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Over the years I've watched a number of family members and friends go through the ups and downs of trying to get pregnant, in addition to numerous clients in my work as a Maya massage therapist. So, it didn't surprise me to learn that one in five U.S. couples turns to help outside of the bedroom when it comes time to conceive a child.

In the medical arena, anyone who has tried unsuccessfully to get pregnant for one year through unprotected sex is diagnosed "infertile". That label alone is a set-up to feel like a failure, unable to do what our body should be doing naturally. So, let's please erase that word from our vocabulary! I like to use the phrase "fertility challenges".

Stress is often a factor in fertility challenges, and yet the inherent stress of not being able to conceive can further disrupt the delicate balance required to foster a human life. When stress hormones dominate, reproductive hormones take a back seat—the body's wisdom says it's not a safe place for a baby. When we can shift our perspective and see our fertility challenges as a gift instead of a problem—a gift of time to slow down, step back and assess our lives from a holistic perspective—we can begin to heal not only our reproductive health, but our bodies, minds and spirits, enriching and aligning our lives for our highest good.

My own journey to motherhood began after the end of a stressful job while vacationing in Mexico. There is validity to getting away from it all! After a remarkable session with Maya healer in the Yucatan, the door opened to what I'd imagined would be impossible—the conception of my first child. What I've since learned from this ancient fertility-enhancing modality can benefit everyone on the journey to becoming a parent.

After my daughter was born, I began studying with Dr. Rosita Arvigo, an American naprapathic physician living in Belize who spent more than a decade as an apprentice to one of the last great Maya shamans, Don

Elijio Panti. Arvigo has dedicated her life to carrying on the healing knowledge of the ancient Maya and has trained more than 400 health care professionals living in the U.S. and Europe to administer the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Massage (ATMAM). The cornerstone of her work is the time-tested pelvic massage she learned from Panti, who healed all kinds of reproductive troubles with this gentle, external technique used to reposition the displaced uterus.

Today in my private practice as a certified massage therapist and Arvigo practitioner, I work with a number of men and women struggling with their fertility, many who come to me beaten down by the physical, emotional and financial stress of high-tech fertility procedures. A variety of factors can contribute to compromised fertility. For women, the displaced uterus is almost always one of them. It is extremely rare that I find a perfectly positioned uterus in my female clients, unless they've already been doing uterine massage. By correcting this physical imbalance alone, my clients are soon on the path to restoring healthy menstruation and balance to their reproductive organs. Men benefit from the pelvic massage, too, because of its ability to unblock obstructions that can impede prostate health, sperm quality and function and basic life force necessary for optimum fertility.

The road to reclaiming our fertility can be difficult and exhausting. To heal ourselves, we must peel back the physical, emotional and spiritual layers of our life experience that are blocking our fertility. Each client walks through my door with a unique story to tell about his or her path to become a parent. I work to address the intricacies of their individual histories by using a body-mind-spirit approach. Creating a nurturing and positive relationship with our bodies and reproductive organs can do wonders for the healing process. As the Buddha said, "our thoughts create our world."

My clients benefit from a combination of Maya massage techniques, dietary guidelines and healing herbal tinctures, along with other alternative modalities that address body, mind and spirit. These include tools from my *Fertile Being* classes such as breathing exercises and visualization techniques, journaling, meditation, acupressure and fertility-enhancing movement sequences. I also teach each client how to perform self-care Maya massage. Anyone facing fertility challenges can benefit from learning this easy, self-nurturing massage technique. My clients who are committed to daily self-care massage typically get pregnant faster. By taking their fertility into their own two hands—literally—they are better able to shed the "infertile" mindset and become empowered parents.

The self-care tools and practices in my *Fertile Being* classes and workshops are designed to empower you to reclaim your own fertility. The class offers a unique community-support atmosphere for women and men undergoing fertility challenges, all on unique journeys to becoming parents. My hope is that through the class, you will discover stress-reducing, fertility-enhancing tools that resonate with you and are easy to incorporate into your daily life. And, my utmost desire is that by approaching your healing holistically, you, too, will discover your own fertile being!

Namaste,

Catherine