3 Strategies for Taking Charge of Your Fertility

By Russell Davis
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Hi, my name is Russell. I want you to know I understand where you might be right now. My wife and I tried for 10 years to conceive and given you are reading this then I expect you may recognise the pain, grief, anger, jealousy, false hopes and all the other emotions we experienced on our journey. We did conceive naturally and have a wonderful son. Having now become a Cognitive Hypnotherapist the one thing I wish I had made use of is the power of the mind. Looking back I can now see how my thoughts and feelings affected our progress.

In this ebook, my intention is to help you grow your family, whether through natural or assisted conception, by introducing you to the power of your mind and what it can achieve for you. You can remove the hidden mental obstacles to having a baby as well as influencing your body to create the best possible outcome.

So, make yourself comfortable as you sow a seed of learning about how you can start to take control of your own fertility. By using these techniques the seed can germinate, you can begin to bloom and grow your family.

Russell
Sarah never thought that she would have a problem starting a family after focusing on her career. Aged 39, after years of trying naturally and three failed IVF cycles, she used The Fertile Mind® programme and was successful with her next IVF cycle.

“It helped me to remain calm and relaxed at very stressful times and also gave me a feeling of empowerment.”

Sarah Thomas
one

The Power of Your Mind
The Power of Your Mind

I first learnt about the power of the mind when at the age of 16 I developed stage fright as a violinist (a shaking bow does not lead to a beautiful resonating sound!). My violin teacher taught me some mind techniques that helped me let go of my nerves by stopping me focusing on my negative feelings and expecting my hand shake to start imminently so that instead I could relax into my performance. There is a principle in life that is ‘the more you focus on something the more of it you get’. I was focussed on my nerves, so guess what I got?

At the time I didn’t really grasp the power of the principles behind the techniques and how they could have a far reaching impact on all areas of my life. I feel excited about sharing some of these principles with you so you may begin to see how they could assist you with your getting pregnant – and maybe in other areas of your life too!

There are many examples of scientific research demonstrating the power of the mind. I will mention some of them in this ebook, if you are interested you can find more on www.thefertilemind.net.

Harvard psychologist Professor Ellen Langer has spent her entire career investigating the power of our mind. “Everybody knows in some way that our minds affect our physical being, but I don’t think people are aware of just how profound the effect actually is”, she says.

Prof. Langer’s research started over 30 years ago in 1979 when she carried out a ground-breaking experiment which is being depicted by the Hollywood film ‘Counter Clockwise’. She wanted to know whether recreating a state of mind from 20 years earlier would make any changes in the bodies of participants, and indeed, the profound and positive differences were truly amazing (sorry if I have ruined the films ending!).

In another example of Prof. Langer’s research she took 84 hotel housekeeping staff and told one group of them that the work they did (cleaning hotel rooms) was good exercise. She told the control group nothing. Four weeks later there were no changes to the control group however the test group had decreased in weight, blood pressure, body fat, waist-to-hip ratio, and body mass index. Their work hadn’t changed, so it seems that some new thinking or belief in the hotel workers had been enough to change their bodies.

What thinking or beliefs do you have that could be impacting your success in being pregnant? The Fertile Mind® can help you change these, bringing you a greater chance of achieving what you want, your getting pregnant.

Up to 38% of couples trying for a baby where the woman is aged over 30 experience problems. Of those couples who seek medical help for their fertility, 15%-30% are told they are experiencing ‘unexplained infertility’, that is, unexplained by medical science.
Harvard psychologist Prof Langer recruited a group of elderly men all in their late 70s or 80s for a ‘week of reminiscence’. Surrounded by props from the 50s they were asked to act as if it was actually 1959. They watched films, listened to music and discussed news events of the time – all as if these things were new and happening right in the present.

Understandably, Prof. Langer herself had doubts. “You have to understand, when these people came to see if they could be in the study and they were walking down the hall to get to my office, they looked like they were on their last legs, so much so that I said to my students ‘why are we doing this? It’s too risky’.”

As the week went by, Prof Langer began to notice that they were walking faster and their confidence had improved. One man decided to do without his walking stick. At the end of the week they played an impromptu game of ‘touch’ American football.

Physiological measurements were taken both before and after the week and found the men improved across the board. Their gait, dexterity, arthritis, speed of movement, cognitive abilities and their memory were all measurably improved. Their blood pressure dropped and, even more surprisingly, their eyesight and hearing got better.
Your mind and body are one system.

Every part of your body is connected to your brain through nerves. When you are sad or happy and cry, your thoughts and feelings result in your body producing tears. Or an embarrassing thought can turn your face red! Or you can wake up sweating and tense from a nightmare.

Equally, what happens to the body registers in the brain, but the brain can influence exactly how it registers and to what degree. You may have noticed how a pain is reduced or goes away when you are distracted by something. The nerves are still connected but the mind is focussed on and registering something else.

I use this principle with clients and can easily enable them to think one arm is so much heavier than the other just by imagining it being heavier. Some clients even find their arm beginning to float in the air when they imagine lots of helium balloons attached to it.

Evidence would suggest that the brain cannot distinguish between reality and what is in the mind.

In 1994, Harvard scientists taught a piano tune to a group of volunteers. The tune was complex enough that they need to use all their fingers to play it. They were instructed to play it over and over again for two hours a day, for five consecutive days. Another group of volunteers didn’t actually touch a piano at all. They just imagined playing the tune, note by note, with all the right fingers, (‘mental practice’ or ‘visualisation’), for exactly the same amount of time as the others: two hours a day for five consecutive days.

The brain scans taken over the five days show the changes to the brain in the two groups are almost identical. The brain can’t tell the difference between reality and what is vividly imagined.

Not only was there no difference in the brain’s response, there was a significant effect on their physical performance. After five days the physical ability (measured by the number of mistakes made) of the visualisation group was at the same level as those that had been physically practising for three of the five days. After the study, just two hours of physical practise was all that was required for the group that had only imagined themselves playing the tune to reach the same level of physical ability as those that had physically practised for the full five days of the study.

This is just one example of the extensive research that confirms your mind and body are one system and how your thoughts can change your biology. For more examples and information on your mind-body connection I can thoroughly recommend Dr David Hamilton’s books ‘It’s the Thought That Counts’ and ‘How Your Mind Can Heal Your Body’.
This concept goes further than muscles, it also affects your genes. Geneticist and former Stamford medical school professor Dr Bruce Lipton explains how the mind-body link works at a cellular and genetic level in his book ‘The Biology of Belief’. This demonstrates how genes and DNA do not control our biology; that instead DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our positive and negative thoughts.

So your thoughts and feelings have a direct influence on your physical body, your biology. Given the delicate and precise cocktail of hormones required for healthy ovulation, conception, implantation and pregnancy, you can begin to see how your thoughts and emotions can impact this quite dramatically. How strongly do you believe you can become pregnant? What is the level of your doubt after any number of negative test results? How stressed do you feel? All these things could be having an impact on your fertility. We’ll examine this in more detail later.

The good news is that you can learn to positively control your thoughts and your feelings, and it’s possible to let go of negative beliefs and overcome unhelpful feelings such as stress and despair. In a process where so much can seem out of your control it can be very empowering to realise you can influence factors which can have a significant impact on the outcome and that pregnancy test result.

Using hypnosis and visualisation (including similar techniques to the participants in the finger mental practice studies), you can ensure that your mind and body are in the optimal state for you to become pregnant and the embryo to thrive, whether conceiving naturally or with assistance such as IVF.
strategy

Visualisation
Sometimes the term ‘visualisation’ can put people off, because they worry that they don’t have the ability to picture things in detail visually. For one thing, as you’ll see below, it’s possible to increase your ability to create pictures in your mind, but really, a more exact term for it might be ‘guided imagination’ in that sense, when you ‘visualise’ playing the piano you are imagining the keyboard, the finger movements, how it feels and perhaps even the sounds that go with it.

All these aspects of the imagination are being registered by the brain and it is responding as you really were playing the piano. This powerful phenomenon can help you achieve those things you most want in your life including your fertility. Through visualisation you can access and influence your unconscious mind to make changes in the body as if what you were imagining were real.

I regularly use visualisation as a form of self hypnosis for physical healing, and I believe it’s responsible for overcoming my lifelong hay-fever, my allergy to horses, as well as for rapid recovery from sports injuries and illnesses. A specific example is that my family all went down with a stomach bug and my wife and son took three days to get better, however I recovered within 24hrs. I have seen the same powerful response with my clients. Visualisation techniques can be utilised alongside medical interventions or, other activities (such as acupuncture) to greatly improve the likelihood of your getting pregnant and maintaining a strong and healthy pregnancy.

According to a study presented to the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology conference in Berlin in July of 2004, hypnosis can effectively double the success of IVF treatments. The study was conducted by Professor Eliahu Levitas and his team at Soroka Hospital in Israel to determine if hypnosis could improve the success of the embryo transfers stage of IVF. The study of 185 woman found that 28% of the women who were hypnotised for the IVF treatment became pregnant, compared to 14% of the women in the control group.

“When performing embryo transfer under hypnosis may significantly contribute to an increased clinical pregnancy rate”

Professor Levitas, Soroka Hospital Israel.

Professor Levitas is not the only fertility expert to utilise hypnosis. More and more of the medical world are waking up to the power of the mind and how it can be used to improve your health, fertility and IVF success.
So, what do we mean by ‘visualisation’? Sometimes clients tell me that they cannot visualise. When I ask them the colour of their front door they are surprised when I tell them they visualised to come up with the answer. They created an internal image of their front door. Sometimes this happens so quickly they fail to recognise it. If I ask them something that requires a bit more brain power such as the make of their first car they are again surprised that the mental picture they create of their first car, however brief or vague, is an example of visualisation.

Some people find it easier to create mental images than others, but like most things, it gets easier with practice. Whether recalling an image from the past or creating an image of something you want in the future, it is a matter of honing the same technique. Here is an exercise you can use to grow your ability to visualise. The more you practise the easier you will find it and the more effective using your mind for your fertility will be.

**How to Visualise.**

**Visualisation Exercise**

Start with the first step and practise each step until you are confident with it before moving on to the next one. Perhaps spend a week practising for five minutes twice a day and you may begin to notice it getting easier and/or the images getting more vivid.

1. Picture a matchbox. Whatever comes to mind, however vague or brief, is visualisation. The more you do it the clearer it can become or the longer you will be able to hold the picture in your mind.

2. Now start to notice more and more detail. If it had a colour what colour would it be? Imagine a picture on the front. Spend some time noticing more and more about the matchbox, you may become aware of more detail. Play with your imagination.

3. Can you change the colour of the matchbox? Practise changing it from colour to colour.

4. Can you rotate the matchbox so it is standing on its end or side, or perhaps turn it upside down.

5. What other creative things can you do with this matchbox in your mind? If you imagine opening it, I wonder if you will find matches inside.

6. Can you imagine what it feels like against your skin. How it would feel as you move it around, perhaps feeling the edges or the texture of the striking strip. What would it feel like if the striking area was sandpaper found on some brands of matches.
Visualisation for Fertility.

So how might visualisation be used to improve your fertility or maximise your success with assisted conception? What do you visualise? You could visualise your body doing whatever you want it to. There is no magic formula, the beauty of this is that it uses your unconscious mind which is unique to you, how you think and the specific circumstances that could be affecting your fertility.

You may be picturing welcoming the embryo and nurturing it, harvesting high quality eggs, seeing the embryo embedding itself in to the uterus lining or your body thereby creating the best environment for it to thrive. It could be any of these, all of these or something different. Some people may visualise these things in a more biologically correct way, others have more symbolic or metaphoric images, it really doesn't matter.

When I visualise my body dealing with a virus I sometimes see the 1980’s arcade game character 'Pacman' eating the 'dots' of virus in my body, at other times I imagine my immune system being strengthened with the arrival of the cavalry - perhaps I played too many computer games and watched too many films in my youth!

I have had clients imagining a more anatomically correct image, but it really doesn’t matter what imagery you use. A key thing is to be aware of the emotions that go along with it so you sink deeper in to the visualisation as if it were real. Feel how you would feel knowing this was taking place inside you as you imagine it.

Being guided through a visualisation and including a time of relaxation beforehand can make it far more powerful because it enables you to enter the visualisation in a more vivid way by getting your conscious (logical, thinking) mind out of the way. I use an mp3 audio track I have created for my healing visualisation.

You may want to consider using The Fertile Mind® hypnosis programmes to help you get pregnant. You can grow your family whilst listening to a powerful and relaxing mp3/CD. These include guided visualisations and unconscious mind re-programming and enable you to let go of any thoughts or beliefs that may be holding your body back from doing what you really want it to do, to get pregnant. See www.thefertilemind.net for more details.

You will find separate programmes for natural conception and assisted conceptions, enabling you today to begin to take control of your own fertility, maximising your chances of getting pregnant. It is surprising how listening to a short (about 10 minutes) relaxing track each day can have the power to change your life forever by helping you achieve what you want, your getting pregnant, and seeing that positive test result.
strategy 2
Letting Go of Stress
It’s no surprise that being stressed can reduce your chances of getting pregnant whether naturally or with medical assistance.

There is plenty of evidence based research you can find on the internet for this. For example, Professor Levitas’ study demonstrated that stress can physically impact the success of IVF egg implantation due to stress induced contractions of the uterus.

It’s not uncommon to hear of couples trying for a baby with no success and suddenly becoming pregnant when they give up and stop trying. My wife and I had a decade of double infertility. After my wife was healed through natural medicine and utilising the mind-body link through lifestyle changes we then found that I too was infertile. However within a couple of months of me letting go of previous buried emotions my wife became pregnant.

In Chinese Medicine sees a connection between the Heart and the Uterus – a ‘special’ meridian – and the Chinese believe the Heart governs fertility and that if the Heart is stressed then conception cannot happen.

Most of us are surrounded by causes of stress and we all respond in different ways. When you get stressed it is often clear that there is an impact to your body. Perhaps you get a tension headache, feel tired and run down, or feel muscles tensing. But stress often creeps up without any visible signs of impact until it reaches a threshold. The thing is, the delicate balance of hormones that fertility depends upon are particularly sensitive to stress.

Stress is a signal for your body to produce cortisol, the stress hormone. It is there to help protect you in the evolutionary ‘fight or flight’ response – when a sabre-tooth tiger appeared, stone-age people needed a rush of energy with which to fight or run away from it! During the fighting or fleeing, other bodily systems would be put on hold till the danger had passed.

Cortisol creates a hormonal imbalance affecting all aspects of the fertility process. In a study of 16 women reported in the journal Fertility and Sterility (2003)9, Dr. Sarah Berga of Emory University showed that ovulation was restored in 7 out of 8 women who learned stress management tools (mind-body integration techniques, cognitive therapy techniques and positive imagery) as their stress hormones reduced compared with 2 out of 8 who did not learn the techniques. In 2006, in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism10, she reported that women who did not ovulate had excessive levels of cortisol.
There are a number of techniques you can use to reduce the stress in your life and heal the effects of previous stress and other emotions.

Focusing on your breathing is a quick and easy way to let stress go. Stress and anxiety are caused by worrying about things that may or may not happen in the future based on experiences from the past. For example, being stressed about not getting pregnant is effectively worrying about an outcome (for example the next test result or cycle of IVF) based on past experience (negative test results). Your mind is time-travelling to the future and back to the past, away from the present moment.

When you focus your mind on your breathing it brings it to your body, to the here and now, because your mind can time-travel but your body cannot. Unless there is an immediate threat in your current environment (check that sabre-tooth tiger is not in the room, in which case you would be feeling fear, not stress/anxiety), you cannot be stressed or anxious when you are completely in the here and now, the present moment. So by focussing on your breathing in the present moment, you might find you can free your mind from any worry you may have over the next test result or any other stress factors in your life such as work.

You could see a therapist such as a Cognitive Hypnotherapist. This can be very effective in helping you let go of stress and anxiety and equipping you to take control of your emotions. To find a therapist near to you see www.questinstitute.co.uk/therapist-finder.

You could take up meditation or yoga, both of which are good stress relievers. Acupuncture is also great for relieving stress and preparing your mind and body for pregnancy.

Self hypnosis such as mp3 downloads can be used to help relieve stress. The Fertile Mind® includes a specific self-hypnosis product designed to reduce or remove the stress in your life that could be impacting your success at getting pregnant, enabling you to feel more relaxed and in control of life as well as being able to see life beyond your next cycle/IVF cycle.

Overleaf are some exercises that may help you begin to let go of stress and get into a wonderfully relaxed state. Some can be used in the moment when you feel stressed and others can be used to enable you to achieve a deeply relaxed state taking you to an effortless relaxing place where you can let accumulated stress just drain from your mind and body.
7-11 Breathing.

This technique utilises a natural biological relaxation process (increasing the amount of carbon dioxide you breathe in) as well as bringing your mind to the present moment.

Focusing on your breathing brings you back to the ‘here and now’ rather than time travelling to the future worrying about outcomes. Simply concentrate on your breathing and count from 1-7 as you breathe in and from 1-11 as you exhale. You can count out loud or in your head but if possible out loud can make it more effective. It doesn’t need to be big breaths, just normal relaxed breathing adjusting the pace of the counting to your breath.

Alternatively you can count from 1 to 3 and 1 to 5 instead of 7 & 11 (which is what I do, having a small lung capacity). After 10-15 breaths you may start to notice how much more relaxed you’re beginning to feel. If your mind wanders just bring it gently back to your breath. The beauty of this exercise is that you can do it any time, any place without anyone knowing what you are doing.

Special Place.

Find somewhere comfortable and quiet where you will not be disturbed. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing for a minute or so. Then picture the most relaxing place you could imagine going to, whether it be somewhere you have been to before or somewhere you could imagine going to.

You can make this place whatever you want it to be. Let your imagination go. Just let yourself go there, noticing what you notice when you are there. What about the place makes it so relaxing for you? Is it what you can see, hear, feel or what you are doing? Be aware of the detail that makes the difference.

Spend as long as you want exploring this place, soaking up the things about it that are so relaxing for you. Take a photograph of this place in your mind so that you can return to it more quickly when you next want to.

Let It Out.

Sit down with a notepad and a pen and write down “I am anxious because…” or “My thoughts and feelings about conceiving are…” and then just write down what comes to mind. You may be thinking that you don’t know what to write, in that case write down ‘I don’t know’.

The trick is to keep the pen moving and keep writing. Keep writing ‘I don’t know’ when you don’t know what to write and you may be surprised what feelings and thoughts come to mind that you were not aware of - things which have been affecting you subconsciously and impacting your stress levels and your belief that you can become pregnant. The process of identifying these, writing them down and letting them out can be very therapeutic.
strategy 3

Weight
A UK study of more than 300 women carried out at the fertility clinic at Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital in London has shown that overweight women undergoing fertility treatment have double the risk of miscarriage. It also concluded that more than 35% of overweight and obese women had a miscarriage compared with 21%.

Previous research has shown that women who conceive naturally are also at a higher risk of miscarriage if they are overweight. After taking into account factors that may influence the risk of miscarriage, such as age and smoking history, they found the risk of miscarriage was double in the overweight group.

The advice should be the same for any woman - that it is important to lose weight independent of how you conceive.

Dr Tarek El-Toukhy, Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital.

I think most people that have tried diets know that ultimately they do not work. The vast majority of clients I have helped to lose weight had been on the all too familiar cycle of losing weight with a diet and then re-gaining it. Diets don’t work. If they did, dieting wouldn’t be the multi billion pound industry it is! Starving your body and telling yourself you cannot have certain foods is not sustainable in the long term. Consciously trying to avoid certain foods is difficult when over 95% of your behaviour is driven by your unconscious mind.

You probably know how it is: you are going so well…until that one biscuit. You said to yourself “just one, it won’t do any harm”, and before you knew it you were sliding back to where you started faster than you could say chocolate digestive! Often our eating, particularly sugary food, is about our emotions rather than physical hunger. Have you ever told yourself ‘I deserve that glass of wine / ice-cream / chocolate’. Unfortunately the stress of not conceiving and the grief of not having children can add further stress to your relationship with food.

Many of our eating habits are just that, unconscious habits. For example, eating until the plate is empty regardless of whether you are full or not. Perhaps you were told as a child you couldn’t leave the table until your plate was clear. Our parents were well meaning but unfortunately these ‘rules’ can lead to unconscious over-eating later in life.

All these things wreak havoc with diets, but the good news is that you can change your eating habits and your relationship with food. You can stop eating for emotional reasons and be more in tune with what your body wants (healthy food) and when it wants it (when you are hungry) and stop when you are full.

If you are carrying excess weight, this can dramatically impact your success in conceiving. I recommend seeing a Cognitive Hypnotherapist if you would like change your relationship with food and let go of unconscious habits.
& finally

Beginning to Take Control
So, there you have it. Your thoughts and feelings can have a profound effect on your fertility. I hope that you have enjoyed this journey and feel inspired and hopeful, because there is hope. Just as negative beliefs and stress can negatively affect your chances of getting pregnant, by adopting positive beliefs and learning to release stress and anxiety, you can harness the power of the mind-body link and channel it to increase your chances of getting that positive test result, of you becoming pregnant.

You can change how you feel and what you believe. You can change your biology to improve your fertility, creating the strongest and healthiest environment for you to get pregnant - from harvesting healthy eggs to welcoming, embedding and giving life to the embryo, whether through natural conception or assisted such as IVF. You can begin now by going to www.thefertilemind.net because you too can start to take control of your fertility to become pregnant.

To your success.

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Medical Warning & Disclaimer.

The information in this book is not intended as medical advice or to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified health care professional. It is intended as a sharing of knowledge and information from the research and experience of Russell Davis. We encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.

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Russell Davis is a Cognitive Hypnotherapist, who trained at the Quest Institute which teaches leading-edge techniques and incorporates the latest discoveries from science and psychology. Russell is experienced at working with individuals and couples at his successful London practice. He has first hand experience of infertility having had a decade of double infertility with his wife. After following natural and holistic approaches to improving their fertility, which included utilising the power of the mind-body link, they conceived naturally. For more information see www.thefertilemind.net or see the contact details below.

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