



EP 009: Your Fertility Support Team

This is the Fertile Mindset Podcast, where we explore all the emotional aspects of fertility to support you on your path to parenthood. My name is Sarah Holland. I'm the Fertile Mindset coach and a mother to two children after my own fertility challenges. I hope you find all the support and inspiration you need within this podcast, to carry you forward on your fertility journey towards your own successful outcome.

It's also my wish that through listening to these episodes, you rediscover how to enjoy life now and live it to the full while you wait for your baby.

Now let's begin today's episode.

Welcome to episode 9 of the Fertile Mindset Podcast. We'll soon be in double figures now, and I'll also soon have a big anniversary and celebration to announce! I'm going to be telling all in a special podcast episode next week, and before then I'll be sharing more about it on social media. The celebration itself starts on Sunday 14th February – yes, Valentine's Day, but that's not it! You can find out soonest by following me on Facebook at Fertile Mindset and Instagram at [fertile_mindset](https://www.instagram.com/fertile_mindset). The links are on the web page for this episode at www.fertilemindset.com/episode-009. During the celebrations I'm going to be giving away some one-to-one support with me so remember to keep an eye on social media and listen in to the next episode.

But on with today's episode first. Today we are talking about Your Fertility Support Team.

Let's look at what a fertility support team is, and why you would want one first.

I'd love to ask you – what came to mind when you saw the title Your Fertility Support Team? What did that look like to you? Was it perhaps your medical team – the nurses, doctor, clinic co-ordinator? Or was it closer to home – your partner, and any family members or friends who are supporting you? Maybe you thought of online friends from fertility groups who've become your support team. Or maybe you imagine a team offering support and guidance, but you don't yet have one yourself, and you might not be sure how to get started creating one.

So let's look at why we would want a fertility support team first.

The experience of fertility issues can be a really lonely one. Although you're experiencing something that around 1 in 8 people who try for a baby go through, when you don't know of anyone in your immediate circle of friends it can feel very isolating. Even if you do have a friend or two who can relate to your struggles, you'll still find that the majority of people you know have no understanding of what you're really going through really, and find it hard to put themselves in your shoes.

However, if you do manage to build your own fertility support team – and we'll talk about how to do that in a moment – then you'll never feel alone or lonely again. This team can be relatively small with the majority of people you know being outside of the team, but small can be mighty and powerful, and that's exactly what your fertility support team will be to you.

Imagine what it would be like to always have someone you can text or call, and know that they will listen when things get tough.

Imagine having someone who understands the complexities of the tests and treatments you are going through and who can be your go-to person when you have questions.

And imagine what it would feel like to know that you have a group of people who are all supporting you in their own unique ways, and are holding that belief with you that one day you will be holding your baby in your arms.

I understand that if you've been keeping things to yourself, you may be cautious about telling other people. I think we all approach this in our own ways, and many people tell me they choose to tell no one or just a few people because they don't want to be overwhelmed by other people's comments, advice, opinions or even how their news affects them.

Others have told me that they regretted telling so many people, and once the information is out there you can't take it back. So it's understandable if you're feeling protective of this part of your life.

When we were trying to conceive our first baby, I was already working in the world of fertility and I decided to be open about my journey with everyone. Well, not everyone. I didn't tell complete strangers but I'm sure you knew that already! On the whole, this worked well for me and there were times when I was feeling low and I was so pleased that I was with a friend who empathised and could give just the support I needed at that time.

However there were times when I wanted to take back that information too. I remember one time when I was with a group of friends. Maybe 4 or 5 of us, standing around, chatting in a circle and one of them reached out her hand, touched my belly and asked "Any news about this yet?" Everyone looked. At her, at her hand, at her hand on my belly, and at me. And then there was silence, waiting for my answer. Awkward does not even begin to describe how I felt as I said "Er... no, no news".

Still, on balance I'm pleased that I gathered such a large support team around me and I was willing to pay the price of occasional awkwardness for the amazing support that I received.

Let's look at who is on your fertility support team already, and as we do this, notice if there are any spots that need filling.

Starting with your medical team – even if you've only just started fertility investigations there may be your GP or family doctor, and if you're with a fertility clinic there may be several people that are on your team. Your doctor, the fertility nurses, and clinic or patient co-ordinator.

You may have an extended fertility treatment team with support from a nutritionist, acupuncturist, reflexologist, fertility massage therapist, or any other practitioners who are supporting you and your fertility.

Think about who you have on your team to support your mind and emotions through these challenging times. If you're a regular podcast listener, or a member of my Fertile Mindset Sanctuary, or you have one-to-one support sessions with me, then I am firmly on your fertility support team and very happy to be there!

You may also have your partner, friends, family members or other coaches or therapists making up your team. Choose people here who you can trust, feel comfortable opening up to, and can expect empathy and understanding from as well as the occasional gentle nudge to take action when it's needed, whether that's supporting you as take the step in researching fertility clinics, or to be by your side as you make complex decisions about treatment options or other paths to parenthood.

Lastly, you might already have or want to look for members of your support team online. There are fertility groups and communities all over the internet and on every social media platform.

I started my fertility journey back in 2004 when Facebook was just a college project for Mark Zuckerberg, and Twitter and Instagram were still years away. Way back then people came together on forums or message boards, and when I decided to try for a baby I searched for and found a forum that was all about pregnancy and parenting. As soon as I realised that we had fertility issues, I found support for this too on this very active and helpful forum. I think there were over 3,000 members at the time and after a few years a group of 30 of us decided to create our own little forum of friends. We'd all become very close, had met up in person several times, and knew that we wanted to keep in touch even if the forum closed down – which it actually did a short while after! This group of online friends gave me the most amazing support while I was dealing with fertility issues. They listened, they empathised, I was sent flowers after a pregnancy loss, and I was recommended to a specific clinic when one friend recognised that I had the same fertility issues as her (which hadn't been picked up by my own doctor). I booked into that clinic, and the next time I was pregnant I was given exactly the right support to stay pregnant. And now I have a 13 year old son who most likely wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that group of online friends.

They were an invaluable support through our adoption process too, and a big group of these fabulous online friends visited when our second baby boy arrived. We're all still in touch, supporting each other through parenting now and some of the babies are now adults. Who'd have thought online friends would stay in touch for so long?

So if you're not ready to tell many or any people in your family or group of friends, this doesn't mean you can't find the support of friends elsewhere. Look online and you'll find people who get exactly how you feel, and you have the option of using an anonymous name when you post online or look for private groups where you can talk without others eavesdropping. We have a wonderfully supportive group for the Blossom and Bloom levels of my Fertile Mindset Membership. It's on Facebook and set as private, so no one other than me and the other members can even see that you're in the group or anything you post. It's a lovely safe place to give and receive support, and several of our members have created friendships and met up in person too.

Now we've looked at the different people who could be on your fertility support team, do you have any spots that need filling on that team? If you do, do you have any thoughts about who could fill these spots, or where you could look for the right people?

Remember my hand is firmly up to be a member of your team! You can join the Sanctuary at www.fertilemindset.com/sanctuary or email me at mail@fertilemindset.com I'd love to hear from you and we can talk about how I can best support you and be a valuable member of your team.

Once you have your team in place, it's then important to keep your team close. This could mean talking to them whenever you need support or guidance and thanking them for the support they give you, but I want you to keep your team close in another way.

Once you have your team assembled, I want you to hold them close in your heart. You can do this now even if you feel there are some empty spots.

This team of people are on your side. They understand how much you want to have a baby, and they're holding this dream for you close to their hearts too. I'm going to guide you through a short visualisation now. Please only do this if you are able to do so, and absolutely not if you're driving ok?! And I'd like you to revisit this visualisation often, so you can remember that you are held and supported.

Ok, so take a moment to make sure you're sitting comfortably, ideally with your feet flat to the ground. Close your eyes if you're happy to do so, and become aware of the natural rhythm of your breath. As you sit here, in this present moment supported by where you are sitting and where your back is resting, bring to mind every single person who is supporting you on your fertility journey. The medical team, doctor, nurse, clinic staff. Other practitioners taking care of your health and wellbeing. The people you go to when you need a cry, or some practical support. Anyone who is in your life who gives you support.

Now imagine that they are standing around you now in a big circle, holding hands, and creating a safe space for you. Each of them are looking at you with loving, kind eyes, and have a smile that tells you how much they care about you and your dream to have a baby. Each person is here to support you, and you can rely on this fertility support team that has been created just for you.

If there are any spaces in your team, take a moment now to call in whoever would be a good fit. Say "I am open to welcoming new people into my support team". Trust that you will find the right people, or they will find you. Be open to all possibilities. You deserve this support.

Now take one last look around this circle of your support team around you. Connecting with each person in turn, looking into each other's eyes and sharing a smile.

As you get ready to come back, wiggle your fingers and toes, and gently open your eyes.

I hope you enjoyed that little visualisation and I hope you return to it whenever you wish to remind yourself of the support team that surrounds you.

Let's end with a recap of today's episode:

First we talked about what a fertility support team is and how when you have a support team you'll never feel alone or lonely again.

Then we talked about how it's a personal decision when deciding who to tell about your fertility situation, and how there are pros and cons of telling more people.

Next we looked at who is on your support team now, all the different places they can come from, and whether there are any spots that need filling.

And lastly I took you through a visualisation to keep your team close to you at all times.

I hope that you are on your way now to creating a fertility support team that meets all your needs. For most of us the path we take to become parents is unexpected, and much longer and more challenging than we ever imagined it would be. You do not need to do this alone. You are not meant to do this alone. Reach out for support, build your team, and know that we're all cheering you on.

That's it for today's Fertile Mindset Podcast. I look forward to speaking to you next time, when I'll be sharing the big anniversary and celebration details with you.

Thank you for listening to the Fertile Mindset Podcast.

If the topics talked about here sounded like I was speaking directly to you and your thoughts, then I would really love to invite you into the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary.

This is my fertility support membership, where you can free yourself from stress, worry and any emotions that don't feel helpful, so you can then create a naturally supportive mindset, your Fertile Mindset.

In the Sanctuary I'll guide you through using the emotional healing technique I use at Fertile Mindset called EFT, and you'll soon be feeling less stressed and more joyful.

If you're not already in the Sanctuary, do come and join us now, starting with the BUD level of membership, which is completely free of charge.

Go to www.fertilemindset.com/sanctuary to join, and then watch the welcome class, which will give you a fast start into taking back control over the emotional side of your fertility.

I look forward to seeing you there, and at the next episode of the Fertile Mindset Podcast.