



EP 010: 20 Years of Fertility Support

Hello and welcome to episode 10 of the Fertile Mindset Podcast. I hope you're well and finding useful support and inspiration within these podcast episodes. It can be so useful to hear someone talking about the things we are experiencing. It validates our experience, shows us we're not alone in how we're feeling, and may even give us permission to feel those emotions more fully and start to work through and beyond them. That's what I hope. That by listening in each week, you are being supported on your own journey into emotional wellness and resilience, because this will be so important to you on your fertility journey. Whatever path you are taking, feeling strong and supported will make the path easier and smoother, and help you keep going when you face obstacles or setbacks.

Now, this episode is slightly different in that I want to tell you a little something about my own journey in the world of fertility support, and what brought me to be at this point where I now have the Fertile Mindset Podcast, and other ways of supporting you as you try for your baby alongside all the challenges that fertility issues bring.

You may have heard me mention in recent episodes that I was coming up to a special date and celebration, and a few days ago on Sunday 14th February I shared what this was. 14th February this year marks 20 years, two whole decades, since I took my first steps into fertility support work.

To celebrate this milestone I am holding a completely free of charge Fertile Mindset Support Circle session on 23rd February. These sessions are usually only within the paid membership levels of the Sanctuary, so I'm excited to be hosting a bigger Support Circle that is open to everyone. Now, if you're already have a membership of the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary on the free or paid levels a space for you has already been saved. You will be sent the link to join and you don't need to register. But everyone else, please go to www.fertilemindset.com/supportcircle to register your free spot. This live session will be a chance to ask for support with whatever challenges you have on your fertility journey, to be guided through using EFT tapping to help you work through these challenges and de-stress, or you can just listen and soak up support and inspiration from the session. You can show up however you wish to. There is no right or wrong, just come along and receive support.

These Support Circle sessions happen twice a month for Sanctuary members who are the paid levels of membership, and this is a one-off opportunity to join a Support Circle for free. It's happening at 8pm UK time on Tuesday 23rd February. It won't be recorded so if you can, clear your calendar and join us. If you don't already know EFT, don't worry. When you register you'll be guided to some resources to quickly learn the basics of EFT in as little as 10

minutes. And of course, during the session itself you'll be able to ask any questions you have. I'm really looking forward to spending this time with you, and I hope you can make it. The page once again to register is www.fertilemindset.com/supportcircle

So, back to today's episode and what I'm going to share on this 20th anniversary of my work in the world of fertility support.

First I'll share how my journey into fertility support began and what I noticed so early on that changed the whole direction of the support I offer.

I'm going to touch on how my own fertility journey ran alongside my fertility support work and how this massively accelerated my learning.

And also I'll share what has happened in my 20 years of fertility support, what my main focus is now and why, and what I hope for in the next 20 years.

Wow there's a lot in pack into this episode, so let's begin.

Twenty years ago, on 14th February 2001 I opened the door to my first paying client in my brand new therapy practice. I was nervous but excited to finally be following my dream of self employment, doing meaningful work and truly enjoying my work for the first time.

I had got to this place at the relatively young age of 23 after leaving college 3 years earlier with no clear direction of what I wanted to do with my life. I knew that I wanted to find a job, any job, that would pay me enough to buy my first home with my new fiancé, who is now my husband and he still had a couple of years left at university. So I took the first job I found which was working for a bank in their huge call centre, taking continuous calls all day long from customers answering questions about their bank account, taking loan and credit card applications and selling PPI, payment protection insurance which from the outset I was very careful to make sure was needed, much to my managers' annoyance when I didn't meet the PPI sales targets. Now years later, the banks have been forced to pay back all this mis sold PPI and I feel vindicated and just a bit smug too. So you could say I wasn't really suited to the world of banking, and for the short time I was in employed work I worked for many different companies, but mainly in call centres with my average stint being around 3 months, and the shortest just 5 days.

In 1999 I was in a particularly brain numbing call centre job where our team of 10 people would average under 100 calls a day. So that's less than 10 calls per person each day, and these were quick calls lasting a couple of minutes each logging repair requests for computers and printers. So if you've done the maths, you'll know that in my 9 to 5 day I was actually working for about 20 minutes. I have never known boredom like it. I would read a lot of books between calls, and surf the internet which was pretty new and exciting at the time. I'd spend much of the day planning my upcoming wedding, and also researching what else could I do as a career. So at my work desk one day I booked myself on to a reflexology practitioner training course, which would start the week after I returned from my honeymoon in September 99. Reflexology had been the one thing that had helped me completely recover from 2 years of painful IBS symptoms, and I was interested to learn more about it. And hopefully it would give me direction into a brand new career.

After the training, exams and finally qualifying, and after a house move to a new town and setting up a workspace in our new home, and then placing an ad in the local paper, I took my first client booking for 14th Feb 2001.

This first client wasn't coming for fertility support. It was back pain if I remember correctly, but within the first week of being in practice I was receiving bookings for pregnancy and then fertility support. In our training, which had been general and covered every area of anatomy and physiology, and health and wellbeing, we were told that this training was just the beginning, and that we should research each health condition as it came to us. So this is what I did when I was supporting couples with fertility issues, having IVF, or recovering from pregnancy loss. I read tons of books, attended fertility trainings, and soon found myself specialising in the areas of fertility, pregnancy and birth. I didn't have any children myself, or any desire yet to have a baby, but I loved the work and threw myself into it. It was amazing seeing positive shifts in health and wellbeing for the women and men who came to see me for reflexology, but the more I supported people dealing with fertility issues, the more I felt like something was missing. I felt like I was lacking the necessary skills and support to help with what I beginning to see as one of the biggest challenges they were facing. This was the emotional struggle.

The hour of reflexology they received from me would leave everyone I treated feeling blissfully relaxed, but I saw that every time they returned for their next appointment, their stress levels had once again rocketed sky high. The training I had received in reflexology mainly focused on physical health and wellbeing, but as I became increasingly interested in emotional health and wellbeing, I began to develop my treatments. I learned reflexology techniques to work with the endocrine system and calm the stress response, I explored chakra work, and I had a dream of creating "Emotional reflexology" although I didn't yet know what that would look like.

While I researched and trained, I still felt at a loss to truly support my fertility clients with their heavy emotional baggage, and would refer them on to counsellors, hypnotherapists or to their doctor for the emotional work and support so they urgently needed.

Around this time I kept hearing about a new technique called EFT which stood for Emotional Freedom Techniques. Many of my therapist friends were talking about it, claiming that it could work on any emotional issue, and bring results where everything else had failed. And it did this by tapping on points on the head, face, body and hands. To say I was sceptical would be an understatement. I thought it sounded utterly ridiculous. My personal experience of emotional therapy had included months of grief counselling, and many hypnotherapy sessions for my phobia of needles. Both had taken a lot of time and effort to make an even small shift, so I couldn't see how tapping on your face would make any difference at all.

I wasn't willing to look into it at all, until one day in 2003. I remember it so clearly. I was the co-chair of a local reflexologists group. I'd set up the group with a friend on the agreement that she would chair all the meetings because I didn't do public speaking, and that had been working well, with me supporting the admin side of the group. But my friend was going on

holiday and it was left to me to chair the next meeting. I was terrified. We had 20-30 members and would meet in a local hall every month to share and support, have discussions, and further our knowledge and training. The chair was an important role in the meeting, and needed to organise and guide the discussions. My lifelong fear of public speaking meant that I was filled with horror. I knew I had to do it, but I couldn't even think about it. As the date got closer, I was still hearing about EFT everywhere. Then on one day a leaflet promoting EFT training was posted through my door AND I saw a post on an online forum for therapists offering free EFT sessions for phobias. What did I have to lose? I had a phobia, I could try this technique, and if it didn't work I could ignore everything I was hearing about EFT and probably then cancel the meeting too because I couldn't bear to go ahead with it feeling as scared as I did.

I decided to go for it and booked an EFT session with a guy called Jonathan who was newly qualified in EFT and offering free sessions in exchange for testimonials if the results were good. He emailed EFT tapping instructions and a diagram of where the points were, and because we lived hundreds of miles apart from each other, we met for the first session on the phone. This was before Zoom was available for online meetings.

I started the session feeling sceptical but trying to keep my mind as open as possible, and within 20 minutes of the first session I felt my fear completely dissolve away. It was amazing. We had started to work on my memories of speaking to groups of people – in school and college mostly because I'd refused to do it since in any work place. And as I thought about these memories after using EFT, I felt relaxed and even wished I could go back and give them another shot. This meant I was also feeling relaxed and even excited about chairing the reflexologists group meeting.

I was amazed by how quickly this technique worked and how powerful it was, and once I'd successfully chaired the meeting, I went on to explore what else I could use EFT on.

I used it on myself, I shared it with friends, and then I signed up for the professional training and started using it with my fertility clients. And that it is where my journey into fertility support really took off, and lead to me founding Fertile Mindset and everything I do today.

But before I jump ahead I want to answer a common question I often get asked by clients and in interviews. Did I choose to specialise in fertility support because of my own fertility challenges? Well, yes and no, but first it was no.

As I said, I started my research and support with fertility and also pregnancy and birth long before I knew I would have fertility issues. In fact when I first began this work I didn't know if I would ever have children, so it wasn't an area that had any personal interest for me. But it was through using EFT, working on my own fears, issues and resolving past traumas, including the story of my own birth that had instilled deep rooted fears in me about childbirth. And it was through doing this work that I then discovered that I did want to have a baby. And once I decided, I wanted to be a mother now.

This was in 2004 and it was the start of a 3 year journey before I met my baby boy. So yes, I did have fertility issues myself, actually both me and my husband did, and it was because of

the knowledge I'd gained through my work that it only took 3 years. I know it could have taken so much longer. I'd love to share my fertility story and all the learnings from it another time on the podcast. But for now, I can tell you that having first hand experience of what it means to have fertility issues gave me such an insight into what my clients were experiencing. I continued to support people on their fertility journeys while navigating my own long path to motherhood, and I know that this massively accelerated my learning, on both the practical and emotional aspects of fertility.

It was when I was on maternity leave that I created my first online resource for the fertility community. It was an ebook called *Overcoming Infertility with EFT*. This book is still for sale online at the Natural Fertility Shop and is also within the many resources in my fertility support membership, the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary.

When I returned from maternity leave I continued to grow both my reflexology and EFT practices with a big focus on fertility. People who were local to me would come to my clinic at home and receive both reflexology and EFT, and I was also getting more and more clients for fertility EFT support through online consultations. Actually a lot were on the phone too because not everyone had Skype, and Zoom didn't exist yet.

It was the emotional support and transformation through using EFT that really interested me though. I was seeing such amazing results that were changing the whole experience of having fertility issues for so many people. I was excited about developing this much needed fertility support, and reaching as many people as possible with it, but as a mum to a pre-schooler my time was limited and a big part of it was still used to give reflexology treatments in my busy practice.

So 10 years ago I made the big, heart wrenching decision to let go of reflexology. I was walking in London with a lovely friend on a starry night. She is an EFT practitioner too and we'd been talking about our businesses and our plans. As I shared the decision I was making with her, I threw my hands up to the sky to release my love of reflexology up into the stars. I gave thanks to all this therapy had given me and my many clients, and we both whooped and cheered and celebrated my decision. I will never forget that moment. Letting go of Reflexology to free up space for me to focus fully on developing my approach to using EFT for fertility support, but there was one more thing I needed to do.

I'd closed my diary to taking any more new reflexology appointments, but I was still receiving regular enquiries for Fertility Reflexology. My reputation had grown over the past few years, and I realised I didn't know any other local reflexologists who were as experienced in fertility support as I was, to refer them on to. So as a final goodbye to my beloved reflexology, I created a two day training course for Reflexologists to learn the information and skills to fully support their fertility clients. I ran this course many times over a couple of years and as soon as I saw some of my students really running with all they had learned and developing their own reflexology training courses, I knew it was time to stop.

Since then my full-time focus on Fertility and EFT has lead me support many more people in one-to-one consultations, run fertility EFT workshops and online webinars, speak at fertility conferences all over the world, and run online fertility events with audiences of up to

10,000 people. I was invited to be a member of the Alpha Zita team, holding fertility retreats in Greece, and I was invited to speak about fertility issues on BBC news. One of the big projects I took on was to launch the first only summits specifically for fertility, and this led me interviewing the authors of the books I read to help me conceive my baby – my two fertility heroines Dr Marilyn Glenville and Toni Weschler as well as many other amazing fertility experts who I've been honoured to work alongside.

My aim has always been to reach as many people as possible with effective fertility support, so this is why my focus now is on this podcast, and continuing to create weekly episodes, and my membership, the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary.

I have a little story to share about how the Sanctuary came to be actually. After I wrote my first ebook, *Overcoming Infertility with EFT* I created a number of other online fertility support resources. Short courses and programs supporting many areas of fertility. I used to sell these separately, and ran short fertility support programs lasting 5 weeks. However I realised that these small tasters of fertility support were only showing people a tiny amount of what was possible, and I knew that not everyone had the budget for one to one support and I only had limited hours for this too. So I made the decision to gather up all the fertility support resources I'd created over the years, add in some live support and a Facebook group to provide connection, and package this all into what is now the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary membership. I priced it at an affordable £29 a month and members can stay as long as they wish – there's no long term commitment, although I soon saw that people were staying for the long term and continuously accessing all the support they needed. And then more recently I've added a free starter level of membership called BUD, the £29 level is now called BLOSSOM, and I added a premium level called BLOOM which also gives an hour of one-to-one support with me included in the membership.

Alongside these 3 membership levels to suit everyone's needs and budget, I've also developed the Sanctuary to include a Pay It Forward scheme to make the £29 level free for people who can't afford it, a tree planting scheme which means that for every monthly payment received a tree is planted to help protect the future of our planet for our children and future children, and we also now send out a beautiful Sanctuary wristband to every member on a paid level so you can keep our support close by and be reminded how strong you are.

I love what we've created in the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary. It's a very special place. I know that this will continue to be my main focus, as it gives such a deep level of support that I know is so needed on a fertility journey.

And what will the next 20 years hold for me and my fertility support work? I don't know. When I think of how much has happened and changed in the last 20 years, I can't begin to imagine what could happen given that time again. As always I'm open to all ideas and potential. I feel that a book is there. I'd love to write a book that gives the reader the support and framework to begin their journey into emotional wellness while they wait for their baby. And I'd love to travel more once we can after Covid, have more in person Fertile Mindset events, meet more people. And I'd love to see emotional support as standard

alongside fertility treatment in clinics. I already work with some amazing clinics who understand and embrace emotional support for their patients, and hopefully this will be widespread in the few years. Because when we feel emotionally strong and resilient, we can think about and go ahead with treatment more easily and comfortably. We can look at all options to create a family clearly and calmly. And we can continue to live our lives to the full while waiting for the baby too. All of this is so important, and I look forward to continuing to support you in doing this, through this podcast, through the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary, and also at the upcoming free Support Circle session which is usually only available in the paid levels of the Sanctuary.

I mentioned it at the start but I'll give the link to register again. It's www.fertilemindset.com/supportcircle. Register your free place on the 23rd February Support Circle there, and you'll also be welcomed into the BUD level of Sanctuary membership. It's free forever and you won't even need to enter any card details to join.

Remember if you are already a Sanctuary member on any level, free or paid, you do not need to register for the Support Circle next week. You are already on my list of people to send the link to the Support Circle to.

If you have any questions about the Support Circle, the Sanctuary membership, or anything at all, feel free to email me at mail@fertilemindset.com. I'd love to hear from you.

One last thing I want to mention before we finish today, is that I am now on the new Clubhouse App hosting amazing fertility support rooms with live chat every week. You can find me on there @fertilemindset and the rooms are on Mondays and Tuesdays at 7pm UK time. If you're on Clubhouse already please find and follow me. And if you're not yet on Clubhouse and would like to be, please email me and I'll let you know how to join. It's invite only at the moment, and also only for iPhone so contact me at mail@fertilemindset.com if you'd like to join us for some conversations and support there. Maybe I'll see you there, or at the Support Circle next week.