Don’t you hate the word “infertile?” It’s so hopeless. It’s so definitive. I’ve decided to go with “fertility challenged.” Because isn’t that what this is? A challenge. A journey.

A great big obstacle to overcome.

I’ve been trying to beat this challenge for nearly three years now. And this time of year is always incredibly tough for me. Two years ago, just three days before Christmas, my water broke at 17 weeks pregnant and I lost our twins. On Christmas morning, my milk came in and I had no babies to feed. A week after that, on New Year’s, my body was still reeling from the loss. No one ever talks about what a 2nd-trimester miscarriage does to your body, so I did.

Last year, I looked to 2014 with so much hope. Surely it would be my year to become a mother.

It wasn’t.

Now, on the brink of 2015, I can’t help but think of all the ways I want next year to be different. Of course, I want it to bring motherhood to me. But I’m no fool. That might not happen.

So I’ve decided to take control of the things I can while on this challenging journey. I write this for all of us fertility-challenged women out there, because I know — I know — you get it.

1. Be kind to yourself

This is probably the most difficult resolution on my list. It’s so hard not to blame, blame, blame my body, my past, my food decisions, my life decisions, and my karma for not being able to get and hold a pregnancy. The anger toward my body leads to negative self-talk and the mistreatment of what was once sacred and beautiful to me: myself. I don’t want to anymore. I don’t want to treat myself like a receptacle for garbage — be it negative thoughts or crappy food.

2. Stop judging other mothers

I never used to be a judger. Since my struggles, I find myself not only judging other women but also getting genuinely pissed off by them. (Are you seriously a pregnant smoker? She’s eating sushi! Did you really just say that to your kid? She doesn’t even deserve those kids.) I know that these judgments are simply (or not so simply) a manifestation of my frustrations and the insecurity that stems from my own struggles. But negativity begets negativity, and this behavior has got to go in 2015.

3. Recognize all loss is significant

We’re all familiar with the Mommy Wars, and this is right in step with that. I feel confident that I’m already practicing this resolution, and always have. Because I think it is so important, I want to continue it next year.

What is it about women who feel the need to “one-up” other women on the awfulness/sadness/tragedy/heartbreak/horror of the loss of their baby? Is a 2nd-trimester loss worse than a 1st-trimester loss? Is a stillbirth worse than a 2nd-trimester loss? Is secondary infertility worse than plain ol’ infertility? Is the death of a two-day-old worse than a stillbirth? Do any of us really need the answers to these questions? Loss is significant, albeit variant, to any mother who’s had the misfortune of experiencing it. If you need to minimize my loss (or any other mother’s) to validate your own, please dig deeper and recognize that all loss is significant. And behind each, is a mother in pain.

4. Take better care of your mental health
This goes along with being kind to yourself, but it goes deeper. Make it a commitment to take better care of your mental health. Read more books. Meditate. Spoil yourself with regular massages. Discover new ways to laugh. Make new friends. Meeting people who know nothing of your pain is terrifying and liberating all at once. At some point, you’ll tell your story to someone who didn’t know “the old you” and regardless of your past, you’ll discover the new you is lovable and worthy of friends. But most of all, you’ll realize you’re not defined by your loss.

5. Take better care of your body

Remember that thing about being a receptacle for trash? I mean it quite literally. Stop feeding yourself crap. Nourish your body with healthy foods. Learn what healthy foods are! Get active. Walk. Hike. Go to the spa. Get a facial. A massage. A new hairdo. Workout. HAVE SEX! Have real sex, not just sex for the purpose of trying to get knocked up. Have sex when you’re nowhere near your ovulation date, and let yourself enjoy it. Don’t look at it like the chore it often feels like.

6. Be gentle with your partner

Most of us aren’t in this alone (and my heart truly goes out to those of you who are!). It’s easy to treat those closest to us like crap. After all, they’re in this, right? Committed. Part of it. Not going anywhere. And safe. We’re safe with the ones we love, which — unfortunately — means we often take them and their feelings for granted. Or we forget that they have feelings, too. Sure, it’s your body. But this is a shared journey, a shared struggle. No one, aside from other women who’ve been through this, can know what it’s like. Try not to hold that against your significant other. And remember, she/he has their own story here.

7. Start a new hobby

Routine is one of the hardest parts of being fertility challenged. We count the days of our cycle. Our period. Our ovulation. Our “sex” days. Our two-week wait. Our expected due date if this month is “the one.” And then we repeat, repeat, repeat. Everyone knows it’s frustrating. But it’s also boring as hell. Each month like the previous one and likely like the next one. It’s enough to make you want to rip your hair out. I’m going to start a new hobby in 2015. I’m going to stop living my life as if the only thing I have going on is my fertility struggle.

8. Break up with Google

Seriously, stop Googling. Talk to your doctor. Find a good one that you trust. It’s not that you’ll never get good info from a Google search. It’s just that the good info is buried on the 29th page of the Google search and you’ll waste far too much time — that you’ll never get back — finding it.

9. Share your story

Please, don’t suffer in silence. Find a group (online or in your area) where you can TALK. And cry. And connect. Find women and families who are experiencing what you’re going through. Or those who’ve suffered from their own struggles in the past. Write in a journal. Start a blog, even if only three people read it. Sharing our story is the single most powerful tool we have to help us through. People need you, and you might not even know it yet. I didn’t know it before I started sharing my story. And I also didn’t know how much I needed others who’ve been through similar struggles. But it’s been my greatest source of strength through it all.

10. Keep trying

Onward. Always onward. Nothing teaches us that more than the start of a new year. Yes, this struggle is tough. Heartbreaking. But isn’t the thought of not starting or growing your family even more difficult and heartbreaking? Maybe your journey ends in a healthy pregnancy and birth. Maybe it ends with adoption. And maybe it ends when you know you’ve had enough and just can’t anymore. But until any of that happens, keep trying.

Photo courtesy of Aela Mass