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The applications of hypnosis and other
mind-body approaches for fertility

A manual for the treatment of infertility and
related conditions through the application of
hypnosis and mind-body approaches

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A brief summary

The *Fertile Body Method* combines hypnosis and other mind-body approaches to help identify and address the mental, emotional and physical factors which affect fertility and reduce the negative effects of infertility.

This book is a manual for health practitioners and contains the six stages of the *Fertile Body Method*, which can be used to study, understand and work with all the different aspects of fertility problems. This manual includes a structured therapeutic framework as well as a step-by-step guide for treatment. It is packed with tips, suggestions, tools and techniques which will provide practitioners with practical ways of working with each stage of treatment. The lively case studies illustrate some of the ways that this therapeutic framework can be put into practice.

Who is this book for?

This book is primarily aimed at hypnotherapists and mental health practitioners who work with, or are interested in working with hypnosis and mind-body approaches for fertility. It is also valuable for other health practitioners wanting to learn more about the mind-body relationship and how we can use the mind to enhance fertility. This book is suitable for those who are new to the field of fertility and mind-body medicine as well as more experienced practitioners who are looking to add to their skills and knowledge.

Many of the approaches suggested in the book utilise a hypnotic state. If you are not a trained hypnotherapist I would recommend that you do not work with formal hypnosis. However, many of these techniques can be used successfully in a state of deep relaxation. All the techniques marked 'can be used without formal hypnosis' may be suitable for use by practitioners who are experienced with guided relaxation and guided visualisation approaches.

How to use this manual

This book is divided into five sections as follows:

- **Section A** introduces hypnosis, mind-body medicine and explains fertility and infertility.
- **Section B** contains the six stages of the *Fertile Body Method*.
- **Section C** includes detailed descriptions of all the techniques, scripts and self-help tools referred to within the book.
- **Section D** outlines the different paths to parenthood and looks specifically at working with natural conception and assisted conception.
- **Section E** includes useful resources and a CD. The CD contains many practical resources such as scripts, questionnaires and homework sheets that can be printed out for your sessions or to be given as handouts to your clients.

I recommend that you read all the chapters before using the techniques and methods, in order to make a positive difference to your patient's health and fertility.

About the author

Sjanie Hugo is a clinical hypnotherapist specialising in fertility and related issues. She works in a busy central London practice and also works as part of a team at an integrated fertility clinic in London. She has lectured internationally for The London College of Clinical Hypnosis (LCCH).

Sjanie developed the *Fertile Body Method* and runs training courses throughout the UK and abroad where she teaches this approach to other practitioners. Sjanie also co-runs the Fertile Being group workshops using the concepts outlined in the *Fertile Body Method* to directly work with and empower couples who want to have children.

Sjanie is particularly interested in the healing affects of movement and dance and is undergoing personal study with the School of Movement Medicine.

Stage 1: Outcome

The first stage of the *Fertile Body Method* is to determine what outcome the client wants from therapy. *Stage 1: Outcome* is possibly the most important part of the *Fertile Body Method* during which we identify the client's goal for therapy, gather information, build rapport, and create a treatment plan.

For those who are unfamiliar with effective goal-setting approaches, the following section contains detailed information about how to create good therapeutic goals using solution focused questions and techniques.

In this section I have also given a few examples of some of the basic educative information that you may need to share with your client to ensure that they understand hypnosis and the relationship between the mind and the body. A case study at the end of this section illustrates how the goal can be used, alongside the *Fertile Body Method* framework, to create a therapeutic treatment plan.

This section contains:

Set the goal:

- Goal setting
- Goal setting for fertility
- Managing expectations
- Essential steps to creating a goal
- Using the goal to create a therapeutic strategy
- A solution focused approach
- What is solution focused therapy?
- Questions for creating the goal
- Prioritising goals
- Working with scales
- Reviewing the changes between sessions.

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Assess the information:

- Questionnaire
- GP diagnosis
- Taking a case history
- Assessing the information
- Selecting techniques
- Choosing appropriate homework
- Creating a therapeutic treatment plan.

Inform the client:

- About hypnotherapy
- The mind-body connection
- Fertility Awareness Education.

Case study:

- Assessing and creating a therapeutic treatment plan.

Set the goal

The law of floatation was not discovered by the contemplation of the sinking of things.

7 KRP DV URZ D G □ □

To work effectively with fertility problems we need to understand more about what it is we are working towards. An obvious starting point is to consider what fertility is and what it means to the client. Fertility is defined as: "Capable of initiating, sustaining, or supporting reproduction. (American Psychological Association, 1994)"

I believe that when the mind and body are in a state of wellbeing, the body will naturally produce the conditions needed for reproduction. It seems that equilibrium and wellbeing are an important aspect of fertility and reproduction. We know however, that millions of people get pregnant and have babies when they are mentally, emotionally and physically unwell. So while overall wellbeing may not be necessary for fertility, it certainly seems that where there are problems, improving wellbeing and restoring balance can enhance fertility and increase the chances of having a baby. Although it is possible to work directly with the known causes of fertility problems, there is still so much that is unknown about fertility and so working towards improving psychological and physical health is more likely to address the unknown causes.

In general terms, a fertile state is a state of mental, spiritual and physical balance which is experienced as a state of wellbeing. What this actually means to each individual will be an entirely unique thing. In order to understand what this means for a particular person we can ask them a series of questions. These questions, given later in this section, are designed to get specific and detailed information about what it will be like for them to be in a fertile state. This information is an essential part of the goal for therapy and will contain all the information you need about how to approach the ongoing treatment.

Goal setting for fertility

Contemplate yourself surrounded by the conditions you wish to create.

Dr Wayne Dyer

With the treatment of any condition, the goal is vitally important. The goal needs to be realistic and achievable to ensure that the person will be capable of succeeding. A well-formed goal for therapy needs to be *SMART* and *healthy*.

- A *SMART goal* is one that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.
- A *healthy goal* is rational, flexible and consistent with reality.

Typically when someone comes to see me with fertility concerns they come with the implicit goal of having a baby. Certainly this is true in the majority of cases but there are of course those who come to see me with other goals, such as to lose weight/stop smoking/stop drinking to improve fertility , to reduce stress/stop worrying , to deal with fear of hospitals/birth/parenthood , and so on.

When I first started working in the field of fertility and clients came to see me 'to have a baby' I found myself feeling unusually stressed and pressurised. Something didn't seem quite right to me, until one day I realised that we were working towards a goal that neither I nor they had any 'control' over.

'Having a baby' is neither a SMART nor healthy goal since it is not necessarily achievable. By achievable, I mean that the person is likely to reach the outcome if they fulfil certain criteria, follow certain steps and take certain actions. Part of the challenge of fertility problems is that having a baby can never be guaranteed, and may not necessarily result, even if all the 'correct' and appropriate steps are taken.

Managing expectations

If 'having a baby' is not a suitable goal for therapy, what is? How can we manage the client's expectation that by seeing you, they will conceive and have a baby?

Although often the person has come to you with the sole motivation of having a baby, an important part of the therapeutic process involves creating this goal in a SMART healthy way, helping them recognise that the goal of having a baby might be counterproductive. To aim to achieve something that ultimately may not happen will lead to stress, anxiety, hopelessness and potential failure.

It is important, therefore, to separate the intention from the goal. Intention is a hope and a desired outcome whereas the goal must be something that can be worked towards and achieved; it should help to make the couple's intention to have a baby far more likely.

Making the distinction between intention and goal not only ensures that both you and the client are working towards something that is obtainable but minimises the likelihood of false expectations, disappointment and further feelings of hopelessness.

The essential steps to creating a SMART healthy goal

1. First explain to the client that a SMART and healthy goal will have all the following qualities:
 - A SMART goal will be: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.
 - A healthy goal will be: rational, flexible and consistent with reality.

Preparation for parenthood

Preparing for parenthood is essential for anyone wanting to have a baby. I think that it is even more important for couples who are struggling to have a child. I frequently work with couples who have been through years of trying but who have never thought about conceiving in terms of becoming parents. Couples sometimes become so focused on having a baby that they forget to think about anything from that point on.

The questions and approaches in this section are intended to:

- Highlight any concerns or fears they may have about parenthood.
- Increase confidence and prepare for parenthood.
- Highlight any conflicts between the couple about parenting.
- Encourage communication between partners and help them both to have more insight and understanding about how the other was raised.
- Help the couple to consider how they want to parent and what is important for them.
- Help the client to become a conscious parent, rather than someone who unconsciously repeats their parents' responses and patterns of behaviour. The way that we were parented is deeply ingrained in our unconscious mind and unless we are conscious of that we are likely to repeat our parents' parenting style, whether we like it or not.

How can we be good parents?

Becoming a parent can seem an overwhelming and daunting prospect for some people, and they may feel that they don't know where to start. Many people have heard and seen differing and conflicting ideas about how to parent and may be confused about what is the 'right' and 'wrong' way of going about it.

Maggie Chapman, therapist and Chief Executive of META charity (Mind Education Through Awareness) talks about the three functions of being a parent: to create physical and emotional safety, to love, and to nurture. Sharing this with your client may give them a good place to start thinking about how they want to parent. They can then ask themselves, 'How can we create a safe, loving, and

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nurturing environment for our child? Understanding their parental role in this way can also inform them about how they would handle day-to-day situations throughout that child's life. Essentially, if you are providing safety, love, and nourishment for your child in any given situation, you will be successfully fulfilling your role as a parent. You can encourage your clients to think and talk about how this could be applied in different situations as your child grows through life.

Ask the following questions:

- Why would a baby want to be born into your household?
- Why wouldn't a baby want to be born into your household?
- What do you trust in your partner?
- What don't you trust in your partner?
- What do you feel safe about in your relationship?
- What do you like about your present relationship with your partner?
- How do you think having a child would alter your relationship?
- What aspects of being a parent do you look forward to?
- What aspects of parenting do you think you wouldn't like?
- How confident do you feel in your ability to be a mother? (Scale 0–10)
- What do you believe needs to change for you to become a good parent?
- What kind of parents do you want to be?
- What do you believe is fundamental for a child's wellbeing?
- What are the qualities and values you want to instill in your child?
- How are you going to help your child to become self-sufficient, emotionally secure and able to function in the world?

Hypnotic tools

- *Pseudo-orientation / Future Pacing*: to create a clear idea of their child as a '25-year-old' who is self-sufficient, emotionally secure and able to function in the world in a healthy way.
- *Visualisation*: being the parents they want to be.
- *Resource Gathering*: to access the qualities that the client feels they need to be the parent they would like to be, for example, patience.
- *Polarity Exercise*: to create acceptance of all possibilities. This is very good for those who demand perfection of themselves as a parent. Example:
I allow myself to make mistakes and get it wrong as a parent, and I very much look forward to it. I also allow myself to be a fantastic parent and do all the right things, and I very much look forward to it.

Self-help / Homework

- Ask your clients to watch and observe other people and how they parent and ask themselves how they would do it differently. Ask them to discuss it with each other and find out how they would choose to do it.
- Ask your clients to think of someone whom they think is a good parent. What do they do that lets you know they are a good parent? Watch them and talk to them, in order to find out more about their attitude to parenting.
- Give your clients a few questions to go home with, that they can reflect on and discuss with their partner in between sessions:
 - What are my core values? And what are yours?
 - What values do we want our children to have?
 - How was I raised? How were you raised?
 - What do I like and dislike about how I was raised? What do you like and dislike?
 - The most important thing I learnt about raising children when I was growing up was What did you learn?
 - What things have we both decided are not negotiable (for example: completing school)?

7:11 Breathing

Can be done without formal hypnosis.

Brief description

The 7:11 Breathing exercise takes its name from the length of the inhale and exhale. This technique can be demonstrated to the client by placing the palms of your hands on the diaphragm (base of your ribs) with your fingers pointing towards each other. You then breathe in for the count of seven, pause for a moment and then exhale for the count of eleven. This breathing is done in through the nose and out through the mouth. The exhale is done as if breathing out through a straw. Your shoulders should remain relaxed throughout and your hands should move apart as your ribs expand to indicate abdominal diaphragmatic breathing. The script below can be used as a guide, but the best way to teach the 7:11 is by demonstrating it to the client and getting them to practise it in front of you.

Main aims

- 7RLQGFHFD]DWQDQ HGR DWR XWEUHKWMP XDWKHERG V] natural relaxation response.
- 8 VHDVHDKHSWRRC] WDE HGRQHDVUH]XDUHD]DWQH]HEVHRU] used for instant relaxation in a stressful situation.

When would you use it?

- This should be taught to everyone who is feeling stressed or anxious unless they already have a technique they are using effectively.
- This breathing technique is particularly good for panic attacks and phobias.

Contraindications

- This is not suitable for people who feel more anxious when they focus on their breathing.

Script

If you ever feel stressed, anxious or fearful you can use this deep breathing technique which is called the 7:11 to regain control and to induce a feeling of relaxation in your body and mind. Breathe in slowly and gently through your nose for the count of seven. Pause for a brief moment before exhaling out through your mouth for the count of 11. Continue to focus on the counting as you breathe. Repeat this until you feel calm and relaxed. You will know that you are engaged in diaphragmatic breathing if your hands move apart as you inhale.

How can it be adapted?

If breathing in for seven and out for the count of eleven is too difficult, it can be adapted to 3:5. The important thing is to slow the breathing down and elongate the out-breath.

Source

Joe Griffin and Ivan Tyrrell (Griffin and Tyrrell, 2007, p. 85–6)

10 to 1 Self-Hypnosis

Brief description

When the client is in a state of deep hypnotic relaxation you can then teach them this *Self-Hypnosis* technique. Include suggestions for regular practice and easy learning. Upon awakening the client, explain the steps for entering hypnosis once more. Then ask them to demonstrate it. Once they have been into and out of the trance, answer any questions they may have regarding this practice.

Main aims

- To induce relaxation through entering the hypnotic state.

- Self-help tool which can be used for affirmations, visualisations and other hypnotic techniques.

When would you use it?

- For clients who would benefit from a systematic and structured approach to entering trance.
- To teach someone the skill of *Self-Hypnosis* for affirmations, visualisations or other hypnotic homework.

Contraindications

- This technique is not recommended for people with low mood or depression because of the suggestions for drifting 'down' which could exacerbate symptoms.

Script

I am now going to teach you self-hypnosis ... you will learn ... how you ... all by yourself ... can go into this wonderfully relaxed state ... all you have to do is to ... find the time and the place where you can ... be comfortable ... and have a reasonable chance of being undisturbed ... you then make yourself comfortable ... you can sit down or lie down ... as long as you are comfortable ... you then gently allow your eyelids to close ... and with your eyes comfortably closed ... you begin ... silently and mentally ... to count down from ten to one ... you count slowly ... at the same rate as you breathe out ... or even at every second out-breath ... that will slow you down ... and with each descending number ... between ten and one ... you are going to become ... one tenth more relaxed ... ten per cent more relaxed ... with each descending number ... each descending number ... will help you to ... go one tenth deeper ... into that wonderful ... hypnotic state of relaxation ... the light trance state ... that in any event ... will become deeper and deeper ... as you practise ... and when you reach the number one ... you will be as deeply relaxed ... as deeply in the trance ... as you are now ... in fact ... you might go much deeper ... because each time you practise ... you become more proficient ... and each time ... you go deeper than before ... now ... when you are in this relaxed state ... you can give yourself positive ... beneficial suggestions ... (insert relevant suggestions about how they

I recommend *The Fertile Body Method* to any therapist looking for a coherent plan to maximise fertility and treat psychogenic infertility.

Thomas Connelly D.Hyp, FBSCH, Org. sec. BSCH

The Fertile Body Method combines hypnosis and other mind-body approaches to help identify and address the mental, emotional and physical factors which affect fertility and reduce the negative effects of infertility. This is a manual for health practitioners and contains the six stages of the Fertile Body Method, which can be used to study, understand and work with all the different aspects of fertility problems. It includes a structured therapeutic framework as well as a step-by-step guide for treatment. Packed with tips, suggestions, tools and techniques this book provides practitioners with practical ways of working with each stage of treatment. The lively case history examples illustrate some of the ways that this therapeutic framework can be put into practice.

This book is suitable for those who are new to the field of fertility and mind-body medicine as well as more experienced practitioners who are looking to add to their skills and knowledge. Includes a free CD of resources which contains scripts, questionnaires, self help tools, diagrams, charts and explanation leaflets for clients.

Practitioners in this field will undoubtedly benefit from Sjanie's in-depth understanding of the complex issues infertile couples have to deal with when trying to conceive.

Lisa Jackson, clinical hypnotherapist and author

The Fertile Body Method is unique, thoroughly informative and practical. It is an extremely welcome addition to the hypnotic literature and one that is destined to become a core text.

Peter Mabbutt FBSCH, Director of Studies, London College of Clinical Hypnosis

This long awaited book is well researched, based on casebook success and provides new therapeutic insight for practitioners working with the increasing number of childless couples worldwide.

Sheila Menon, Principal LCCH Asia

The Fertile Body Method constitutes an indispensable contribution to the field of hypnotherapy and its author deserves our appreciation.

Elizabeth Muir MSc.(Psych), Ph.D. MNACHP



Sjanie Hugo is a clinical hypnotherapist specialising in fertility and related issues. She works privately in a busy central London practice and as part of a holistic team at the London Fertility Clinic at The Hale (www.thelondonfertilityclinic.com). While lecturing internationally for the London College of Clinical Hypnosis (LCCH) she developed the Fertile Body Method training for therapists, which she continues to teach throughout the world.

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