



Meditation & Fertility

by SUE DUMAIS

Sue Dumais meditating

If you are trying to cope with the stress related to fertility, meditation is truly a gift. This simple and effective practice can transform your fertility journey from an emotional rollercoaster to a more calm, controlled and even positive experience.

According to Dr. Alice Domar, Director for the Mind-Body Center for Women at Boston IVF, mind body techniques such as meditation produce a relaxation response, which reduces stress and may increase your chance of conceiving. The relaxation response involves releasing feel-good endorphins and turning off stress hormones.

Studies have shown that the effects of meditation include:

- An increased sense of calm
- More control over the mind and thoughts
- A deeper connection to self and inner wisdom
- Greater clarity and focus
- A better ability to cope with stressful situations

Meditation, simply put, involves focusing your mind in a way that promotes the intention to reflect, contemplate or quiet the mind. It's easy to begin: just choose a goal like gaining control of your thoughts and quieting your mind. Then you need to choose a form of meditation that best suits you.

Here are some that I use with my clients. Try them all and then find the one that works best for you.

If your mind wanders during meditation this is normal—just gently return your attention to the meditation. As you practice it will become easier. At the end of each meditation bring your awareness back to your body and your physical surroundings before opening your eyes.

To begin:

- Turn off all distractions (phone, TV, radio etc)
- Find a comfortable position (sit tall in a chair or on the floor, you can lie down as long as you stay awake)
- Set your intention (e.g. quiet my mind, let go of fear or reflect on my fertility)
- Release judgments and be patient with the mind and body

Observing the Mind

Intention: reflect, contemplate or quiet the mind

Close your eyes and bring your awareness to your breath for five breaths. Move your awareness to your mind. Begin to observe your thoughts. No judgment, just observe. Notice how your thoughts come and go. Observe the speed of your thoughts. Are they positive or negative? Imagine a balloon or bubble surrounding each thought and watch each thought float away. Begin to slow the thoughts by imagining you are slowing the



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speed of the bubble floating away. Notice whether there are spaces between the thoughts. Begin to invite positive and supportive thoughts such as “I believe”, “I am strong”, “I am fertile”. Notice how the physical body changes as you begin to invite these new thoughts. Spend 5 - 10 minutes observing the mind.

Breathing Meditation

Intention: Quiet the mind. As you focus your thought on the breath it gives the mind something to do and your thoughts will begin to slow down.

a) Breath Awareness: Close your eyes and bring your awareness to

your breath. Without changing the breath, notice the length of each inhale and each exhale. Notice how the exhale naturally follows each inhale. Become aware of the areas the breath flows easily. Notice the areas where the breath has more of a challenge reaching. Remember there is no judgment just observation. Is there a pause between the inhale and exhale or does one flow directly into the other? Observe the breath for 5 - 10 minutes. Listen, feel and allow the breath.

b) Counting the Breath: Close your eyes and bring your awareness to your breath. Begin to count for the

length with each inhale (1, 2, 3, 4) and count the length of each exhale (1, 2, 3, 4). Is the inhale longer or the same length as the exhale? Again there is no judgment, just observe. Continue to count each breath in and out for 5 - 10 minutes.

Affirmation Meditation

Intention: reflect, contemplate or quiet the mind

Close your eyes and bring your awareness to the breath. Reflect for a moment as you ask yourself what you need for support at this time. Allow the word to come intuitively from within. As you inhale repeat the words “I am” and on the exhale repeat the word you chose such as “calm or relaxed”. Invite the word into your body and create a real sense of it. Repeat for 10 - 20 breaths or until you reach the desired effect.

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Mindful Meditation

Intention: reflect or contemplate

Bring your awareness to your senses. Notice what you see, smell, hear, taste and feel. Take at least two minutes on each sense. Practicing mindfulness while you are eating or walking allows you to become present. Being in the moment will help you focus your thoughts on the “now” versus an upcoming appointment or the two week wait for a pregnancy test. Practicing present moment awareness will keep you focused on “what is” and you will learn to shift your thoughts away from worrying about what may or may not happen in the future.

Initially, the process of re-training the mind and re-gaining control of our thoughts can be frustrating. Start with 5 minutes a day. It will get easier each time you meditate.

There will be days where your thoughts are harder to slow. Repeat to yourself “I am where I am and it is OK”, “My mind is busy and it is OK”. As you move from judgment to acceptance you will feel a sense of control and calm. I encourage you to be patient and your mind and body will respond.

A regular meditation practice can help you reconnect to your own internal wisdom and experience a greater sense of control over your thoughts and feelings.

References

Conquering Infertility, Authors: Alice D Domar and Alice Lesch Kelly. Published by Viking (2001).

Family Passages’ Meditation for Fertility MP3 Downloads/Audio Files by Sue Dumais at www.familypassages.ca.

About the Author

Sue Dumais’s own struggles with fertility, combined with a passion for yoga, inspired her to co-found Family Passages Mind Body Fertility Studio in Vancouver, a tranquil spa-like space where women and couples can experience mind body programs, yoga for fertility and self-care designed to support them on their fertility journey. Sue has recently published the book *A Strong Core for Life* and has developed several instructor training courses for fertility and pre/post natal fitness. Sue can be reached at 604-266-6470 or visit www.family-passages.ca

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