

My Journey through Fertility

By: Sue Dumais

My fertility journey has been an incredible adventure full of highs and lows. Through anger, sadness, grief, anticipation, joy and excitement I have forged a path of self discovery.

When I first discovered I wanted to be a mom I was 24 years old. I was holding my baby nephew and he fell asleep with his head resting on my chest. I felt an overwhelming sense of knowing from deep within. A knowing that one day, I would become a Mom and experience the gift of having my own baby to hold.

At 30 years old I still wasn't quite ready to start my family. When I found out I was pregnant, I was initially shocked. Being a Mom wasn't in my immediate plans. Once I stopped and noticed the energy of my baby from within, the shock quickly turned to excitement and anticipation. I loved the idea of being a Mom. It was all I could think about. In one moment the rest of my life shifted and I was so happy. I knew I would be a great Mom and just the thought of holding my baby gave me a feeling of warmth. I didn't feel empty inside anymore. I felt complete and whole.

At 11 weeks in my pregnancy I begin to notice some spotting. Right away I was terrified that something was wrong. After 5 days of spotting, my midwife booked an ultrasound. It was Friday afternoon and I had to wait the whole weekend for my appointment. The minutes ticked by so slowly. The waiting was torture. I tried to remain positive but I began to doubt my instincts. Remembering my sister-in-law experienced bleeding throughout her entire second pregnancy, I tried to reassure myself that everything would be ok.

Before my appointment on Monday night I wrote a letter to my baby. I encouraged her to stay with me. I told her I would love her, care for her and be the best Mom. As I came to the end of the letter I felt uneasiness deep down inside; I knew there was something wrong. I ended the letter saying goodbye to my baby and thanking her for coming to touch my life so powerfully.

Later that evening I was told the "fetus was no longer viable". My baby had died at 9 weeks. Normally a women's body would have responded with a miscarriage. My body and my heart were still holding on to the hope of being a Mom. I reluctantly decided to have surgery. It was at that point that I realized that my baby was really gone. How could she have left? What did I do? It seemed so unfair. I was sad, angry and devastated. In addition to all the emotional pain I was experiencing intense physical pain. After a second surgery and antibiotics for a uterine infection, I felt wiped out emotionally and physically. As I crawled out of isolation all I could do was turn my energy to becoming pregnant again.

When my husband and I finally started trying to conceive at first it was exciting and fun! I assumed I would become pregnant right away so I tested a few days before my period was due. I was disappointed but didn't give up hope. I convinced myself it was just too early to test. After 2 more negative pregnancy tests my period arrived. I was crushed. I became quiet and withdrawn.

At the beginning of each cycle I would get excited and hopeful. After ovulation I would look for signs of pregnancy. Some months I would convince myself that I must be pregnant based on the symptoms. I started to change my lifestyle by avoiding dairy, alcohol and sugar. I even tried different sex positions. I was desperately trying everything I read about or heard about. Every month that passed and each period that came, I felt heavier and heavier. I felt

defeated. I began to question everything. What was wrong with me? What was wrong with my husband? Why can't I just get pregnant? Other women who don't even want a baby are getting pregnant. It seemed so unfair.

We decided to test my husband's fertility. I was surprised when he told me he was anxious and nervous about the results. We talked about what we could do if the results were unfavorable. I mentioned to him that if he was sterile I could look into sperm donation. He was strongly apposed and there was no convincing him to look at any alternatives. I wanted a baby so badly that I didn't want to be faced with that decision. How could I decide to stay with my husband who I love with all my heart and give up the dream of experiencing a pregnancy? I knew with every cell in my body I wanted to be pregnant. How does one possibly make a decision like that? I had to stay positive because it was too painful to even begin to grasp the idea of having to choose. Needless to say, it was a challenging couple of days as we waited for his results. Thankfully, the results came back normal. After reading about female fertility testing, I wasn't ready to turn to conventional medicine just yet. If I became pregnant before I should be able to conceive again.

After listening to a lecture by Dr. Lorne Brown, TCM on acupuncture and fertility, I was immediately drawn to it. I decided to follow my intuition. After my first experience with acupuncture I felt an overwhelming sense of calm. I realized how much stress was affecting my inability to conceive. Love making had become baby making and all my energy was devoted to charting and becoming pregnant. I was completely consumed and feeling out of control. I was putting so much pressure on myself and it was affecting every area of my life including my relationship with my husband. As I shifted my focus to my own health, I devoted time to acupuncture, yoga, eating healthy and managing my stress. After 3 months of acupuncture and traveling for 6 weeks we conceived.

When I took the pregnancy test and it showed a positive result I was more nervous than excited. Was it too good to be true? After confirming the results at my doctor's office I still had trouble celebrating. How could I be certain it I wouldn't lose the baby again? No one could give me any reassurance. I would jump back and forth between excitement and worry. To help me cope with my fear of miscarriage I continued to chart my temperature for the first 5 months of my pregnancy. Each day I woke up with a high temperature was the reassurance I needed to know that, today I was ok. It was what I needed to be able to celebrate for at least that day. My son arrived 1 month early of his due date. He was healthy and strong. I was overwhelmed with joy and happiness.

Just before my son turned a year old we decided to start trying again for a second baby. I decided I wouldn't let things bother me this time. I convinced myself I would become pregnant when it was meant to happen. Immediately I noticed a similar pattern each month of excitement and disappointment. I was determined to not let it rule my life again as it did before. After 6 months I was in complete denial. I didn't realize how much I began to pull away from my husband and family. I began to isolate myself pretending nothing was wrong.

After a year of trying to conceive a friend asked how I was doing. I immediately broke down and cried. I felt relieved to finally let it out. I had been burying my emotions each month and I couldn't hide them anymore. I had kept myself busy as a way of avoiding all my sadness, desperation and grief. It was time to deal with my emotions and face my fertility challenges. Intuitively I was drawn to my yoga practice but felt I needed something more. After reading Wayne Dyer's book *Inspiration* I was inspired to combine yoga and fertility. I began practicing specific poses that would support the reproductive system, balance my hormones and reduce my anxiety. I had trouble with my own personal practice. I found so many

distractions and excuses and I had trouble committing. It was another way to avoid my emotions.

I decided to begin teaching a Yoga for Fertility class. I had been teaching yoga for years and thought if I could experience the poses with other women it would be a healing experience for all of us. I was surprised to learn there were so many women experiencing fertility challenges much like myself. In each class I continue to learn something new about myself and I was touched and inspired by each woman's journey. I realized the value of connecting to other women going through a similar experience. It was healing in itself. I felt a sense of community, support and belonging. I no longer felt isolated. It was exactly what I needed to shift my perspective about my own fertility challenges.

Even with the shift in perspective I realized I was still experiencing a mild depression each month and emotional heaviness with each period. Through life coaching I discovered that each unsuccessful month symbolized another loss. The loss of a baby. The loss of hope. The loss of trust and acceptance. I remembered reading about cultures where women celebrated their bodies and their monthly cycles. Menstruation was a celebration and an opportunity for the body to cleanse and detox. I decide to celebrate my cycle and teach other women to celebrate their cycles and embrace their womanhood. Although some months I feel like I am pretending it still feels much lighter now.

I realize now that my fertility journey has been a journey of self healing. I am learning to be my own best friend. I am learning to rediscover my joy, with or without a pregnancy. It all starts within me. I continue to reach out for support each day and I am comforted by knowing, I am not alone. My story has no conclusion at this time as my journey through fertility continues. It has been an incredible experience and I have received many gifts along the way. I know now that I am exactly where I need to be. I am on this journey with you. I am here for you! I am here for me! I am here for every woman.

Namaste, Sue

Sue Dumais' own struggles with fertility combined with her passion for yoga inspired her to co-found Family Passages Mind Body Fertility Studio in Vancouver 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 a *Yoga for Fertility Handbook* and *A Strong Core for Life*. She has also developed several online audio classes and self help programs as well as a *Fitness Fertility Specialist Certification* and *Yoga for Fertility Instructor Training* courses. Sue can be reached at 604-266-6470 or visit www.familypassages.ca



To learn more about Sue Fertility Journey and the tools she uses to help transform her own as well as her client's visit her blog at www.familypassages.blogspot.com