

eLearning Series: Reclaiming Your Fertility

Part 3



In the first two installments of our eLearning Series, *Reclaiming Your Fertility*, we have covered charting your cycle, timing intercourse for natural conception, and optimal nutrition for reproductive health. While reclaiming your fertility does include practical “how to” details like these (have sex on certain days, eat this and not that, do this self-care practice to balance your TCM zang-fu organ imbalance), truly reclaiming your fertility goes way beyond “how to” and means living life from a place of authenticity, openness, courage, and vulnerability. The essence of the work we do at [Acupuncture Denver](#) as [Fertile Soul Affiliates](#) is about this as much as it is about being highly experienced experts in the field of Oriental Reproductive Medicine. When we open our hearts and live life with authenticity, we find that *miracles do happen*.

My colleague Donna Huber and I always begin our “*Reclaim Your Fertility*” *Fertile Soul Workshops* with two questions for the attendees: “How many of you believe in miracles?” and “How many of you think you can force a miracle?” Whether the miracle in our lives is the birth of a biological child, the completion of an adoption, the realization of a long-forgotten dream, an opening to spirit, reconnecting with our creativity, or the conscious decision to embrace child-free living, miracles are possible for all of us. They happen when we have the courage to go to the depths, feel the tenderness of our own vulnerability, and let go. Or as Donna says so eloquently, when we realize we “don’t have to give up the dream, but we can give up the fight.”

One of my favorite teachers, [Brene Brown PhD.](#), writes extensively about this in her books *I Thought it Was Just Me* and *The Gifts of Imperfection* and speaks about it in her video *The Hustle For Worthiness*. She notes that while we can easily access “how to” in terms of how to eat, exercise, spend money, or live a healthful lifestyle, we are the “most obese, over-medicated, and in-debt cohort in history.” Her point is that while we are all willing to look at information or “how to,” we are terrified of looking at the things that underlie the choices we make (which are clearly not the most healthful ones in most cases).

While Dr. Brown is referring to the US population in general and how we all struggle with health and wellness despite being virtually inundated with “how to” information, I think what she is saying is even more relevant to those struggling with infertility. In the world of infertility, there is a plethora of how-to information: Western medicine books, Chinese medicine books, blogs, forums, magazines, websites, the unwelcome advice of well-meaning friends and relatives, the predictions of psychics, “birth intuitives,” and “spirit-baby” channels, the counsel of world-famous reproductive endocrinologists, the lifestyle prescriptions of acupuncturists, and on and on. Despite having access to all this information and advice, many of my patients still come to me feeling overwhelmed, disconnected, and deeply mired in shame. My greatest aspiration as a practitioner is to offer a safe haven to my patients where they can be themselves and tell their stories. This is the first step to moving from shame, fear and disconnection to courage, compassion and connection (the latter being the antidotes to the former, according to [Dr. Brown's](#) research).

As someone who went through my own pregnancy losses and family-building struggle, I know how desperation feels and how it provoked me to look outside myself for answers, certainty, and reassurance. None of these things “worked” or brought me to a place of peace. It was only when I was able to face my worst fears, feel the depth of my grief, and open my heart to the intensity of the love I felt for the babies I lost that my own miracle happened. When I listened to the “still small voice” in my heart, I was overcome by a deep knowing that led to choosing adoption at just the right time to connect us with our son, who is the greatest miracle I have ever known.

So while I will happily share some basic lifestyle and self-care information in this email, I also urge you to look below the surface and unearth the wisdom that lies within you. And despite the distractions and voices coming at you from all sides, take time and create enough stillness to listen to your own heart.

But in terms of some basic lifestyle tips or “how-to” here goes:

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1. Calm your nervous system to activate the HPO (hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian) axis and improve blood flow to your reproductive organs: do whatever you can to mitigate your stress response by integrating practices like belly breathing, yoga, meditation, deep relaxation, massage, and acupuncture.
 2. In a world that rewards us for living a *yang*-lifestyle (dynamic, busy, over-active, outward, productive, fast), cultivate a *yin*-lifestyle (contemplative, restful, playful, inward, slower).

3. Practice setting boundaries. Constantly saying “yes” even when we want to say “no” can drain us more than we realize. A healthy immune response depends on maintaining healthy boundaries in our lives and practicing self care as much as we care for others.
4. Keep your feet warm if they are typically cold (this warms the kidney organ system which controls reproduction). You can do a warm foot soak at night and add relaxing essential oils like lavender or chamomile.
5. Adopt the Spleen Qi Diet as outlined in the previous email and avoid stimulants, tobacco, pesticides, chemicals, and exposure harsh household detergents or toxins.
6. Check in with yourself and your partner regularly as you navigate the fertility treatment process. We offer our patients a great handout related to this so that they can make decisions about where to go with treatment (or where not to go) without becoming overwhelmed. Empower yourself to choose what feels right for you despite any outside pressure or judgment from friends, family, doctors, healthcare practitioners, or anyone else!
7. Repeat this mantra as often as you need to and come back to your breath when you feel overwhelmed with fear or desperation: “*All is well, I am safe*” (from Louise Hay, whose work I also highly recommend). Another simple mantra I really love is “*I am enough, I have enough, I do enough.*”
8. Create a gratitude practice. Practicing gratitude is one of the most powerful antidotes I have found for my own tendency to become anxious in the face of uncertainty. I have a simple white-board in my office where Merry and I write down one thing each day for which we are grateful. You can create a gratitude journal, a daily two-minute gratitude contemplation, or make your own “gratitude board.” [Brene Brown](#) noted in her research that joyful people are grateful and it wasn’t the joy that led to the gratitude, it was the gratitude that opened them to joy.

To learn more about Brene Brown’s work, I encourage you to watch her brief [TEDx video](#) and visit her [website](#). And to have a truly life-changing experience on your own fertility journey, I highly recommend attending a [Fertile Soul retreat](#) with Dr. Randine, my mentor, friend and wise teacher.

Please feel free to [email me](#) or call us at the clinic if you'd like more information about our treatment programs, workshops, or classes. We are honored to work with couples on their family-building journeys and feel grateful to witness so many miracles every day!

Take care,
Jane

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