



EP 025: Thinking of Yourself as a “Fertility Patient”

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 back to another episode of the Fertile Mindset Podcast. This episode is back to me again, just me, after last week inviting the lovely Hannah Vaughan Jones to join me, and next week I have another guest who I had a great conversation with and I'm looking forward to sharing that with you too. But today, you have me, talking about another Fertile Mindset topic.

In my episodes I like to share my thoughts on specific challenges that you may be facing on your fertility journey and give you support and inspiration around that challenge or topic. Having been a fertility therapist and coach for over 20 years now there are many, many things I could speak about, but I'd also love to hear from you too. Is there something you would like to hear talked about on the Fertile Mindset Podcast? Are you facing a particular challenge related to your fertility right now? Please do get in touch at mail@fertilemindset.com and let me know what you would like to hear about on this podcast.

Now, it is lovely to be back again speaking to you, and this week's episode is on something that I have seen so often, and causes so much pain. It's also quite unexpected and seems to sneak up on us. We start out trying to conceive feeling very much connected to the dream, the vision we all have of having a baby and being a mother, being a parent. After all, that's what this is all about. It may have been a dream that you've had for some time, maybe since you were a child, knowing that one day you wanted to be a parent. Or perhaps more recently you connected to the idea of motherhood, maybe after you met your partner, or got to a certain place in your life, and it just felt like the right time. You then started trying for a baby with a vision in your mind of where this will take you, to that goal, that dream of welcoming your baby. Starting to try for a baby is all about the baby and about you becoming a mother.

However, it took a little longer than you expected, and then a lot longer. And then you got to the time of going to your doctor and starting initial fertility tests. And that's a big and significant step. That's when you started to involve someone else, and it became something else. You were no longer trying for a baby and looking forward to becoming a mother. Now you were also a fertility patient. And that label, that shift to something you weren't expecting or prepared for can hit you like a ton of bricks.

I know there'll be some of you listening who always knew that you would need to be a fertility patient to become a parent, maybe because you already had a known issue with your fertility, or you're trying for a baby as a single person or in a same sex relationship. Even if you knew you would be a fertility patient, the reality of it can still be quite different to what was expected.

Through years and years of talking to hundreds, or most likely thousands of people, I know that most go into those initial fertility appointments believing, and hoping, that a reason for the fertility problems will be found. And that it will be a reason that is quickly and easily fixed. After all, isn't that what the testing is for – to find out what the problem is and then match it with a solution, and before you know it you're pregnant? But the outcome of the tests can be more complex. It may be that several possible reasons for not conceiving have been found, maybe for both you and your partner. Maybe some results are borderline or unclear, or there is no obvious solution available. Or you've been given the infamous diagnosis, that isn't a diagnosis at all, of unexplained infertility. Which can be the most frustrating of all, as you're left with no answers, no focus, and no possible solution or treatment.

And then if you do go ahead with treatment such as IVF, you may feel so certain that it would work for you first time. After all, a lot of time, effort, expense and medical expertise is being poured into this treatment. Surely it has to work? But as you later realise the odds of each fertility treatment cycle are not on the side of success, so it more often than not takes more than one cycle to achieve a successful pregnancy that results in a healthy baby at the end of it.

Once you step into the world of being a fertility patient, life can become very complicated and overwhelming. There is so much to learn about and understand, and it can feel like you're taking a fast-track education in all things fertility, not to mention statistics as you try to make sense of the charts and table of IVF success and wonder where you will fall on the chart, and research what you can do to tip the odds in your favour.

So what started as a straightforward plan to make a baby that you thought would take no more than a few romantic encounters with your other half, has now become a mission to conceive that's taking all your time, energy and money, and has taken control over your body, your relationship, your friendships, your work, your calendar, your mind and emotions, and indeed your whole life. Is it any wonder that this has become your focus, your identity even. That you now see yourself as someone with infertility or as a fertility patient.

Your mind and life is so full of everything related to fertility, that you've lost touch with the fact that you are essentially, a woman waiting to become a mother. That's what this is all really about but that vision for yourself and your future now feels elusive, distant, or maybe quite surreal. It's become all about the tests, treatments, results, waiting, clinics, doctors, needles, medications, scans, temperatures, hormone levels and so on. It's all about the trying, with no connection to the end result – that end goal, the dream, the baby.

Ask yourself now; do I think of myself as a fertility patient, a person with fertility issues, or do I think of myself as a woman waiting to be a mother? Where does your energy go, what do you feel a connection to?

Up until now you might've just been feeling that your fertility journey was becoming overwhelming, and that something was off, it didn't feel in flow. But now as you've given yourself this chance to check in and see where you are, by asking yourself: do you feel like you still have a connection to being a mother, or has it all become about the fertility journey you're on? It might feel like a wake up call. When you realise you've lost the connection to what this is actually all about – the bump, the baby, the rest of your lifetime being a mother – then it brings forward a moment of choice, to make a decision. Do you want to stay fully immersed in all things fertility and that to be your focus, or do you want to regain that beautiful connection to becoming a mother?

People have told me that when they notice that they're identifying with being a fertility patient and that's how they see themselves, it becomes difficult to imagine that there is anything else. They're so consumed by the fertility challenges, that they can't even imagine being without them. It's who they are, it's what they do. Imagine if it was all over. No more need for appointments, medication, scans and tests. Yes, that would be amazing, but you'd be surprised how many people have told me they'd feel lost without it. That they now can't imagine their life being any other way. And by that, meaning that they can't imagine it all being over and them having their baby in their arms. Or maybe you're not surprised because you can relate to this as well.

So how can we emerge from this fertility patient identity and rediscover ourselves, who we really are, and what this is all about, what it's really for?

Well, listening to this podcast today and taking time to reflect on the questions I've asked you IS your first step. You may want to pause and take more time to reflect. To think about how you've been living your life, where your mind goes, and how this is affecting you.

Also see how it feels to reconnect with the dream of having a baby and becoming a mother. Can you bring that vision to mind, or does it feel difficult?

When we first decided to try for a baby we were on holiday in Scotland in Aberdeen, and once we'd made that decision, we went to a big baby clothing and supplies shop called Mothercare. I wanted to walk around, look at the tiny baby clothes and the prams and feel that connection to becoming a mother. And so on that day we bought a small toy. A little brown and white dog, which was so so soft, soft enough for a newborn to have in their cot with them. We named that little dog Lucky to bring us luck on this new adventure into parenthood. We had no inkling at that point that it would take us years to conceive our first baby, but that little dog was a thread that took me back to my dream, my vision of being a mother, of placing Lucky the dog in my baby's crib.

So maybe there is something that brings that connection to life for you. Or something that you could do or buy now to remind yourself why you are on this journey, and that you're keeping your dream of a baby close to you, no matter how much the fertility journey and all it involves tries to separate you from it.

You could buy your own little toy, or maybe write a letter to your baby, or spend time in the room where you know your baby will sleep and just feel that connection to the new life, the new soul you want to welcome into that space.

If you feel you can, spending time with friends' babies and children can help you with that connection too, although I know this can be painful as well. And this is where I would love you to use EFT tapping. As you know, this is the technique I use with all the support I give at Fertile Mindset, as it brings real balance to your emotions, and helps you clear any thoughts and feelings that you don't need, and make way for a more supportive, calm and positive mindset.

If you don't already know how to do EFT, you can learn for free and then be supported by me in using it effectively for you and your fertility inside my membership, the Fertile Mindset Sanctuary. Whilst the paid subscription level called BLOSSOM is closed to new members at the moment, you can join the free BUD level right now and start using this very effective technique for emotional wellbeing on your fertility journey. You can join the free level at www.fertilemindset.com/sanctuary.

And then once you are familiar with EFT you can use it on any feeling of disconnect you have around having your baby and becoming a parent. You could do this by noticing what has been getting in the way. Is it the overwhelm of all the fertility research you've been doing, or is it the worry about upcoming tests or treatment? Whatever your mind is occupied

with, whatever is making your mind feel so full it could explode, THIS is what you want to apply EFT to.

Another quick and easy way to learn and start using EFT is by listening to episode 20 of this podcast. Just scroll back to find it on whatever podcast player you are on now, or you can find it on my website at www.fertilemindset.com/episode-020. In that episode I teach you EFT and then guide you through using it step by step. It's so easy, and you can use that recording for anything, including working on shifting your identity away from being a fertility patient and towards being a mother.

I would love to know how you get on with this, and what starts to change for you as you bring about this shift in how you see yourself, and the thoughts that fill your mind. It's my wish for you that you have more clarity, more space, and more joy in your life after addressing this, and that you feel more connected than ever to your dream of having a baby.

Thank you for joining me today. It's been lovely to chat with you again, and I look forward to speaking to you next week.

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.