

Mind Over Matter: Oriental Medicine and Fertility

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After doing fertility work for a number of years, I was thrilled to encounter the book [Mind-Body Fertility Connection](#) by James Schwartz. He truly brings together the mind/body/spirit connection in his work, and I believe many couples have greatly benefitted from his years of dedication.

JW: Please tell us about your background.

JS: I am a board-certified hypnotherapist, a [neuro-linguistic programming](#) practitioner and a member of the [Colorado Association of Psychotherapists](#). Through my extensive hypnotherapy work with infertility clients, I created and developed a program that focuses on healing the mental and emotional barriers that can often prevent conception.

JW: How did you come to get involved with fertility as a specialization?

JS: When I first started working with hypnotherapy, I had no idea I would end up specializing in fertility work. I was working in an acupuncture clinic where many women were coming in for infertility issues. Within the first month or two of opening my practice, I saw a half a dozen clients, referred to me by acupuncturists, who suspected that their patients emotional issues might be a contributing factor to the overall infertility picture. Most of the patients had been told by medical doctors that their chances of getting pregnant or going full-term were very slim.

At the time, there were no classes or books about how to use hypnosis for infertility, so I had to develop my own program. As it turned out, all six of those clients got pregnant, went full term and had healthy babies. Those clients told their friends and it just took off from there. My work with those clients evolved into my hypnosis program, which became the basis for my book.

JW: What do you think is the best way to promote fertility?

JS: I think the key to fertility is to create mental, physical, emotional and (for some) spiritual wellness. I highly recommend that all my clients use acupuncture to put the body in a place of physical balance. I recommend hypnotherapy to reduce stress and process the emotional blocks that might be interfering with the conception process. When a fertility client has weak kidney and spleen *qi*, a uterus that is out of alignment, is experiencing high anxiety and has a fear of repeated miscarriages, it is very unlikely that she can successfully conceive or carry the baby full term.

The key is to first create balance, which is when the process begins. Many women figure that going off the pill is the start of the fertility journey. I feel that a woman begins that journey when she starts to work on creating balance in her life. I find it to be very rare that a woman can circumvent that process by ignoring all of the physical and emotional issues by opting for Western medicine. Women who choose Western medicine should be doing this wellness work in conjunction with their procedures.

JW: Do you feel that any woman with a diagnosis of "infertility" can ultimately overcome that diagnosis?

JS: Absolutely. I believe that the term "infertility" is used too liberally within the Western medical model. If a woman who is having trouble getting pregnant goes to a Eastern medicine practitioner, and that practitioner observes conditions such as blood stagnation related to the liver (resulting in poor blood flow to the uterus) and depleted kidney energy, that practitioner isn't going to use the "infertility" label. Instead, the acupuncturist is going to say: "Let's try to correct these imbalances and give you the opportunity to succeed." Similarly, if I see a woman trying to get pregnant but experiencing a high level of stress and who has some issues, I would also say: "If we can process these issues, it might change the dynamics of your situation."

The "infertility" diagnosis is usually based on the limited resources available within the Western Medical system. I find that when a woman achieves physical and emotional balance, there may no longer be an infertile situation. That is why I felt this book was so important to write. Some people get into the mindset that Western medicine is the only way to address fertility when the statistics show that alternative modalities often produce better results.

JW: Can you talk about those statistics?

JS: There are nine major studies that were overseen by more than 20 doctors) in which mind-body work was used to promote fertility. The success rates ranged from 42 percent to 65 percent. If you compare that to the success rate of Western medical procedures, a single intra-uterine insemination procedure, which costs about the same as a 10 week mind-body program, produces a [success rate](#) of 2 percent to 8 percent. An in-vitro procedure, which costs between \$15,000 and \$25,000, produces a [28 percent success rate](#) for young women and less than a 10 percent success rate for women over 40.

It is important to note that the IVF success rates I use are from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, which tracks all IVF procedures performed every year within the U.S. These numbers are based on live births for women not using donor eggs. Numbers from some clinics can sometimes be misleading. Some clinics count any pregnancy, rather than a live birth, as a successful outcome. Other clinics strongly encourage women to use donor eggs because that dramatically increases the success rate.

JW: Although you are not an acupuncturist, you often refer to terms and conditions related to acupuncture. How does that factor into your work?

JS: I believe that healing of the future will combine modalities that connect the physical and the mental/emotional realms. When I work with hypnotherapy clients experiencing physical disharmonies, I teach them how to do mind-body healing meditations. The visualization work is partly based on Eastern medicine diagnosis (which is provided to me by the client's acupuncturist). Since Eastern medicine focuses on the roots or source of an imbalance, I incorporate that information. Naturally, this work also involves processing the emotional issues that may be at the root of the physical condition.

One of the reasons I feel I have been so successful in my work is because I do my work in conjunction with Eastern medicine practitioners. I am fortunate to have a network of gifted acupuncturists in my area, and we often combine hypnosis and acupuncture. I believe that the combination of the two is more powerful than either modality would be on its own.

JW: What have you learned about fertility through your years of clinical work?

JS: Stress reduction is probably the most important part of creating conception. Not only can stress create conditions such as hormone imbalances, but the hypothalamus gland (essentially the body's control center for reproductive activity) is highly susceptible to stress. A common stress-induced pattern with infertility is a situation where the adrenals produce cortisol, the stress hormone that puts the body in fight-or-flight response. The blood goes to our extremities so we can defend ourselves. This takes the blood and energy away from the uterus and the reproductive system which need that energy and blood flow to function properly. People think of stress simply in terms of the day-to-day stuff, but our old unprocessed issues are the main contributors of stress. So, the way to reduce stress is to process the emotional issues that are creating blocks to fertility.

JW: Can you share with us what a typical hypnosis session would entail?

JS: The goal of hypnosis is to access the subconscious mind. All of our issues, whether it be anxieties, fears, behavioral patterns, beliefs, memories, experiences, feelings or emotions, are all rooted in the subconscious mind. To make changes in our lives, we have to address the subconscious material. Just talking about things on a conscious level will not uncover or process the incredibly powerful subconscious programming.

The hypnotist uses what is called an induction to move a client into a state where subconscious information is easy to access. The process can vary from session to session, but the hypnotist will try to help the client find the source or root of an issue. When the origin is uncovered, then that source material can be processed or healed and replaced by a more positive belief system.

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