

*FIVE COMMON TROUBLES
REGARDING
NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING*

BY HEATHER KEIMIG

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PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK."

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**PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS
CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING."**

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PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE."

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK."

Personal Ignorance:

- This is fundamentally rooted in a lack of awareness of the science behind Natural Family Planning (NFP).
- Many Catholics still are unaware of just how effective the process of identifying a woman's biomarkers and interpreting them for purposes of family planning has gotten.

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK."

Cultural Ignorance (or outright dismissal):

- There is a tremendous amount of residual “bad press” and “bad intel” regarding NFP.
- Even medical professionals are often not adequately educated in what is normal, possible, nor in what the full effects of hormonal birth control do

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK."

Failure of Formation (or compliance):

- Poor or inadequate training
- Lack of commitment to the rules
- Lack of partner support, etc.

Related to the first concept, except that, like a vaccine, this person has “tried NFP” but found it wanting and will be harder to “re-convince” to try again, unless something changes in their circumstances to make them re-think their decision.

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK." SOLUTIONS

Most important concept here is ...

Evangelization.

Treat those who are struggling against a lack of information or an unsuccessful attempt to use NFP as souls in need of formation.

Be open to the Holy Spirit to move in their hearts and your mind to speak the words they need to hear, etc.

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK." SOLUTIONS

- Do your homework! 😊
- There is large and growing body of scientific research and a rise in the number of medical professionals who are embracing the world of natural fertility awareness methods and advocating them to their patients.
- If the person's real trouble with NFP methods is more personal, see if you can work that out into the open and challenge their experiences or encourage them to try again. What was their initial motivation to try NFP the first time?
- Like any evangelization, this is best done in a trusting relationship with no time pressure.

PROBLEM #1: "IT DOESN'T WORK" RESOURCES

- ✓ <https://naturalwomanhood.org/guide-to-the-effectiveness-of-fertility-awareness-based-methods-natural-family-planning-does-it-work/> - excellent overview article with good term explanations and plenty of hotlinks to other sources to back up their statements
- ✓ <https://fabmbase.org/what-is-fertility-awareness/> - another good overview of terms, types and effectiveness rates of the different types of NFP
- ✓ <https://fabmbase.org/resources/external-resources/#hfaq-post-709> – it's a big, wide world out there; don't get lost!
- ✓ <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/> - homepage of an organization whose purpose is to train medical professionals in normal, natural women's fertility patterns, so that they can advocate for their patients to consider the various forms of Natural Family Planning; they have an entire section of their website dedicated to research in the field of NFP (<https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/learn-more/research-nli/>)
- ✓ <https://naprotechnology.com/> - these people are serious about their reproductive health science

PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING"

- This is fundamentally rooted in a lack of faith formation.
- Can also be a lack of awareness of the sociological and psychological research showing that contraception is bad for marriages and hard on women.
 - Divorce & infidelity rates rise with contraceptive use.
 - The intrinsic “lying with our bodies,” in the words of John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, eats away at the trust and intimacy of a marriage. Especially true if the spouses did not agree to the contraception jointly.

**PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS
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- Beyond the more person form of this in the prior slide, can also take a more global form, as in:

“White, celibate men shouldn’t make decisions about
what I do in my bedroom.”

PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING"

- We can experience similar thoughts about other aspects of our Faith! Always be aware of YOUR OWN biases, prejudices and quirks.
- We all do not need to be Catholic apologists, but we should all have a basic grasp of the principles of our Faith and know where to go, when we are confronted with a question or objection that we can not readily answer.

**PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS
CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING."**

We need to be aware that people's visceral, often illogical, reactions to the tenants of our Faith are often rooted in some personal hurt.

Tread carefully.

**PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS
CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING" SOLUTIONS**

The most important concepts here are ...

Honesty and a willingness to learn

- Acknowledge your own “back story” as you navigate why you feel embarrassed!
- Seek healing in whatever way it is needed.

PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING" SOLUTIONS

- We have a responsibility to educate ourselves and there are vast resources at our fingertips with which to do this.
- Some issues in the world of sexuality are completely settled, from a Catholic perspective, and it is our responsibility to learn why, such as contraception or IFV.
 - Some issues (like certain reproductive assistance technologies) are not yet “settled”, and we have an obligation to keep praying and listening for clarity from those who have the authority to guide us.

PROBLEM #2: "I'M EMBARRASSED THAT MY CHURCH SAYS CONTRACEPTION ISN'T A GOOD THING" RESOURCES

- ✓ **Theology of the Body for Beginners: Rediscovering the Meaning of Life, Love, Sex, and Gender** by Christopher West, updated edition
- ✓ **The Case Against Contraception** by Trent Horn, DVD
- ✓ **Surprised by Life: 10 Converts Explain How Catholic Teachings on Life Led Them to the Church** by Patrick Madrid
- ✓ <https://onemoresoul.com/about> - a clearinghouse of many resources related to themes of abortion, contraception, Natural Family Planning, sterilization reversal, scientific studies related to NFP & similar, and other pro-life related topics, such as IVF and physician-assisted suicide
- ✓ <https://www.catholic.com/> - a clearinghouse of resources on all sorts of topics that the world objects to within Catholicism, including our teachings related to life topics
- ✓ <https://fabmbase.org/catholic-corner/> - a clearinghouse of websites, podcasts, books...you name it!... on all things NFP related

PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE."

Personal barriers:

- This is fundamentally a lack of personal virtue formation.
- There can also be a lack of awareness of the reality of married life, too much 'sex ed' from movies & TV, etc.

PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE."

Cultural barriers:

- We have a very sex-saturated culture now, where contraception plays an understood and central role to dissociate intercourse with a new child.
- The thought of having to regulate one's sexual desire – within marriage! – seems outrageous, even wrong or unnatural.

PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE."

Spiritual barriers:

- This type of objection may be a sign that there is sexual struggling going on – pornography, masturbation, etc. – that is causing the person to have developed uncontrolled sexual desires.
- Tread carefully.

**PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE."
.... SOLUTIONS**

The most important concepts here are ...

- Seek **spiritual help** in the form of Confession; those graces are real and powerful.
- Seek **spiritual growth** in the form of developing penitential practices unrelated to the person's sexuality.
- Seek **intellectual growth** about normal lived sexual experience, but only if this will actually help and not just become its own "rabbit hole" and not aid the person conquer this struggle.

**PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE."
.... SOLUTIONS**

- This is not an easy fight, especially if it has been going on a long time in the person.
- Be patient, as they struggle against long-time habits and desires.
 - Tread carefully.

PROBLEM #3: "IT'S TOO HARD, TOO MUCH ABSTINENCE." RESOURCES

- ✓ <https://www.reclaimsexualhealth.com/> - highly effective help for those struggling with pornography, masturbation or other compulsive sexual behavior
- ✓ <https://www.navigatebetrayal.com/> - support ministry for spouses of those who have committed infidelity, are addicted to pornography or have some other sexual sin
- ✓ The virtues of fortitude and temperance are two of the cardinal virtues; all other virtues are grouped around these four. Like muscles, our choice to use these virtues helps us to build them up in our hearts, so that they can more easily be employed in future situations. CCC 1803-1811, especially 1803 & 1811
- ✓ Bringing even venial sins (strong sexual urges, the dwelling on sexual thoughts, etc.) – and certainly mortal sins – to our Lord in Confession pours healing graces into those wounds in our minds and hearts, allowing us to gradually over time conquer even our most favorite “pet sins.” CCC 1458, 1468-1470

PROBLEM #4: "I HAVE IRREGULAR PERIODS, SO I NEED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS."

Personal Perspective:

- Most women don't have advanced medical formation to know, from their own education, what is "normal."
 - We rely on what our mothers, girlfriends, sisters, etc. tell us.
 - We rely on what our health care providers tell us.
- Periods can be legitimately unpleasant, painful and messy; there isn't a way to set that cross down completely until menopause.
 - This makes the promises of Hormonal Birth Control sound great, but (far from bringing real healing to a woman) they often make the original problem she was struggling with worse, simply from lack of attention over the years she takes them.

PROBLEM #4: "I HAVE IRREGULAR PERIODS, SO I NEED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS."

Professional Perspective:

- In medical and nursing schools, there is a serious lack of science foundation on what a normal menstrual cycle is and how to heal one that is actually in need of help, rather than just apply a very powerful band-aid.
 - <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/An-Evaluation-of-US-Medical.pdf>
 - <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Physicians-Need-More-Education-About-Natural-Family-Planning.pdf>
- Your health care provider is not trying to hurt you by recommending Hormonal Birth Control! It is quite likely being done out of ignorance and an acceptance of what they were taught in school. Everyone drinks the same Kool-Aid...

PROBLEM #4: "I HAVE IRREGULAR PERIODS, SO I NEED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS." ... SOLUTIONS

The most important concepts here are ...

- Be your own best advocate.
- Gain the knowledge you need. (It's out there!)
- Know that there are actual solutions to many reproductive troubles.

Think about the fact that:

Hormonal birth control drugs are the only medications that are given to healthy people for the purpose of shutting down a normal function of their bodies.

PROBLEM #4: "I HAVE IRREGULAR PERIODS, SO I NEED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS." ... SOLUTIONS

- Learn what is actually normal...and not normal. You might be able to help your medical provider to grow in this area, or you might make them aware of physician groups who can do so.
 - <https://www.menstrual-matters.com/cycle-length/> - for instance
- Seek out health care providers who are willing to listen to your preferences and priorities – and who are willing to learn.
- Good Women's Health Care seeks to restore and allow to function properly our reproductive structures and functions – not medicate them away.

PROBLEM #4: "I HAVE IRREGULAR PERIODS, SO I NEED BIRTH CONTROL PILLS." ... RESOURCES

- ✓ <https://fertilitycare.org/find-a-mc> - this website will show you any medical care providers who are trained in a special type of NFP called NaPro Technology (Natural Procreative); many will work with you at a distance and have you travel for in patient exams or procedures only on occasion, depending on your situation; it's a good place to start if you know you have outlying trouble
- ✓ <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/> - a training organization for medical professionals to more effectively embrace natural women's fertility and know what to do to treat troubles that arise; if your local health care provider is open to it, this may be a source of training for them to better care for you and their other patients
- ✓ <https://onemoresoul.com/nfp-directory> - another listing of NFP-only doctors (not just OB/GYNs; not just Creighton/NaPro Technology trained)
- ✓ <https://fabmbase.org/resources/how-hormonal-birth-control-works/> - think you know how hormonal birth control works? You might want to make sure before you start – or keep – taking it.
- ✓ <https://ccli.org/nutrition/> - many menstrual problems can be repaired by improving/changing our diets; try some of these resources and see if they help
- ✓ <https://www.optimox.com/> - consider beginning to use their vitamin 'Optivite' at the levels they indicate on the bottle to improve menstrual difficulties; I consider it something of a wonder drug and recommend it to everyone

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE."

Personal mindsets:

- This is the problem of mistaking NFP as a "Catholic contraceptive."
- Remember that, as you approach Matrimony, you are in a season of preparation – in all areas of your person, including your sexuality – for an unknown future ahead of you.

"Every method of NFP is nothing more than fertility awareness, and each method is designed to teach a woman how to identify her fertile window. It does not become family planning until the information gathered about a woman's cycles is used to make decisions about a couple's sex life. That's it. Fertility awareness is for avoiding pregnancy, achieving pregnancy, and identifying underlying health issues." (<https://totalwhine.com/2020/07/19/nfp-is-fertility-awareness/>)

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE."

Personal mindsets:

- Our Lord made us to have free will, and He valued that aspect of our personhood so highly that He allows us even to make bad choices. He never coerces, only invites.
- Our response to this gift should be to revel in the trust that He has imbued our relationship with and strive to discern His will for us in every situation, including our fertility.
 - We are His sons and daughters, not slaves. He has made provision in this time to understand women's fertility signs, so that His children can enjoy His gift of intercourse and not conceive, when they have discerned it is best at that time.

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE."

"Professional" mindsets:

- If you are involved in marriage preparation, you will become inured to the steady flow of young people through your sessions who are already cohabiting and contracepting and have no openness to anything else. It is rare – and such a blessing! – when someone comes for preparation who isn't in that spiritual place with such an obvious failure in their formation.
- Be careful to not discourage those who DO wish to allow the Lord to plan their family size!

In short, don't hit the sheep! 😊

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE."

"Professional" mindsets:

- Instead of doling out discouragement, remind couples in your marriage preparation processes to consider that this period of preparation might prudently include a course of NFP to help them identify any:
 - barriers to conceiving
 - "red flags" of potential miscarriage troubles

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE." ... SOLUTIONS

The most important concepts here are ...

- Know what the Lord actually asks of us. (We can always choose to live more heroically, but know what is expected.)
 - Our Lord is gentle and His yoke is light.
- The unitive goodness of intercourse is real and important to couples, even if they are unable to also be ready for another pregnancy at that time.

PROBLEM #5: "WE DON'T NEED NFP BECAUSE WE JUST WANT TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN TO LIFE" ... RESOURCES

- ✓ "[Fertility awareness] is knowledge of her body that every woman ought to have." **Dr. Evelyn Billings**, co-founder of the Billings Ovulation Method
- ✓ "It's also important to remember that God's will is for us to have free will. What kind of relationship is it if he just does everything and we just let him do it? Of course, we should be open to his will for us. But he wants us to be able to choose. He wants us to discern whether or not we should use those fertile days, because he wants us to be in relationship with him at all times. No relationship is one sided! When we take the time to truly pray about what God is asking of us in our marriage and for our family, we are satisfying the desire of his heart."
(<https://totalwhine.com/2020/07/22/nfp-does-not-limit-the-power-of-god-it-frees-it/>)
- ✓ God loves us so much and respects our natures, which include free will, that he allows us to choose poorly, even to sin. It is not His will, but it is our choice to make, because of His great love: **CCC 309-315, especially 311**
- ✓ We are free to choose for the Lord, and choose against Him. **CCC 1730-1742**
- ✓ We have a conscience, and we must form it in order to choose well. **CCC 1776-1789**
- ✓ There is no sin in understanding female physiology; all potential for, or actual, sin comes from the misuse of that knowledge. There is also no sin in choosing to remain abstinent for some period of time, even while married, as long as it is being done for good reasons. **CCC 2366-2372**
- ✓ "Every method of NFP is nothing more than fertility awareness, and each method is designed to teach a woman how to identify her fertile window. It does not become family planning until the information gathered about a woman's cycles is used to make decisions about a couple's sex life. That's it. Fertility awareness is for avoiding pregnancy, achieving pregnancy, and identifying underlying health issues."
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Thank you for listening!

If you would like a copy of this PowerPoint, please feel free to email me at:

Heather Keimig

hkeimig@diosteub.org