



EP 038: Karen Deulofeu and Julia Midwinter

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 the Fertile Mindset Podcast. In this very special episode, I invited Julia Midwinter and Karen Deulofeu to join me and share their fertility stories. Now both Karen and Julia had IVF treatment, and I had the honour of supporting them both with EFT and mindset work. The positive experiences they both had of that emotional support on their fertility journeys led to them making big changes in their life and training as fertility coaches. There are honestly so many similarities in their stories, but this podcast was the first time they had met! I know you're going to love meeting these two inspiring women yourself. And if you're wanting to have emotional support and mindset work too, listen to the end where I invite you to take part in 5 Days to Fertility Calm. The link to read more and register is at www.fertilemindset.com/5days. So now, here is my conversation with Julia and Karen.

Sarah: Hello, Julia. Hello, Karen. Lovely to have you join me on the podcast today. How are you both? Julia, how are you?

Julia: Hey, Sarah. Thanks so much. Yeah. Great, thank you. I'm really excited to be here, and to be chatting to you and Karen today, in the sunshine as we've just said, sunshine and the window's closed unfortunately for the recording.

Sarah: I know, we're in the height of British summer right now, although this is going to be going out later, it's absolutely lovely to be on a warm day and for once in this country.

And Karen, how are you doing today?

Karen: Yeah, really good too, thank you. So nice to be joining you both today on this sunny day here as well.

Sarah: Lovely. Good. I'm so pleased that we've found a time when the three of us can get together because when I was thinking about this episode and how I wanted to kind of share this kind of story that you're going to share, it's going to be really interesting when we get into your stories, just both of you came to mind at once, and I don't think you have met each other before, have you? Do you. Had you met each other, or not?

Julia: No, no, I don't think we have.

Sarah: Brilliant. So yeah, you just have, like so many similarities and you followed similar paths now after your fertility journeys as well. So it's going to be really interesting to share your stories, so thank you so, so much for being here.

I thought it'd be really nice to start off with, to hear about both of your own fertility stories and, and what kind of struggles you had, what you were facing. And I know that happily now you both have your children and that's just amazing. But I wondered if you would like to both share a little bit of your story first. Julia, would you like to share your story?

Julia: Sure. Thank you, Sarah. Yeah. I think, thinking back to my story, it probably starts before I was even trying to conceive, which is a bit crazy, but I know that happens for quite a lot of us. So I got an endometriosis diagnosis when I was 30. I didn't have a boyfriend. Didn't have any thoughts of having children at that point. And I just remember the consultant saying to me, you know, you really should try and have children as soon as possible, and I just thought, how, how can you be telling me this? This is crazy. So I think just that those thoughts and beliefs about my ability to conceive started embedding my brain at that point. And so when we, I did find my husband, and we were trying to conceive, I kind of kept telling myself, oh, it's going to be really difficult because I've had this surgery and I know that endometriosis can affect fertility. So those are the kinds of thoughts that I kept going through my mind.

So we tried for a year, with no luck, and then decided to go through to IVF, or we had the normal fertility tests and then decided to move on to IVF because of the endometriosis. And I think I just kept having all this sort of this baggage behind me, of, of the surgery and what my consultants said to me, all throughout my cycles. So we ended up having four IVF cycles and I did get pregnant on the first cycle, which I thought, okay. Wow. That's amazing. Sadly, that ended in miscarriage. And I think that this, this kind of the feeling of being successful on an IVF cycle and then suddenly that being taken away is, is so distressing and it can come as such a shock as well. Like you just don't you think, oh, I've done it. I've got past the biggest hurdle, but actually, you just don't realise that there are so many other hurdles in this process and on this journey. So we did another cycle and sadly I miscarried again. It was at that point I think I really decided that I needed to do something more for myself to try and stop blaming myself for what I was going through. Stop blaming my body. Start thinking differently about my journey, and thinking differently about my, believing that I could have a child and that believing that I was meant to have a child and that I could be a good mother. Because all these thoughts were starting to appear as well, but, you know, maybe, maybe I'm just not suited to being a mum. Maybe it's just not for me in life. And I think that they were just starting to, to really damage me and make me feel really, really low. And it was at that point, Sarah, that I think I stumbled upon your Facebook group. And I, it was just so nice to be part of a community of people that really understood. And I think I just didn't have anyone in my friendship group, or my family, who really understood what it was like to be going through infertility. Like all my friends managed to get pregnant really quickly. None of my family seemed to have had any issues. So I really felt so alone. And to suddenly be drawn into your Facebook community and to be learning about new techniques, to help manage emotions and manage some of these really difficult thoughts and challenges throughout the journey was a really big turning point for me. And I continued on.

So another big impact on my emotional health was going to see an acupuncturist, which I've found so helpful and therapeutic cause I found it really relaxing at the time and I also felt that I was doing something physically to help my body. And I decided to see a fertility coach as well. So the combination of being part of a community, getting, and getting that one-to-one support, made a massive difference for me. And I genuinely, I can generally say this in all honesty. I went into my final cycle, just completely in acceptance of what the outcome was going to be. I just thought. I don't know what's going to happen, but I actually do believe it's possible for me to get pregnant and have a full-term baby this time, but if it doesn't happen

then that's okay. There is an alternative. And just to have that weight lifted off me, that pressure of it's got to work, it's got to work. I can't believe this isn't working, was, was amazing. And I think it released such a lot of tension within me, physically as well. And that final cycle was obviously the. Was the one that gave me my son.

So, Yeah, just truly grateful for your community, Sarah, and for meeting you, and kind of embarking on that process of that emotional journey, and a journey to self-development, which I'm now continuing myself.

Sarah: Gosh, that really. What you said there about the mindset you had, Julia. Before your final transfer, your final cycle. That sounded so powerful because you had both the strong belief that it really could happen, and it's absolutely possible for you to get pregnant and have a full-term pregnancy, which I know can be hard after losses. You know? So that's when it was, it seems that's when it was really highlighted for you to change your beliefs, and look at pregnancy and really have that belief there. But also having the surrender and thinking, although I truly believe this is possible I am still not in ultimate control of the outcome. So wow. What a place to get to. Thank you so much for sharing that story. And I think yours is one, as well, that's slightly more unusual, in that you kind of knew that you had fertility problems before you, or you would, could have, potential problems before you even started trying to conceive. And that's, it's shocking, isn't it to hear that when you're so young, you haven't even thought about having children yet, but it's there in the back of your mind, so you've got that kind of expectation as soon as you start, you know, you know what could happen. But then of course, like you say, when you got pregnant, you thought that would be it. You thought you'd succeeded, but then unfortunately you had a loss and again, it's, you know, it's the unexpected. So what a journey you went on and, and how it brought you to find or seek out, and find the right kind of support. I'm so happy to be a little part of that, and it sounds like you had a really good support team there, with all the different things that you were doing, so that's really lovely. Thank you for sharing your story.

Karen, I'd really love to hear what your story was as well. What was your fertility story? Where did you get to?

Karen: Thank you, Sarah. I am quite similar to Julia in a way, because mine also started way before I was trying to conceive, or even before I was in the right place to conceive.

So I was 25 at the time, on a gap year abroad, having the best year of my life in Spain and I noticed I had a bit of a bump on my tummy. My boyfriend at the time came up, he was like mmm yeah. Just blew it off. My mom was recovering from cancer, so I thought I was just being a bit paranoid about lumps and bumps and what not but went to the doctors out in Spain and they suggested I get it checked out. So when I came back at Christmas. In fact, I still thought I was just being a little bit paranoid and didn't really take it too seriously. But my boyfriend at the time pushed me on my last day in the UK, pushed me to go and see a doctor. Went to the doctor. I laid down, she pushed my tummy and she said, yeah, you're pregnant. I said, absolutely not. There's no way I could be pregnant. And she was adamant. She found a heartbeat. It wasn't a baby. It was mine. And this went on for quite a while. And she then agreed that no, I wasn't pregnant, but there was something happening so they sent me for an urgent scan, an urgent consultant's appointment. Did all of that. We realised there was something quite big happening. So I went down to Cornwall to stay with my family, and went to a consultant appointment on the Friday morning. They said, okay, you need to go and pack your bag, come back. You've got a huge ovarian cyst. We need to operate on you today. I was still a little bit in shock to learn what was happening. And he said, yeah, you. Look, this is about to burst. If it bursts you're not going to survive. You need to come back. You need to get your bag. You need to come back. We need to operate today. When we were. When I was, I vividly remember signing all the consent forms and they said look, we don't know what we're going to find when we open you up, and we might have to take everything, we might have to do a full hysterectomy. I refused to sign it. I knew I was so sure I wanted children and I vividly remember not wanting them to take that choice away from me.

And preferring to die than having that choice taken away, it was awful. So anyway, they just took an ovary. The rest was there. It was all fine, but it was along the, it was a big surgery, I've got a scar from my belly button down. I was in hospital for a couple of weeks, and I was out of action for a couple of months. But it was all such a shock and it hit me so hugely that I became obsessed with when should I start having children

The boyfriend I had at the time, wasn't, he wasn't my life partner, and I just became absolutely obsessed with, when should I start having children? When am I going to, when's going to be the last time? All this kind of thing. A couple of years later, I started having really bad pain from the site they did. I obviously got scared again, they did a laparoscopy and realised it was really heavy scar tissue, which they took away. And yeah, that was all fine for a year or so, then the pain started coming back. It was clearly scar tissue and they wanted to do more surgery to remove that, but by that point, I just didn't want anybody to touch me there at all. I wanted to keep what was there. Even though I was in severe pain for years, I just didn't want anybody to, to do anything that I don't want my chances to be, to go down even more. I was so desperately wanted children at some point in my life. But at the same time, I kind of almost had a delayed teenage rebellion, I think. And just went a little bit off the rails, just lost myself a little bit, threw myself into work, but it wasn't really my kind of thing, but I was almost two different people. I wanted this big career corporate job in case I couldn't have children, so that I could focus on something. But at the same time, I was obsessed with finding somebody who I could have children with, or maybe going out alone or I don't know, it was, it just took over everything. And I was so paranoid about this scar that I had my belly button down. I remember I would wear, like, bodysuits constantly. Like nobody would be able to see my tummy because I just was so aware of this outward sign, that there was something wrong inside. I felt less of a woman, all this kind of thing. It was really, really bad.

And then I did finally meet somebody, met my then-husband. We started trying, so that was about 10 years later, so it was quite a long period of time that I struggled with, with this kind of notion of desperately wanting children and not being in the right place. Then we started to try and pretty quickly, things didn't really happen. We went to the GP, and he did all the normal tests, but fast-tracked for IVF because of my age by that time, and because, me just having the one ovary. Even then, we went to the hospital, in fact it wasn't for IVF, he fast-tracked us, fast-tracked us for more tests, just to see what could be done. We went to the hospital, and they said straight away, let's get you started on IVF. You can start next month. Cause it was all so, it seemed so suddenly urgent again.

I was devastated that they said I needed IVF. I remember coming home, we went to the pub and my husband was so excited and so happy and he was like, look, they told us, we can do this. You just have a bit of an issue, but IVF is gonna, we're going to have our baby with IVF. If it's gonna work, it's gonna, it's gonna be fine. And I just, I just hit rock bottom again, at the thought of needing a science for me to be a mummy. And also it was a desperation as well because it felt so final to need IVF. I was terrified of what would happen if it didn't work. What would, yeah. Who would I be then? And, well, this kind of thing. And I just, although on one side I was grateful to have the opportunity of IVF. I was also utterly devastated that I needed an IVF.

Then we started the IVF journey, and we went for the, everyone was really keen for us to get going. We went for the first scan. He took a look and he said that your other tube is really badly damaged. They needed to remove it. Devastated again. It was terrifying. Just utterly awful. It sounds really silly, but I didn't want them to remove it. We went in there for a long long time. I just didn't want them to take it away. I didn't want another part of me in that space to be taken away.

Sarah: Mmm. That's understandable, yeah.

Karen: Yeah and he just didn't understand me. And in the end, he didn't take it completely. He just, they cut it and they kind of tie it at each end. So I effectively don't have the tube, but

he left it in there. But it's completely cut, so I was left with just one ovary and no tubes. I had huge, then all the emotions come out. I was utterly terrified about not being able to have children, a huge guilt that my, kind of, reckless years had potentially caused the damaged tube in some way. And yeah, all sorts of things. My husband was really positive that, you know, the reason we hadn't had, we hadn't been successful with basically the tube was so damaged it was getting through. But now we'd figured that out once we had IVF, I had an ovary, I had eggs, so IVF, in theory, should work because we have all the bits, we just need the science to put it all together.

And he was very much of the mindset that, you know, if you're positive, then things will happen and your mind creates your reality. Yeah. And we did that, but not quite in the right way. And I really vividly imagined everything. I named this baby. I imagined holding her, playing with her. It was going to be a her, I called Lilyama, which is why my business is now called Lilyama. And everything was going to be, I was going to finally have my baby. And we did the IVF, and it didn't work. I've never cried so much, for so long, in all my life. It was weeks. I just couldn't pull myself out of it, it was awful. Because I so much thought it was going to work.

And again, I hit that rock bottom. I didn't want to be here. I didn't know what was going to happen. I was all over the place. When we did the IVF with her, I still refer to her as her. I still see it as a person. When we did the IVF, we were left with, we had two embryos out of it. We had one that was not a good quality and her, that was good quality. So we were left with this one, not good quality embryo. Because she hadn't worked, I was absolutely sure that this one wasn't gonna work. So once I got out of the grief about that, not working and on the registrar again, I just kind of dismissed this other one that I thought wasn't going to work because it wasn't good quality. So, I was doing a lot. I'd found meditation a couple of years earlier and the meditations that I would do would be kind of scanning through your body, see your bits of your parts of your body and I would find that I would get to my ovary, reproductive organs section, and I just couldn't get through, it was like a black hole. It was a heavy black space. It was a cave. It was, I don't know. It was just a, just a dark space that I couldn't get through. So whilst I was mid, mid the cycles, I went to fertility shows and I looked through for other clinics because I completely dismissed this second IVF. I was looking at other clinics to start our next round and the following year, that's when I found you, Sarah, at the fertility shows. And we got talking about this, about my journey and the back space that I had, that I just couldn't get past. And we started doing some IVF, not IVF, EFT, together before that second cycle.

Sarah: I remember it so clearly; I remember so clearly you walking over to my stand and that's quite a few years ago now. Isn't it? And very rarely did I ever do any EFT with people at those shows, you know, it was just purely conversation and giving leaflets. And sharing details, you know, and getting in touch later. Because it's not usually the time or place to sit down and have a therapy session, is it? You know, it was Kensington Olympia, thousands of people there, a very public space, you know. But I could see, and I'm sure you're going to say, you know, what was going on for you at the time, what stage you were in your cycle and everything, but you just needed something there and then, you know, there was no time to wait. And luckily there was a room wasn't there? That I think it was Fertility network UK, I think, that had this little kind of chill-out room in case anyone needed a bit of space. And when we luckily got permission to use it very luckily and yeah, that was amazing to be able to be with you at that time Karen. I'm so pleased that you, you managed to stumble across my stand on that day.

Karen: Completely. I think I had a bit of a cry; probably quite a big cry with you in that room, from memory. And then yeah, we had those sessions, and it was just transformative. I couldn't believe the difference that it made. EFT was completely new to me at that stage. I was doing acupuncture and reflexology and that kind of thing, but never come across EFT. And it just made such a huge, huge, huge difference in how I saw myself, and how it kind of paused the crazy emotional roller coaster that I was on. And it's somehow it, it kind of un-

blocked this black horrible space that I had and I think a combination of that, and also similar to what Julia said, and it's difficult to articulate this properly, but almost because I didn't think it was going to work, I didn't pin all my hopes on it, and I didn't get all that kind of emotional - This has to work. I was quite fluid about it, quite calm about it, and it worked. Against all the odds. It worked. And now that's my little boy. It's my little, three-year-old crazy toddler. And yeah, it worked. And so the whole journey through infertility and then my journey during pregnancy, because I realised that it affected me a lot in pregnancy as well, the fear didn't quite, didn't leave me. And I felt like there wasn't a huge amount of support out there for that space. And I just really wanted to help people because I knew what it was like to be there. I've been there. But also to help the dads as well, because it had a big impact on our relationship, on my husband, and on me as well, obviously. So that's why I kind of went into coaching because I just needed to use my experience to help other people through their own struggles.

Sarah: That's the thing, isn't it? When we live something ourselves and gosh, that was a long period of time that you lived that as well, you know, similar to Julia, in that you knew very early on that there could be problems and then it became a focus. And we really notice the impact it has, not just while we're trying to conceive, but on our life as a whole, doesn't it? When we have fertility struggles in any way. And we have the uncertainty about whether we will ever have a baby, especially if it's something you so wanted, you know, and then suddenly there's uncertainty around it. It's yeah. It shows the true value of taking care of your emotional wellbeing. And I always think that is taking care of YOU, isn't it? It's taking care of you, because it all becomes about the baby and about your body conceiving, but this is taking care of you as a person, your emotional side of you, you know, and your, your whole life, which is what I love about both of your stories is that not only, did you have that realisation, and you got the support around you, you took the action, you had your wonderful outcomes as well, which we can only ever really wish and hope for. But you both have got your little boys now. Are they similar ages? Actually, Karen, you said your little boy is three. How old is your little boy Julia?

Julia: Yeah, he's nearly three. So yeah, very similar.

Sarah: So you've really travelled this path, like parallel ways. And you didn't even know each other.

Julia: Yeah that's funny, isn't it?

Sarah: Yeah. Amazing. And you've both taken huge steps now. I think it was quite a big change of career for both of you as well. Karen, you said you went from a corporate type career and now going into fertility coaching, was that the same for you, Julia? What were you doing beforehand?

Julia: Yeah, exactly. So in publishing. So it is quite a big, a big change. But I think, I think you just, you feel like something is missing, so you've experienced this, this big, this big part of your life and this big, huge, emotional shift, and you've done so much self-development on yourself that then carries on to the rest of your life, and you, kind of, think I'm, kind of, I'm not really done here. I feel like I need to give back, and I need to show, as Karen says, you know, provide that support to other people because it can feel so, so lonely. Even if people are on social media. And I think, you know, social media is brilliant for that, for bringing communities together, of people that are experiencing the same kind of thing. And I love seeing so many people's kind of personal fertility journey accounts on Instagram and Facebook, because you just feel that they are connecting with each other, which is brilliant. But just, just being able to support people and giving people the space to talk about what's going on. Because I think another thing that I found really hard was it was all so raw and emotional and I found it really difficult to talk to my husband about it, without getting really upset, talk to my family about it, without getting really upset.

Being upset in front of a coach is completely different to being upset in front of your family. Like you, kind of, you feel like you have to hold that emotion for them as well and so you worry that they're getting upset. So I think seeing someone neutral and sort of almost a third person in your journey, really helps take that pressure off of you, that you're not responsible for that person's emotional response to what you're going through.

Sarah: Absolutely. I think the way that you mentioned about social media, as well as fertility coaching, I think the way that we are able to navigate these journeys now has changed massively. And definitely in the time, since when I was trying to conceive my first baby, which was, well he was born in 2006 so it was a couple of years before that, 2003 -2004 is when I first started to try to conceive. And I don't know if there was any such thing as a fertility coach right then, there definitely wasn't the kind of communities on social media, although there were some online communities that I definitely found a lot of support from, but you're right, now it's so much more open and talked about, at least within the communities, even if not so much outside, you know, but the lot of recognition between us all, you know, what a struggle there says that the toll that it takes on our emotional wellbeing and on our relationship and other areas of our life. And luckily, there are fertility coaches now, you know, when I launched Fertile Mindset, which is many years ago now, with EFT coaching. And, you know, doing my own, my own kind of made up way of supporting fertility really, taking a technique that I've known about for years. And I've been using it professionally for years, but then really honing it specifically for fertility and putting my own take on it really. And put myself out there, and started supporting people.

I almost felt like I was on my own at that stage. You know. It wasn't really talked about so much. People would see acupuncturists. Absolutely. They'd see nutritionists maybe, for looking at their physical house, but there wasn't so much focus on the emotional side and in the last 13 years or so, and definitely in the last few years now, there are, there are so many more options for people aren't there? Looking for emotional support, looking for someone that you said that they can talk to, that isn't a family member or close friend that won't have any kind of bias in any way.

And, you know, cause I don't know how both of you found it, but I found that when I talk to friends and family, They would be more on the side of well don't you think you should stop, because this is so much, and it's such a struggle and I don't like to see you go through this pain, you know? And I had this certainty, like both of you did, you know, of actually I'm going to keep going and just get the support around me and I can do this. And I've got this vision of myself being a mother and I'm working towards it. And I wanted to keep that strong, you know, and not have people who cared about me telling me to stop. So I think it does make a huge difference, doesn't it? To be in front of a coach or whoever, someone you can really speak to and be honest, and they're just there holding the space for you and helping you find your own tools to move forward, because that's what coaching really is all about, Isn't it? It's bringing out what you already have. I'd love to hear both of the, both of your stories about how you really stepped into coaching then, and, and what it's been like to be a fertility coach now.

Karen, what's it like for you as a, as a mum to a three-year-old as well, and to be a fertility coach, and supporting others through this journey.

Karen: It's a little hectic. It's great. I think, I was thinking earlier, for me, also, made me shift my perspective about lots and lots of things. Going through the fertility journey myself, and thinking about corporate work and this kind of work. I would just find that I couldn't get enthused about the corporate stuff. Like a lot of other people, it just completely shifted how I saw different things. So that's partly, as well, why I came into coaching. And then when I do the coaching to be able to see the change in people, I do different. I have different styles, different. I have packages that I do for people. So there's like a course of eight sessions, or I do ad hoc sessions with NLP and, and different bits and pieces. And one time in particular, I, it was a few weeks ago. I had a lady. She's, she has one child and she's pregnant with

another one, but for various reasons, she's, she's really struggling emotionally with it. And we did some work together and halfway through the session, it was, like, almost like a visible pop, in her like. The atmosphere changed, her voice changed, her being changed. Suddenly she seemed free and calmer and it was just so beautiful to see. And she was so appreciative. And just to be able to give that to people is just an amazing feeling and it's so powerful for them. Because I know how awful it is when you're in that hole, and you're feeling overwhelmed and stressed and fearful. To just be able to release that and be back in that kind of calmer space. And to be able to help people get in that space is just incredible.

Sarah: Yeah. I know exactly what you mean there, Karen, that visible change because either we're seeing people in person or over Zoom and you can see, you know, their expression, and their manner, and how they're holding their body. And actually once they move through something and beyond and find whatever their perspective or mindset or new belief is, whatever it is that they've reached, that is just so supportive and feels right for them. It does change everything. It's not just what's going on privately inside their head. You see it, you see it about, you know, how they're holding their body and how they're expressing themselves. And it's. Yeah. Life-changing. Which both of you know. You know, you both experienced that complete shift into how you both approached the next cycle, the cycle that became your little boys. You knew that it took this, this massive shift, which actually I'm guessing did it, both, for both of you, did it feel kind of quite natural then, once you got there? Julia you said about, you know, having the strong belief, but then, you know, also accepting what will be, will be, you know, I don't have complete control. Did that feel like a more comfortable, natural place to be?

Julia: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that, yeah, as Karen says, it's something shifts, and you can't really put your finger on it. We can call it like an aha moment, or a light bulb moment, but you can't really say, okay, specifically, this happened, and this is why I feel better, but it's, it's that sort of continual work on yourself, with people who are there to really support you and really care about where you're at, right at that point. And not trying to push you in any specific direction, not really giving you advice, just letting you be with your feelings, and letting you work through them and process them, that helps you get to a different place. And I think if you don't go through that journey, it's really hard to get to that other side. And that other side felt, as you say, completely natural. And just, yeah, this is meant to be, this is, this is the place I'm meant to be at right now and go in whichever direction it takes me. And for me, I just, I just really felt that whichever direction I go in, this was definitely going to be my last cycle. I'd decided on that already. And even just making that decision felt right, reassuring. I was doing something that I could control. I can control how many cycles I do. I can control if I keep going, or if I stop. Something that's really hard on this journey is that feeling of being out of control, but with your decisions, you can sort of start plotting bits of the journey that are within your control. And just having made that decision made me feel much more empowered, and like either option would actually be okay.

And then when I did have my baby, then it just. It was amazing. I mean, the pregnancy was difficult. So I think, as Karen says, it doesn't end when you get pregnant, especially if you've had miscarriages, there's the anxiety and the overwhelm and the feeling of, am I going to be good enough? And is this, is this really happening? Or am I going, am I going to lose the baby? That stays with you throughout the pregnancy, I would say, and getting the support throughout the pregnancy, I find this is also really beneficial to help you manage your emotions, and manage those expectations, and keep you in the present. Cause yeah, the hormones, the hormones also exacerbate the emotions.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. And I think it was Karen who said as well, that you're kind of learning skills for life here, aren't you as well? So once you've had the experience and given yourself permission as well, I heard you talked about that, you know, giving yourself permission about how you feel and allow yourself to feel it, and express it, and acknowledge it, and not just push it away and then find the support and then see actually there is a more natural, comfortable way to feel with life's challenges, whether that is trying to get pregnant

with fertility challenges, whether that's, you know, getting through that nine months of pregnancy when you're fearful of losing another baby, and then onwards. I mean you're both at the toddler stage of parenting, and as a parent of a teenager, I'm going to tell you now, it doesn't get any easier. I'm sorry, but there are challenges along the way, you know, and that's life. And once we've learned these tools, yeah, it gives us, when you said about control, everything feels out of our control. Doesn't it? We've just. We've handed over our body to, to medicine, you know, it's like help me get pregnant. And suddenly we feel like we don't have any control over things, but if we can start to spot the things that we do have control over the decisions, we make, the support that we bring in using tools that will actually help us with our emotions and gain some control back over our emotions, ownership over our emotions, you could say. Yeah, they're definitely lessons that we have for life to carry forward. Like you've both been saying, that are really beautiful, to share with other people, to see that that community is there, because that community is not going anywhere, you know. People will move through it and beyond it, and graduate from the fertility community, but there are always more people. And I think I don't, you know, I feel like we're seeing increasingly more people in the fertility community because you know, women are, trying for their babies either starting later in life or they're continuing for longer, because there are so many more options now aren't there available?

Not only IVF with your own eggs, but IVF with donor eggs, or a donor embryo's. And there were so many, you know, lengthening fertility journey, lengthening options there, aren't there to, to be on this journey for longer? So we can't underestimate the need for support. I think. So if this episode does anything, I hope that it really highlights, you know that fertility coaching, emotional support is, is something that could and should be incorporated into every plan.

And it isn't often, is it? You know, it's not often that you sit down with your fertility doctor, and you talk about the treatment, and you might think about what supplements you want to take and other ways you support your physical health, ready to get the best quality act, the best quality sperm so that you can conceive. But how often do we really then say, right, and now what's there for me? What's going to support me through this process? And I don't think it's done routinely. It's more approached if we really need it, you know. We get to that point of thinking, actually, I'm not coping. This is way more stressful than I thought. But if it can start to be brought in as a standard approach, then wouldn't that be amazing to, you know, have support all the way through which I know is what you, you know, you support people with. And I do as well.

And I know Julia, you told me recently that you've discovered that fertility coaching is now available and covered by some private health insurances. Is that right?

Julia: Yeah. So I think, as you say, Sarah, it's not always been something that is the first point of call when you speak to your consultant, but I think this past couple of years has really shone a light on mental health in general, and so a lot of companies are now creating wellbeing policies, mental health policies, which may or may not, kind of, allow you to have some funding for fertility coaching. And also, some of my clients have been claiming, fertility coaching through their private medical insurance through work, so there are more options to make this accessible for a lot of people, so it's worth inquiring if you're, If you're employed at the moment, through your HR departments, to see what they offer. Because I think this is just something that more and more companies are doing now.

Sarah: And it is time to prioritise, you know, like you say, the last two years that we've been through, with the pandemic is we're into our second year with it, aren't we? It has totally highlighted the need for emotional and mental health support in every area of our life. And for those people who've been trying to get pregnant in this time, It's been an even more challenging time to access treatment and to, you know, make decisions about vaccines, and all sorts of things that have been going on for the fertility community, so, yeah. If now is the day anyone that's listening to this, that you make that decision to reach out for emotional

support. I think that is amazing. And I hope that it changes things for you moving forward. And of course, yeah, we are all active on social media. We've talked about that. I know both of you are active on Instagram. Could you both just share your Instagram handles? We will put them on their podcast page as well for anyone that visits there, but Karen, where are you on Instagram? How can we find you?

Karen: Yeah. So I'm @fertility_lily.ama

Sarah: Wonderful and Julia, what's your Instagram handle?

Julia: And I'm @pineapplefertilitycoaching

Sarah: Lovely. Thank you. So we can, you can both be found on Instagram. And, you know, it's engaging with communities like that, even just looking under the hashtags and finding other people that are going through similar stories and following accounts that you find supportive, maybe the first step. And then of course they could get in touch with both of you, all three of us, you know, if they needed support, more directly. I have my own free challenge coming up, which is starting in a couple of weeks on the 13th of September. I've got my new free challenge. Well my existing free challenge, but we're doing it for another time. It's called five days to fertility calm, and that's a completely free opportunity to explore the emotional side of fertility, but then also be guided through using the technique that I use, which is called EFT, EFT tapping, to start really transforming and moving through those emotions, and finding those places that we've just been talking about there, of that more natural, more accepting, a more comfortable place to be. Whether you are looking at an IVF cycle or something else on your journey that's going on, and using these tools and techniques can really bring you to exactly where you need to be.

Thank you both for sharing your stories. You were both so open and raw with what you shared and I, that is so appreciated because, we need to hear those stories, you know, we need to know exactly what it feels like, and that people are not on their own, you know, and however they're feeling, however hard it feels, however, they don't want to share those deep dark emotions with their friends and family, that they are actually completely normal. You know, this isn't unusual. They're reacting in a, in a normal way to an abnormal situation, really. But at the same time, we don't have to accept that. We don't have to stay stuck with those emotions. And there is a different way if we get the right support in place, and the right support around us, you know, to do this in a different way. And I'm, I'm so pleased that both of you, you know, got that support in place at really crucial times as well. Like there are so many parallels in your story, this is crazy. But how, you know, you were both approaching that cycle going this is the last time, this is my second embryo, you know. This is it. It needs to happen. I'm also going to surrender in this moment because the pressure could have been there even more, couldn't it, let's be honest? You know, it could have been even more stressful and more pressurised, and who knows what would have happened in those cases, whether they would have been successful pregnancies for your both or not, we'll never know that. But you know, actually that you were taking care of yourself through this. And that's giving you that insight to take this on for everybody else, you know, and, and support them too. I'd love to, yeah. Any last things that you would like to say to our audience about fertility coaching or a different mindset shift they could make? Like, what would you like to share, Karen, Julia, who wants to go first? Karen?

Karen: I think, it's similar to what we said before, but the biggest thing for me is since doing this work, that we think of fertility coaching as helping you with your fertility if you're, and a lot of people think is when they get to that really stressed state. But actually, like we mentioned earlier, the fertility aspect affects all areas of your life, but also, the fertility coaching that we do, can impact, for the better, all areas of your life too. So, you know, it's useful to use a coach or go to a coach, or use these kinds of techniques at any stage in the journey and knowing that it doesn't only impact your fertility journey, but it will impact your perspective of

yourself, your relationship, your work, all of these different aspects as well, so it's a really, really powerful tool to have.

Sarah: Absolutely and gosh and don't we learn so much about ourselves along the way as well, you know, we'd never choose this path. I often say this, we'd never choose this path, but actually, we become grateful for the learnings and the way that we grow and what we learn about ourselves, so thank you for that reminder, Karen.

Julia, what would you like to leave our listeners with today?

Julia: Yeah, I think, I think that's really important just to not wait until you're in the darkest depths of your fertility journey, the earlier that you can start working on yourself in this way, the more equipped you'll be to handle some of those challenges. And also, some of the things that I work on deeply with my clients is just thinking about beliefs versus facts. So what you believe and what you think about your journey, about your body, is not necessarily true, and trying to separate out what's really factual and what it is that you're telling yourself, can be really powerful. That's quite a big focus for the work that I do with my clients and just having that, that realisation that you can control what you believe and what you think, and that can then in turn change how you feel and how you behave. That realisation can be really powerful in this journey.

Sarah: Beautiful. Absolutely. Thank you so much, both of you. You've shared so much of yourself, and I really hope, I know this, this episode is going to be helpful to lots and lots of people who are listening. So thank you so much for your time, both of you. Congratulations on your amazing successes, not only your babies, your little boys, but also how you've now developed, and building out this amazing coaching businesses for both of you and that you are magnifying the support that's out there, you know, so I feel such an honour that I got to touch each of your lives in a small way, and that then you took that and went on and, and see, you know, serve so many others and support others. It's quite magical. So thank you so much for being here before I get teary. We'll say our goodbyes.

Thank you. Thanks for being there when we needed you as well. It made a huge, huge difference. Thank you.

Sarah: You are so welcome. Thank you, ladies. Goodbye.

Oh, I loved that chat with Karen and Julia. Aren't they just the most lovely, inspiring women? And it feels like yesterday when I was supporting them both with the heavy emotions around their fertility struggles and their IVF treatment. And now they are both mothers, both of them to 3 year old boys, and making their own difference in the world with fertility coaching. I'd love to invite you now to step into fertility support too with my free challenge, 5 Days to Fertility Calm. It starts on Monday 13th September and will only take you a few minutes a day to take part, but will give you the same opportunity for positive change as Karen and Julia experienced. I'd love you to join me and you can register for free now at www.fertilemindset.com/5days. That's number 5. www.fertilemindset.com/5days I hope to see you there and I look forward to seeing what happens for you during our 5 days together. Before then I look forward to speaking to you again on the podcast 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.