

Dr Nina Francis

What is RIFis?

(Formally Known as 'Gender Disappointment')

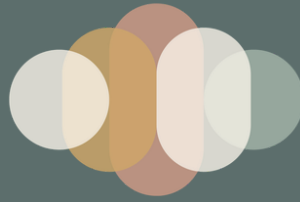
RIFis stands for the **R**upture of an **I**magined **F**uture centred around **i**nfant **s**ex.

RIFis, can be understood as the complex and difficult emotions that some parents experience when there is a rupture in their imagined future centred around infant sex. That is, where a parent has psychologically invested in a future within which there is a certain sex child, and when that sex child is not conceived, they experience a rupture in their imagined future and this rupture can lead to many different, nuanced, yet difficult emotions.

It can be a highly complex and exceptionally challenging experience that may include all-encompassing emotions such as sadness, grief, distress, guilt, shame, anger, resentment, confusion and emotional numbness, which are often intensified after a scan or confirmation of the baby's sex.

These feelings are more common than most people realise, yet the experience is rarely spoken about openly, which only serves to compound the difficult emotions and sense of isolation that can be experienced.

Parents who experience RIFis rarely seek help due to the stigma and shame they feel. There appears to be a social assumption that parents are 'disappointed' in their children and can just 'get over' it. When a more helpful way of understanding this experience is as a rupture of an imagined future where the sex of a child holds great meaning to the parent. And when that child is not conceived, it can lead to complex and difficult emotions.



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If someone has shared this information sheet with you, they are showing great courage and trust in you, and they are likely wanting support.

Three ways to start the conversation:

 Learn more about RIFis by visiting www.drninafrancis.co.uk for the most up-to-date knowledge and support on this experience.

 You don't need to fully understand their experience to acknowledge their feelings. Validation can be so incredibly powerful:

"I can see how difficult this is for you."

"Thank you for sharing this with me."

 Listen with curiosity and without judgement. Ask open questions such as:

"What does having a son/daughter mean to you?"

"How has this experience been for you?"

And allow them space to share their thoughts and feelings.

RIFis is often experienced in silence because of fear, shame, and misunderstanding. By listening without judgement and responding with compassion, you can help create a space where parents feel supported.