

The original article by Pam Newbury can be found here: <https://www.manchester-hypnotherapy.com/treatments/hypnosis-and-fertility/>

Hypnosis to help Fertility and IVF

Hypnosis and Infertility

Infertility is on the increase and is more prevalent than people think. Depending on the source, statistics show anything between 14-20% of couples struggle to conceive naturally. Many factors affect a couple's ability to conceive, and stress and anxiety are thought to play a big part. Reproduction is an extremely complex and delicate biological processes, involving a changing cocktail of hormones; when your body and mind are tense and anxious, it makes perfect sense that this may affect your ability to become pregnant. Hypnosis can really help you to deal with the emotional roller coaster of infertility and this in turn can help your body to function more effectively.

Hypnosis, fertility and stress

There is increasing evidence of the way stress impacts fertility. In a study, 52% of the women who completed a stress reduction programme were successful with their second IVF cycle, compared to 20% of the control group. This is a statistically significant difference. Another study demonstrated how hypnosis could double IVF success rates.

The pituitary gland in the brain controls the levels of key fertility hormones such as FSH and LH. It also controls the "fight or flight" response – the way the body responds to threat. One of the functions of the flight or flight response is to shut down non-critical processes to focus on surviving the "threat". However, your body responds to everything it perceives as "threat" – it is controlled by a very primitive part of our brain which can't tell the difference between physical threat and threats which are emotional or psychological – such as infertility.

There are lots of ways of helping someone with their fertility and stress reduction is an obvious place to start

Hypnotherapy reduces stress to help fertility

An increasing number of both men and women are using hypnosis and hypnotherapy to help improve their fertility. The techniques used in hypnotherapy help you to remain calm and relaxed, whether you are trying to conceive naturally or undergoing IVF treatment. The ability to deal with stress when you are trying to get pregnant is very important as stress and anxiety are understood to be a significant contributing factor in

infertility. Some women experience irregular periods due to stress, whilst in men sperm count can be lowered. Additionally, stress may lead to habits which are unhealthy, with the result that you are less likely to be able to become pregnant. If you are suffering from stress, you may be less likely to eat healthily, and there are studies which suggest that being even slightly overweight (for men AND women) or underweight may effect your chances of pregnancy. Perhaps stress and anxiety mean that you drink more alcohol or caffeine than is healthy, which in turn can lead to insomnia (as withdrawal from alcohol causes waking in the night, and caffeine can prevent you from falling asleep or reaching a deep level of sleep). In addition, some studies have linked drinking more than 3 cups of coffee a day to an increased risk of miscarriage. Widespread research links consumption of alcohol to a lowered chance of pregnancy. Perhaps stress is causing you to smoke or adding to the feeling that you cannot give up. Or you may even be doing everything you possibly can to keep healthy and look after yourself, but find that you cannot sleep because you are worrying about the fact that so far, despite taking charge of your fertility in every way you can, you haven't yet become pregnant. Lack of sleep adversely affects the body generally, and can affect fertility. Many people who have problems with fertility find that their confidence and self esteem suffer. Hypnosis helps by enabling you to switch off from your fears and anxieties, allowing you to become relaxed, and teaching you techniques to do so wherever and whenever stress threatens to affect you. It enables you to switch off from thinking about something which is upsetting and difficult – and by doing so reduces the stress which is contributing to the problem.

Hypnosis, IVF and other Fertility Treatment

You may be using IVF or other fertility treatment methods to increase your chances of conception. Fertility treatment is very a stressful experience for many, for some because of changes in mood which can occur during hormone treatment, for some because of the anxiety about cost, for others because of the strain that undergoing – sometimes repeatedly – emotionally and physically painful procedures can bring. Many couples also experience anger, frustration, guilt and depression as a result of their infertility.

The HFEA recognises the emotional difficulties associated with fertility problems and all HFEA licensed clinics are required to offer you the option of counselling before treatment commences. Hypnotherapy and counselling can help you to find ways of dealing with the difficulties you are facing, and also to cope with any other stresses and worries you may have. The HFEA describes three different options of counselling (1) counselling about the implications of the treatments you are considering, particularly where these may involve donated eggs, embryos or sperm, or surrogacy (2) support counselling – this is concerned with the emotions and stresses you may feel whilst undergoing treatment and provides support and understanding – this is particularly important for those individuals who have decided not to inform friends or family about the treatment, and who are therefore not able to use this usual support network; and (3) therapeutic counselling. The experience of infertility may bring back other unresolved issues from your past. Many people struggle with the feeling of unfairness and “why me?”; others feel depressed and

anxious. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy can help you to deal with all of the issues around fertility treatment, as recommended by HFEA.

Whether you have unexplained fertility and are still trying to get pregnant naturally, or whether you are receiving fertility treatment, hypnotherapy can help you to remain focused, positive and confident. In addition to ways of coping with stress, you may wish to use guided imagery and visualisation to help you prepare for IVF treatment and pregnancy. Hypnotherapy is an excellent way of helping you to prepare mentally for fertility treatment by use of visualisation and relaxation techniques. You will also be encouraged during hypnotherapy to focus on those areas of your life which already give you happiness and satisfaction, further helping you to relax, to relieve stress, increasing the chances of a successful outcome. This positive outlook on your life, and the perspective this gives you, helps you to deal more easily with the emotional and physical challenges of IVF. You will be taught self hypnosis so that you can recreate – whenever and wherever you want – the fantastic state of relaxation you achieve in your hypnotherapy sessions. You will be given a self hypnosis CD to help with this.

Fear of Needles

IVF inevitably involves the taking of blood samples, and for many types of treatment, hormone injections are needed. This can cause difficulty for many individuals. Pam is very experienced in dealing with needle phobia and in providing support and encouragement to those who are hoping to be able to carry out the injections themselves – even for those who do not have a needle phobia, this can be problematic. Suggestions relating to motivation and coping skills are given whilst you are in hypnosis, helping you to deal with this stage of the treatment.

CBT and hypnotherapy gives you the support you need to help cope with and to overcome infertility, and to deal with IVF.