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I thought I'd lost the baby. Then we saw a little arm waving: Kate Silverton reveals how the trauma of IVF treatment ended in joy - the natural way

By [Sarah Oliver](#)

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Like many mothers-to-be, Kate Silverton cried silent tears of joy when a thin blue line on a pregnancy test bought at a corner chemist's showed a positive result.

But it was not a result she had been expecting, and because of her medical history, she attributed the first tender signs of pregnancy to looming menopause.

The BBC newsreader had always known that motherhood might be one of the few challenges which would defeat her.



Keeping mum: Kate proudly shows off her baby bump

Having lost an ovary in life-saving emergency surgery at the age of 29, she had known throughout her 30s that the chances of her ever conceiving were plummeting.

When, at 37, she met the man of her dreams, security consultant Mike Heron, she began a series of gruelling fertility treatments culminating in four merciless rounds of IVF, which resulted in failure.

The couple sought strength in each other and decided first to celebrate their life together by marrying in an intimate Christmas ceremony last year and then to investigate surrogacy or adoption. Kate, whose pragmatic and determined nature has served her well on assignments around the world, refused to let despair or disappointment corrode their happiness.

'I'd been heartbroken at the thought of not being able to be a mother and not being able to give the man I loved a child of his own, but we'd put it behind us.'

She would take her pregnancy tests at her gym, determined not to have any sadness in the South London home she and Mike moved to in January. And it was there she found she had, against the odds, conceived naturally.

She smiles as she recalls: 'I'd had some symptoms that I now recognise as early pregnancy signs – a craving for bacon sandwiches, a swollen tummy and two rather short "cycles" – but I assumed it was the onset of an early menopause.

'I sought to see my GP to discuss hormone replacement treatment, so convinced was I that I could not be pregnant. When I saw a second blue line appear on the test I couldn't believe it. I had to do another before I even entertained the idea that I might be pregnant.'

It was an extraordinary moment, for Kate's chances of becoming pregnant, even with the highest doses of IVF drugs, had been placed at between three and five per cent.

'I'd been told I was out of time,' she says.

'I'd been heartbroken at the thought of not being able to be a mother and not being able to give the man I loved a child of his own, but we'd put it behind us. I didn't want it to define our life when we had so much to be grateful for.'

Kate and her husband had accepted the idea they might not be able to be biological parents but were keen to explore other options.



Happy day: Kate says marrying Mike and settling down 'unblocked' something within her

'The week before I found out I was pregnant I had agreed to be a mentor to a youngster with the charity Kids Company. Camila Batmanghelidgh, who founded the charity, asked me if I would consider it and we readily agreed, thinking this could be the start of a new journey and ultimately lead to adoption – an idea that I hope we have only had to temporarily abandon.'

When she discovered that she might – against all the odds – actually be pregnant she couldn't share the news face to face with Mike, as he was in Nigeria working with BBC journalists monitoring the election there.

'I left a long, rambling message, half apologising for raising any false hopes as we had been here before and I had miscarried – but half delirious with such potentially exciting news.'

Kate knew a positive test did not necessarily mean a happy outcome and, as ever in early pregnancy, each day brought with it new worries. Just 48 hours after taking the pregnancy test, she began a physical and emotional journey which she now knows is just a taster for the tough challenges of motherhood.

'I went to see my GP to register the pregnancy. It was the first time I had visited him as we had only recently moved into the area. He took one look at my records and advised me that given my "history" and my age, the positive result could also quite possibly be due to a pregnancy hormone-producing tumour that was mimicking a pregnancy.

'Very rarely there are tumours that grow and produce the pregnancy hormone hCG, inducing some of the early side-effects of pregnancy but masking a much more sinister outcome – that of ovarian cancer. I couldn't quite believe it.'

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It's testimony to Kate's fortitude that she can smile as she says it – but there was a far worse setback to come.

On March 22, she visited the Harley Street clinic of Professor Stuart Campbell, gynaecologist to rock stars and royalty, and pioneer of the ultrasound. Her mother Patricia and her father Terry had come with her in Mike's absence in case the news was as they feared.

'The professor was probably the best person I could have seen at such a sensitive time,' she says.

'He was kindly and said that although such cancerous tumours were very rare it still might be that I did not have a viable pregnancy. The odds seemed stacked against me but as soon as I saw the screen and saw this little white light I knew it was an embryo. It's a sight I will never forget.

'My parents had come with me to the surgery fearing the worst – now I called them in to see their grandchild – in its earliest stages – but alive and most certainly viable. Professor Campbell turned on the Doppler, the instrument that picks up the heartbeat, and the sound was something I will never forget.'

Just two days later, however, it seemed that this potentially last chance at motherhood was being snatched from Kate in the cruellest circumstances. She found herself bleeding heavily and had to be rushed to hospital by a friend.



Demanding day job: Like many women, Kate focused on her career - missing her moment to become a mother

At St Thomas' in London she spent an excruciating four hours in Accident and Emergency only to be told she was probably miscarrying and that she should go home and sit it out.

'It was almost midnight and no one was available to give me an emergency scan to see precisely what was going on. There was nothing they could do. It seemed such a cruel twist of fate, yet almost immediately my defences kicked in – trying to reason that perhaps this had not been a "viable" pregnancy after all. But it did leave me utterly bereft.'

The next day, March 25, Kate went back to Professor Campbell's clinic for an investigative scan. He told her she would possibly need a minor operation to clean out her womb. He offered her another scan to double check the diagnosis.

'Once again we saw a bright white light on the ultrasound screen – and this time there was a little arm waving. "Your

baby is still here Kate,” Professor Campbell said smiling. “Look, it’s saying hello.” He was thrilled – I was in shock.

‘The “miscarriage” had been either been a blood vessel bursting or a low-lying placenta. Either way it had done no damage and I was still very much pregnant. I telephoned Mike again. “We’ve got a fighter,” I told him.’

She went home hardly daring to believe the news.

‘I still don’t,’ she said.

‘I’ve not yet been able to relax and enjoy myself 100 per cent. As any mother-to-be will know it is an incredibly vulnerable and precarious time.

‘I would not have revealed it publicly except people had begun asking questions and it’s obvious I have gained weight, especially on screen. I was, and am still, unable to think beyond the next few days.’

There was, of course, an intimate and joyous reunion with her husband.

‘The day Mike came home I put on a dress showing off my bump. He opened the door, took me in his arms and just said, “Wow”.

‘We still cannot quite believe it. We had our first scan together when he heard the baby’s heartbeat for the first time and it was the first time we thought we might possibly become parents, a moment neither of us will ever forget.’

But the recent terrible news of so many late miscarriages – Lily Allen, Amanda Holden and Kelly Brook have all lost their babies beyond the 16-week point that Kate is now at – are a salutary reminder that pregnancy is always unpredictable.



Fertile relationship: Kate with husband Mike Heron

It's something Kate has always known and, unusually, come to terms with. The first time I met her we discussed the difficulties of combining a career with motherhood, of finding the right man and settling down when the temptation is to believe you can cheat nature.

She recognises that she belongs to a generation of women for whom opportunities in the workplace are to be seized and life beyond it to be independently enjoyed. It is the same generation which blurs the boundaries between being thirtysomething and being fortysomething.

But there is, of course, one crucial difference, the fertility window which slams shut in that decade. And so while Kate reported from around the world, tested herself for extreme documentaries and embraced the kind of projects which made her a household name, such as the BBC's Big Cat Live, she was missing her moment to become a mother.

Suddenly, however, it has just been gifted back to her and she is not going to jeopardise it. She withdrew from a trip to Helmand, where she was to spend time with British troops over the Royal Wedding, and she mothballed a documentary which would have involved her driving across India – just the kind of hands-on project she relishes.

For a fortnight after her suspected 'miscarriage' she felt so vulnerable she wouldn't even do an outside broadcast which, for a woman who is a triathlete, an open-water canoeist and adventurer, tells you much about her state of mind and is a measure of how precious she believes this pregnancy to be.

The experience of undergoing assisted reproduction has also made her re-examine a subject she first visited professionally when she made a groundbreaking edition of the BBC's Panorama programme.

In it she followed several mothers-to-be, keenly aware she might never join their ranks. She sought expert advice on falling birth rates and the challenges posed to professional women as they fight for their rights in both boardroom and nursery.

'I was told I should have children sooner rather than later because of my medical history, and one specialist told me I owed it to myself and all other thirtysomething career women to get pregnant.

'I thought he was being absolutely antediluvian in his views until he went on to say we simply couldn't cheat nature and that we should plan our families with the same precision with which we plan our working lives. Which of course we don't.'

Kate believes that the assisted reproduction industry gives women, especially older women, a false sense of having a backstop, an insurance policy in case the traditional route to motherhood proves too tricky.

She adds: 'Its science is little match for nature's black magic and for a patient in or approaching her 40s, there's only a one in four chance of achieving pregnancy this way. For those such as me, for whom IVF was a last resort because of other fertility problems, the odds are far lower.

'I have had innumerable treatments, from ovary-stimulating courses of the drug Clomid to four rounds of IVF. I was in the care of three hospitals and spent many thousands of pounds.

'I became a bloated vessel of hormones and chemicals and every month I seemed as far away as ever from being a mum.'

'It was punishing, physically, emotionally and financially. There were just two or three eggs per cycle and they were too fragile to be truly viable. I became a bloated vessel of hormones and chemicals and every month I seemed as far away as ever from being a mum.'

Disillusioned, she turned to other treatments. She had acupuncture with fertility specialist Gerard Kite. His is a holistic approach and she had long conversations with him about childlessness, motherhood, career and relationships.

She also had reflexology, took nutritional advice and like any journalist dug into her research, falling asleep over the pages of a fertility book every night. She sought advice from Dr Geeta Nargund, a pioneer in the field of natural IVF where no drugs are used to stimulate the ovaries.

Kate says: 'I am not a drinker or a smoker and I have always kept myself fit but I made other significant lifestyle changes. In retrospect I believe it is these which finally led to me becoming pregnant without help – other than Mike's!

'Chief among them was to simply stop trying, I quit worrying and hoping and testing every month. Mike and I accepted that we would have to seek another way of having children in our lives.

'We went on holiday to South Africa and made a pact to enjoy the future and be parents in a different way. We threw ourselves into planning our wedding and got married in St Bride's – the journalists' church on Fleet Street – just before Christmas. We moved into our first shared home in January and began to nest.

'And I think those things told my body the truth: that I was ready to give myself to motherhood. You cannot lie to yourself, tell yourself you are ready when you aren't, when you are thinking there's still another exciting assignment to tackle or another party to enjoy.

'I wonder if my new sense of calm, the deep peace and profound happiness I have in being Mike's wife, unlocked or unblocked something within me. I have always wanted children. It wasn't that my career got in the way; it's just that I didn't meet the right man – Mike – until I was 37.

'Or did my fantastic job as a broadcast journalist stop me from meeting someone and settling down earlier? Today one in five women will never be a mother and for many that statistic brings desolation.

'I know this from the number of readers and viewers who have responded to my story and I hope that by revealing my own difficulties I am proof that pregnancy can still happen when all hope, seemingly, is gone.

'My favourite saying is "In life you make bouquets with the flowers within your reach". Mike and I took strength from our marriage, made plans for the next 30 years and committed to the idea of mentoring and perhaps adopting children in need. One day we still will. But just as you can't ever predict what tests and sorrows you will face, you never know when Mother Nature will give you the greatest gift of all.'

* You can follow Kate's progress on Twitter: @katesilverton1.

Find this story at www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1387142/Kate-Silverton-reveals-trauma-IVF-treatment-ended-joy-natural-way.html

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