



WOMEN'S HEALTH

# Helping Infertility Patients with the Spirit Essence

Aimee Raupp, LAc

As many of you know, when it comes to treating infertility, we are dealing with a patient population that is, generally speaking, in emotional turmoil. These patients often experience fear, anxiety, despair, hopelessness, grief and anger. And, it is these emotional states that are hindering their ability to conceive. Which is why in my practice, I discuss an important tenet of TCM with my fertility patients: The spirit and the essence must meet in order for life (or *qi*) to be created.

This tenet rings true for so many of our cases, but when it comes to infertility, I find it to be of utmost importance.

I'm sure most all of you have heard this statement—and on a deeper level, as practitioners, we can understand it as the heart and the kidney must communicate—the fire from the heart must bring warmth down to the kidney water so that reproduction can occur.

But how do we apply that in our practice? What does this actually look like?

Of course, we can use acupuncture points to help calm the shen, to regulate *qi* and to nourish essence. But what more can we do for these patients?

In my practice, I introduce the "spirit essence" theory to my patients and I ponder it with them. I take my patients on a journey encouraging them to look deeper into their lives. Are they living with joy in their life? Are they accepting where they are as where they are supposed to be? Are they open to becoming a parent? Do they believe in their bodies ability to reproduce? Is there a healthy amount of "fire" and passion in their life? Are they open to receiving energy and hence fostering a new life?

To me these types of inspections are the root of connecting the spirit and the essence. Coaching my patients to look at their lives in this way often allows them to let go of the pent up emotions that are holding them back from getting pregnant. I find that many of my fertility patients have a hard time finding joy in their day to day life—that their fertility challenges have taken over most every aspect of their life. I find that these patients no longer have faith in their body—and they are doing all they can (diets, acupuncture, assisted reproductive techniques) to get pregnant. And, yet the one thing that is often missing from their get-pregnant-regimen is introspection and self-reflection.

When it comes to treating such a difficult disease as infertility—we really have to dig deep and relieve the emotional constraints that are blocking our patients. I find when I instruct my patients to do the following, they really open up and allow themselves to become a parent:

1. Focus on joy. I encourage my patients to journal daily about three things that brought them joy that day. Focusing on joy will open up their heart and ignite a healthy heart fire.

2. Meditate. A daily 5-10 minute meditation will calm their spirit and bring clarity to their shen. I recommend that they meditate on seeing themselves as a parent, seeing themselves pregnant, holding their baby. I urge them to find the feeling of fertility—to feel the joy they will feel when they do become pregnant/a parent; to feel the fullness they will feel emotionally and physically when they become pregnant; to imagine the feeling of a life growing inside of them; to feel their heart feeling up with joy.
3. Believe. I encourage them to believe in their ability to get pregnant. Each day I ask them to recite to themselves mantra's such as: "I am fertile", "I am open to receiving" and "I believe in my body". Even if they don't believe these mantras, saying them over and over again will eventually shift their mindset into believing. I find that if patients don't believe they are fertile, then they are blocking their own ability to reproduce.

Treating infertility truly requires more than just acupuncture, herbs and dietary recommendations. We need to assist our patients on a journey into their hearts and help them open up to receiving and creating life. And, I strongly feel as practitioners, we need to make sure we are being true to our own core—focusing on our own joy—connecting our personal essence and spirit. With our own focus on the importance of connecting our essence and spirit, we can confidently guide our patients. Without addressing deep emotions that come with the trauma of being told one is "infertile" we aren't correcting the root problem. Whether your patient is Kidney Yang deficient or has Liver *qi* stagnation, their spirit must find joy. The joy will light the fire in their heart that will connect with their essence and create life.

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