

HypnoFertility – bringing the power of the Mind/Body connection to conception.



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Jeannine loves nothing better than to hear the words “unexplained infertility” in her clinic. Though they strike terror in the hearts of the individuals who have received this diagnosis, “unexplained infertility” actually means there is no physiological reason for a woman not to become pregnant. Although couples often feel helpless upon learning of this “condition” it is actually great news. In the absence of a pathological impediment — the removal of all or part of the reproductive organs, for example — most couples can be helped to achieve fertility by exploring prior programming or emotional blocks. They begin to bring the full power of the mind/body connection into play.

Jeannine has been working in her own clinic (Whangaparaoa, Hibiscus Coast) and at the Motherwell Clinic (Grey Lynn, Auckland) for the past two and a half years – using hypnotherapy to assist with unexplained infertility and habitual miscarriage are her areas of passion. She was introduced to the use of hypnosis herself as a 7 year old. She was taught self-hypnosis at that time to deal with insomnia, and has used it in many personal contexts since then.

Family, children and parenting have always been important parts of Jeannine’s life. Even as a child, she wanted to have children and become a mother – and as a mother of 3 teenagers now, is been very grateful for the experience. Her commitment and passion for her work with others experiencing difficulties in becoming parents themselves is based on her own life goals and values.

What is Hypnosis?

Hypnosis is a deeply relaxed state of body and a normal, natural healthy state of mind. This state occurs spontaneously during the day as daydreaming and just before going to sleep. In hypnosis, positive suggestions are more easily accepted and acted upon – hence its use in smoking cessation, weight change, stress release and other general habit changing areas.

It is important to clear up some common misconceptions about hypnosis. While in a state of hypnosis, an individual is completely aware and in complete control of the process - in fact, self-awareness is generally greatly enhanced while in the hypnotic state. It is often associated with stage shows for many people. Stage

show participants in hypnosis are aware of what they are doing and consent to it.

In general terms, anything affected by thinking or stress can be helped by hypnotherapy. Everything an individual does or wants to do will be enhanced when the body and mind are relaxed – and they **believe** that they can achieve it. This is the essence of the mind/body connection.

How hypnotherapy works:

People are bombarded with suggestions, helpful and unhelpful, everyday. Every suggestion experienced with the senses passes through a filter in the mind – based on past experiences and beliefs – which determine what is accepted or rejected. In hypnosis, this filter is by-passed so that suggestions that an individual would like to believe are accepted and embedded in their subconscious mind. This changes the “little voice” in the background to work for and with a person, (positive self-talk) rather than fighting against them (negative self-talk).

Worry and concern acts as “negative self-hypnosis”. The negative self-talk (judgement of self and others, blame, self-punishment, justification, defence of views and attack of others) that occurs in a person’s mind about the challenges they may be experiencing, repetitive patterns and/or other difficulties can cause great stress and anxiety. When a person becomes so worried that they allow a negative inner mind state to take over, they begin to experience the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure.

Stressful situations, events and experiences in life will often result in negative self-talk. This has a direct causative effect on the endocrine (hormonal) system. This is achieved by the direct stimulation of the amygdala, and its interrelationship with the hypothalamus, and parts of the brain involved with emotions.

The amygdala is responsible for the “flight or fight” responses in the body and manifests as a contraction of the muscles, an acceleration of the cardiovascular system, and the release of “emergency” hormones throughout the body. The body is on alarm, energy is directed toward the areas needed for actual “fight” or “flight” such as the arms and legs, and away from areas the brain considers less important. When the body is stimulated to respond in this way unnecessarily and repeatedly (by varied and repeated suggestions including negative self-talk) the body systems becomes unbalanced physically and are unable to operate naturally.

Positive attitudes in any situation (including stressful ones) will result in positive self-talk (acceptance of responsibility, ownership, exploration of possibilities, creativity and hope). Again, this self-talk has a direct causative effect on the

endocrine (hormonal) system, employing different physical areas of the brain and in turn has positive effects on the health and well being of the physical body.

How hypnotherapy can help with fertility:

Whether people are aware of it or not, they are being subjected to considerable conditioning and suggestion from the society and media regarding fertility, family, sex and sexuality. For example, the media's recent inclination to depict women over thirty-five who want babies as 'desperate' caught up in a 'biological-clock panic', and having 'wombs that are too old to work' undermines the confidence and emotional health of millions of women concerning their fertility. It also places undue fear-based pressure on women in their 20's and 30's to have families when they may not be ready to do so.

This, combined with emotional and behavioural conditioning from childhood can leave people with unhelpful self-talk and concern. Negative feelings left unexpressed and/or unresolved hold considerable energy which can block conception. Unexpressed emotions such as the fear, anguish, guilt or profound shame can create extreme emotional conflict, which affects every cell of the body and can cause or compound reproductive problems.

It is often surprising for clients to look at these influences in their lives and the effect they now have. Experiences may be as subtle as watching their own mother struggle uncomfortably with a pregnancy "suffering in silence" to sexual abuse or the experience around an abortion for example. Such experiences can diminish overall feelings of safety and comfort, causing a woman to live in a state of constant fear. Though the conscious mind resolves to forget or move past the incident, the subconscious mind (the emotional part of the mind) is in conflict because of feelings of betrayal and endangerment. The sympathetic nervous system remains on guard, overriding the body's natural tendency toward balance.

As this condition becomes chronic, the parasympathetic nervous system, concerned with conservation of energy and restoration, is unable to fulfil its regenerative duties. Lack of health and vitality, which is the natural result of disharmony between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, leads to a variety of stress-related symptoms including "unexplained infertility."

The neuro-chemical barrage that is associated with the "fight or flight" response in all human bodies can be triggered by a threat to self-esteem or dignity. The body is on alarm, energy is directed toward the areas needed for actual "fight" or "flight" such as the arms and legs, and away from areas the brain considers less important. Unfortunately, the reproductive system is the most expendable. Once a chronic imbalance of the autonomic nervous system is created, only the regular and consistent practice of relaxation will facilitate the restoration of the

parasympathetic nervous system. Hypnotherapy provides an effective means of establishing that restoration and enables women to establish the level of safety essential for reproduction to occur.

The Clinical Hypnotherapy Fertility Programme

The Clinical Hypnotherapy Fertility programme is a series of individual therapy sessions working with a woman and her partner to learn how to enhance fertility and conception. This is an opportunity to learn relaxation techniques, and explore the issues that sometimes prevent pregnancy, and increase the woman's chances of the pregnancy they desire.

Therapy sessions are tailored for each client, based on the individual needs of the families. The initial interview helps to identify areas of concern and what the clients really want and believe is possible for them. A care plan is established based on identified factors.

Hypnosis techniques empower men and women to feel confident, successful and hopeful. Using these techniques enables them to redirect their attention and attitude away from negative self-talk to the things they really want to achieve. Three factors contribute to this success: a willingness to be hypnotized, a desire to discuss and understand the process, and the ability to follow simple instructions.

A very real concern for many people is the inability to conceive a baby. Each year, many New Zealand couples pursue treatment for "infertility". Most consult conventional doctors, an infertility workup is conducted ... and depending on diagnosis, drugs or high-tech procedures such as IVF are recommended.

Great strides have been made recently in Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). A range of medical options are available. Overseas studies have shown that using hypnosis increases the effectiveness of these options by up to 35% (20% pregnancy rate in the control group, 55% pregnancy rate in the group using hypnosis). At the same time, people using hypnosis experience an overall positive effect on their health and wellbeing.

When people have made the emotional, physical and financial commitment to conceive a child, they deserve the highest possible chance of success. Hypnotherapy transforms the worry, fear and frustration they are feeling. They are provided with tools that enable them to achieve the relaxation and confidence necessary for a calm, peaceful, positive and viable pregnancy.

Learning techniques of relaxation and self-awareness provides families with insights about their unique situations, and frequently different levels of healing take place. Hypnotherapy used effectively will reduce stress, increase

confidence and instil a sense of control and hope. This in turn will enable people to maximize their chances of conceiving naturally and/or increase the success of medical assistance.

Hypnotherapy helps men too:

The difficulty experienced by couples trying to conceive is likely to be the male's responsibility in around 40% of cases. Women and men have similar links between the brain and the reproductive organs, so in men, stress and tension can reduce sex drives and cause impotence.

The release of the male hormone testosterone, which triggers sperm production, is governed by the hypothalamus-pituitary control center, which is highly sensitive to emotional tension. Studies link heightened anxiety with low sperm counts. Emotional tension can be exacerbated by negative beliefs, behavioral patterns, and conscious and unconscious damaging thoughts, feelings, and attitudes.

Men who have taken part in hypnotherapy treatments have been helped considerably. For example, sperm count, quality and mobility have all shown improvement through the use of hypnosis and relaxation techniques.

If sperm production and quality are not issues for the man, hypnotherapy enables men to contribute more effectively to conception. They can explore what is important to them, what they really want to achieve and how they can work more fully as supportive partners. They can also identify any blocks they may be carrying and the associated self-talk, then deal with those to allow a more natural and relaxed approach as a man.

Men would be helped more extensively if they were more willing to attend and take part in a hypnotherapy programme – Jeannine has worked with a number of women who have been unable to conceive for this reason.

Research results from around the world:

A growing body of research world-wide is demonstrating that fertility rates can be significantly improved through mind/body techniques such as hypnosis. The following quote is from Dr. Christiane Northrup MD (based in USA), "*Specifically, I have found that psychological and unconscious beliefs about pregnancy, sexuality and having children can actually block fertility.*"

Lynsi Eastburn who founded the HypnoFertility Programme in Colorado, USA has documented a number of studies and research findings that have been conducted there. The following is a selection of the results she has collected and based some of her work on:

- *Dr. Elizabeth Muir, a clinical psychologist working with hypnotherapy for infertility explains that hypnosis affects the hypothalamus - the neural centre at the base of the brain linked to the pituitary gland - and controls the flow of hormones in the body. The hypothalamus is sensitive to stress and acts as a bridge between the emotional and physical, turning emotional messages into physical responses that affect hormone levels. Muir believes that the psychological issues surrounding pregnancy are not sufficiently well addressed for many women with fertility problems.*
- *Studies conducted by Alice Domar, PhD, director of the Beth Israel Deaconess Behavioural Medicine Program for Infertility in Boston support Muir's theory that unresolved issues about having a baby can be removed with counselling and mind/body techniques such as hypnotherapy. In the first study published in 1999 in the Journal of the American Medical Women's Association 42% of 132 infertile women in the program conceived within six months of completing it. In the second study, published in 2000 in the journal Fertility and Sterility, 55% of the previously infertile women who met regularly in a mind/body program conceived, compared with 20% of the control group who used no mind/body techniques and who did not attend meetings."*
- *A recent Israeli study showed that the success rate of IVF treatments doubled in his test group from 14% to 28%, when the subjects underwent hypnosis during implantation. Professor Eliahu Levitas conducted this study with 185 women.*
- *Dr. Gayle Peterson has developed a technique called Body-Centered Hypnosis. Dr. Peterson has found that high anxiety states in the mother must be reduced in order to normalize pregnancy and birth. She sites several research studies that suggest a positive link between fertility and treatments based on hypnosis. She is a pioneer in the field of mind/body states and their effects on fertility, pregnancy and birthing.*
- *Dr. Ernest L. Rossi specializes in psychobiology, or the relationship between the mind and physical body states. He has done extensive research to suggest that human genes must be in a state of physical readiness for conception to take place, and that hypnotic-type suggestions can activate specific genes, including the IL-1, c-fos, and the CYP17 in a specific order.*
- *At the Institute of Applied Psychology in Lisbon Portugal, a team of researchers led by Katharina Hirschenhauser has concluded that men who actively want to be fathers automatically adjust their testosterone levels at exactly the right time (the middle of their partners' menstrual cycles).*

Perhaps there is no better hypnotic suggestion for a male partner than the idea that he wants to become a father.

Check for more details on Lynsi Eastburn's website www.hypnofertility.com.

For more information:

Contact Jeannine:

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Recommended reading:

"It's Conceivable! – Hypnosis for Fertility" Lynsi Eastburn, BCH

"Conquering Infertility" Alice Domar

"The Whole Person Fertility Programme" Niravi Payne

"Spirit Babies" Walter Mackitchen