change of conversation, or simply a quiet moment).
- You don't have to pretend you're okay, but you also don't have to explain your feelings to everyone.

4 Supporting Each Other

NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS AS A PARTNER

The holidays can bring up different emotions for each partner. One person may want to attend every event, while the other feels overwhelmed. You might cope in different ways, and that can lead to tension or misunderstanding.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING EACH OTHER:

- Talk honestly about what each of you is hoping for and what feels hard.
- Be curious rather than assumptive about each other's needs.
- Decide together what information you're comfortable sharing with others.
- Create an exit plan if one of you needs to leave.
- Check in throughout the season—needs can change.
- Remember that there isn't a "right" way to feel or cope with the holidays.



You're on the same team, even when you experience things differently.

5

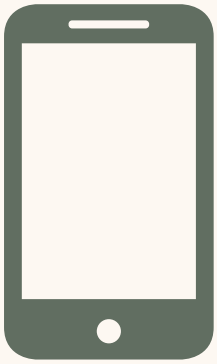
Social Media & Digital Spaces

PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

The holidays often come with an increase in pregnancy announcements, baby photos, and family updates on social media. It's okay to protect your peace.

IDEAS FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES:

- ☐ Mute or unfollow accounts temporarily.
- ☐ Limit time on social media during the holiday season.
- ☐ Avoid scrolling during times of higher vulnerability.
- ☐ Remember that you can choose what you consume.
- ☐ Give yourself permission to step back without guilt.



Protecting your mental health is a valid and healthy choice—not a sign of bitterness or weakness.

6 If You Decide Not to Go

IT'S OKAY TO OPT OUT

Choosing not to attend a holiday gathering doesn't mean you're avoiding your loved ones or "not coping." It can be a thoughtful decision about your emotional capacity and well-being.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- You can decline an invitation, even at the last minute.
- You can choose a smaller or different celebration instead.
- It's okay if others don't fully understand your decision.
- You can still show care and connection in other ways (a call, a text, a separate visit later).



Setting a boundary around your capacity is a form of self-care, not selfishness.

7 After the Holidays

CARING FOR YOURSELF

The emotional impact of the holidays can linger. It's common to feel a "crash" afterward—grief, sadness, exhaustion, or increased anxiety.

IDEAS FOR AFTERCARE:

- Schedule downtime after major events.
- Reconnect with supportive people.
- Journal about what was helpful and what felt challenging.
- Be gentle with yourself—there's no timeline for moving past difficult emotions.

A Final Reminder:



You don't have to prove that you're coping well by making yourself endure everything.



You are allowed to set boundaries, say no, and protect your energy. The holidays can be meaningful, even when they are also difficult.