



EP 014: Be Kind to Yourself

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.

Hello and welcome to episode 14 of the Fertile Mindset Podcast. Now, there's one clear message in today's podcast, and that is to be kind to yourself. It might sound simple, but I can almost guarantee that it's not an intention that's frequently at the front of your mind. And it's more likely that criticism, judgement, blame, and frustration directed towards yourself takes centre stage more often than kindness. The sad thing is that when we face the big challenges in life – like fertility issues – this is when we need to have that kindness towards ourselves the most. We crave kindness from others and may seek it out and be grateful to accept kindness when it's shown, but in those real times of need, kindness from and to ourselves is likely to be more lacking than ever. It's when we're under the most pressure and stress, that we feel overwhelmed and act out of fear and have more negative thoughts about everything, including ourselves.

So, what I'd like to do in today's episode is not only encourage you to be kinder to yourself – and give you the reasons why this is a good idea – but also give you some easy steps to bring more kindness into yourself each and every day. Does that sound good? Ok then, well let's begin.

First let's look at what it means to be kind to yourself. The dictionary definition of kindness is: the quality of being generous, helpful, and caring. Generous, helpful, and caring. Now if we look into the etymology, the root of where the word kind comes from, it's from the Middle and Old English words spelt *k i n d e* and *c y n d e*. These words meant to be natural, native, and innate, and later evolved into meaning "with natural feelings." From this we can see that being kind to ourselves and others is our natural state. It's only when we are under pressure that we switch to something that isn't natural – the tendency to berate, blame and shame. Of course, it isn't natural! It doesn't feel good and rarely achieves anything, whereas kindness...

What are the benefits of kindness? In Dr David Hamilton's book *I Heart Me* – the science of self love, he refers to kindness towards ourselves as self-compassion. The wonderful thing about David Hamilton's work is that his science background means that he backs up

everything he writes about with solid scientific research. In the section of the book about self-compassion he refers to the practice of it as a triple anti-inflammatory, because it reduces inflammation in three scientifically proven ways. Self compassion reduces biological inflammation, inflammation towards the self (which we call self criticism), and inflammation in relationships where the research strongly linked hostility in relationships with a hardening of the arteries which lead to the research being named Hard Marriage, Hard Heart.

Whilst all three areas are fascinating and important when looking at our health and wellbeing related to fertility, I want to focus on the biological inflammation and share the research findings with you. We know that excess inflammation in the body can cause various fertility and health problems, so this research is so useful. Plus, it will give you a very easy, practical way to increase self-compassion and kindness towards yourself, and therefore reduce inflammation in your body.

In the 2009 study 33 people were enrolled into a 6-week program of learning and practicing tools for self-compassion including the Buddhist loving kindness meditation. There was also a control group of 28 people who didn't take the course and instead attended group discussion sessions about health. After the 6 weeks both groups were tested to see how their bodies responded in a stressful situation. The group who had taken part in the self-compassion exercises had much less inflammation present in their bodies. In addition to this the study also proved that those who practiced the most each week had lower levels of inflammation than those who practiced less.

So, if we're encouraged by this research to practice more self-compassion and kindness, we also want it to be an easy practice that we can do regularly.

One powerful way, as mentioned in the research, and the I Heart Me book is the loving kindness meditation. This is a beautiful practice that we can use daily in around 10 minutes. I have included a link to a recording of this meditation in the podcast show notes at www.fertilemindset.com/episode-014. You can also find links to all the books I have mentioned in this podcast on that page.

Now, we often find it easier to be kinder to others than we do towards ourselves, and one way to turn that back towards ourselves is by paying attention to and being conscious of our self talk, our inner monologue, and our thoughts. Let's look at the power of our thoughts and think of this in terms of the thoughts we have about ourselves, and whether we are being kind or not.

In Michael Neill's book *The Inside Out Revolution* he talks about the creative principle of thought, from the three principles work by Sid Banks. He said it's very important to remember that "you're only one thought away from happiness, and you're only one thought away from sadness". He went on to say that the secret lies in thought and it's the missing link to happiness that everyone is looking for. Everyone is given this gift to walk through life and see what we want to see, see things how we choose to see them. You have the freedom to see as a free thinker. Now we all know that we have thoughts, a constant stream of thoughts all day every day. That isn't news to us, but it's the quality of those thoughts that have the power to make a huge difference to the quality of your life. Choose to think good, supportive, kind things about yourself and it will change your whole experience of how you see yourself within your life, and of course within your fertility journey.

Drawing on what I've talked about during this episode, I'd now love to give you some easy steps to bring more self kindness into your life. You could do a few or do them all! And why not? They're all super quick and easy to do.

- Firstly, look at the thoughts you have about yourself. Start to become aware of them and really listen to what you are saying. Then as soon as you've heard something unkind, flip your self talk to kindness. So, if you've made a mistake, instead of saying "I'm so stupid, I'm always making mistakes" think what you would say to a friend and say it to yourself. This might be soothing words to comfort such as "you're only human, it's ok to make a mistake, or it's ok anyone could make that mistake.". Or maybe you could laugh at the comedy value of the situation that works for you!
- Also, if you're feeling worried or nervous about something, instead of playing your worries on a loop in your mind, flip this to kindness by saying "you can do this, I believe in you, you're stronger than you think."
- Another way to bring in self kindness if you use EFT tapping, is that when you tap add in the words to each tapping round: "I choose to show myself kindness and compassion". Whatever you are working on with EFT, these words will encourage your mind and your thoughts towards kindness, and back to your natural and most supportive mindset.
- An easy one to do every day, several times a day, which the wonderful Louise Hay was a big fan of was that whenever you look into the mirror, look yourself in the eyes and say "I love you" out loud. It might feel a bit cringy at first, but the more you say it the more you will feel it and kindness starts to flow towards yourself in those moments.
- In fact, using the mantra "I love myself" throughout the day whenever you have free moments and spaces between your thoughts, is very powerful. You can read all about Kamal Rakivant's experience with taking on this mantra and how it changed his life in his brilliant book Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends On It.
- It can feel like self care and pampering like taking a long bath or giving yourself a pedicure can be seen as kindness towards ourselves, but I suggest that to make them acts of true self kindness, you can do them with more loving intention. And you can do this while you're doing anything for yourself, whether that is washing your hair, preparing a meal, shaving your legs or anything really! Be intentional with your thoughts, in that moment that you spend doing this, is a moment of kindness to yourself. You wash your hair with kindness, enjoying the sensation of the water and shampoo, and taking care of every hair on your head. You prepare your meal with kindness knowing how much you will enjoy the food and how it will nourish your body. These acts of self kindness take no extra time but change how we experience them by ways of the words we use and the thoughts we have. It's so powerful!
- Lastly, if you do have some time to dedicate to your self kindness every day, in about 10 minutes a day, you can listen to and practice the loving kindness meditation, that has been scientifically proven to increase self compassion and reduce inflammation. And can I suggest that if finding time each day for this mediation or any other act of self kindness feels difficult, then know that giving yourself this time is yet another way to show yourself kindness. And you already did it today listening to this podcast, so I know you can do it every day.

I hope you've enjoyed this exploration into being kind to yourself, and that you enjoy making self kindness a new habit to support you, your wellbeing, your health and your fertility.

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.