5 Things To Improve Your Fertility Transcript

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Introduction and Speaker Welcome

Welcome back to The Super Fertility Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Cleopatra, and I'm very excited to introduce our next speaker to you. I have with us today, Dr. Marc Sklar, the fertility expert.

And he's a natural fertility specialist who helps couples get pregnant. And he's been doing this work for 20 years, and he's on a mission to help you feel hopeful and confident about your fertility journey again.

Dr. Marc Sklar, in addition to your Doctor of Acupuncture and or Oriental Medicine degree, you are trained at the Harvard. You were trained at the Harvard Medical School Mind Body Medical Institute, and you're the creator of an incredible YouTube channel called FertilityTV, as well as marcsklar.com and reproductivewellness.com.

You're a fellow of the American Board of Oriental Reproductive Medicine and a medical advisor for Symphony Natural Health. I want to welcome you, Dr. Marc, thank you so much for being here with us today at The Super Fertility Summit.

Thanks so much for having me. I'm so excited to talk to you again and reconnect and talk about all things fertility. Me too. So we have had an incredible conversation in the past and we're excited to bring, conversation to you today.

that's fresh, that covers emerging trends in 2024 and to really showcase, Dr. Marc's wealth of wisdom and clinical expertise and, and give you some practical tools that you can start taking away with you today.

So I'm very excited. One of the things I like to do, Dr. Marc, is to start from the end. So if in thinking about the mama, dada, the human of any gender, listening to our voices today and right now, what's the one thing that you hope that they will take away from this interview today?

That's a great question.

Building Belief and Reframing Fertility Mindset

I love I normally get asked that question at the end, and I think, you know, I think it's so important that couples listening, that women's listening right now recognize and understand that they can get pregnant, they can have a healthy baby.

They have to be open to new paths, new journeys, new opportunities, new, treatment options that they may not have thought of before understood or even thought that could even be an option for them.

And I think if we open ourselves up to all possibilities and all options, then our chances of conception, you know, increase the likelihood that you're going to be able to have a child, have a healthy pregnancy is definitely going to increase.

but, you know, I think most of all, we need to be open to those different opportunities. And we need to have belief that it can happen. I love that so much.

And I like to start with that question because I really want there to be a through line for a conversation one. Right. And organizing through line. But number two, I want the mama who's sitting down or going for a walk or in her car listening to us taking the time out of her life to listen to us, which I view time as the most precious resource in the world.

And it's precious when it comes to the biological clock, and it's precious when it comes to all of life that I want her to

know from the outset why it's worth that precious time to take the time to to listen to this conversation.

So that's that's why I start with that question. And I really love what you said about belief, because I often say that belief may not be a sufficient condition for getting and staying pregnant, but it's a necessary condition, right?

So it in and of itself, could it solve every possible impediment and obstacle? I don't know, probably not. I mean, the scientist in me says probably not.

but I've always been a bit of an atypical scientist in that I have such a strong faith and belief, in just in life and, you know, the things that drive us.

But I know what I know as a scientist is. And watching women and couples do this for now, 28 years, almost three decades, is that you could go through all the right steps and all the motions.

And if you fundamentally don't really believe that this is possible for you, most of that effort is being wasted. Right? So that's I love that we're starting off with understand ending that we want concrete, actionable tools that are evidence based.

And yet we want to have that unshakable foundation of belief and and having an unshakable foundation of belief really is an interesting choice of words on my part, because I would say that most people going through a fertility journey feel very shaken when it comes to their beliefs.

So let's let's actually tackle that a little bit for for those who can really identify with that, how do you find the belief and the faith in your body, your eggs, yourself, the timing of your super baby when it's been so long and hard in the past?

Yeah. you know, I agree, by the way, with everything you said, you know, it's often going to be much more than just the belief, but the belief has to be a piece of that puzzle, you know, without it.

And often I think that belief is if we're looking at a puzzle, it's probably in the center and everything's going to be built around that. That's right.

and so, yeah, it's hard when things haven't worked out for various reasons. You've been told by, and I think this is probably the most, difficult to shift.

So you've been told by your OB or your IVF clinic or whoever you've spoken to, maybe it was a close friend. They didn't know how impactful their words were going to be.

but you've been told that, oh, it's it's not possible. Your chances are really low or whatever words were used. Right. And those words get embedded. They get burned into our psyche.

it's really difficult to take those words and move past them. So I think one aspect of it, is we got to fake it till we make it. We've got it. You know, we've we do have to like, even if it's a little bit of a false belief, we've got to we've got to make it up a little bit for ourselves.

because soon that what started off as, like, a false belief or a fake belief that, that was there is going to shift and your body's going to start to really believe you're going to start to really believe in yourself.

But, you know, sometimes you're questionable. You're not 100% sure that that's the case. Or if you if you can believe in yourself. And so you're like, oh, what?

I'm not I how can I even believe that? Well, I think we have to like, fake it a little bit in the beginning. So that's one aspect of it. The other is we need to create a mechanism within our daily practice to start to retrain our minds, to start to create that belief so that our mind can think differently so that our body and all the cells can start to believe and think differently than what they've been told.

It's so quick with the the that negative comment that gets embedded very quickly. But to shift away from that, that takes time. And so it's not going to happen overnight.

But I think it's about baby steps. And so, you know, if you're going to create some mantras for yourself, some positive affirmations that you can tell yourself repeatedly.

So maybe you're putting it, you know, in the bathroom, you're putting those different ones by your bed. You're maybe you change the, the wallpaper on your computer screen and on your phone, right?

Like your you we kind of just give in to those things, but we can use those as tools for ourselves if we're constantly seeing. Yes, I you know, I am, I am fertile, I am healthy.

You know, whatever positive affirmations we need and we're seeing that in multiple places, then I always like to have it recorded, like, you record your voice saying those words, and then you're playing it back to yourself, you know, two, three, four times a day.

you're going to start to retrain your mind.

Stress, Chinese Medicine, and Creating Space

And when you and invariably you're going to have those negative thoughts and you have to be able to just be like, okay, that's I have the thought. It doesn't make it real.

I'm going to push it aside, right? Like I'm going to push it aside and replace it with a, a more positive thought, something that's more productive for me.

And this all takes time and effort. That is not an easy shift. So I think that's essential from the get go is kind of laying those foundational pieces around to change the mindset and then really celebrating your wins, big or small.

You know, those little wins are building blocks to accomplish our long term goals. And if the only goal that you're willing to celebrate, the only success you want to thrive with is that positive pregnancy test, then we're going to be disappointed.

A lot, right? So I want us to celebrate those little victories, those little wins, even if it's not exactly what we wanted. And it's not where, you know, where we where we need to be.

And so I think that is also very, very important. The ride, the trajectory to success is not always this positive upward linear movement. And so we have to also understand and recognize that it's not always going to be smooth.

There's going to be a bumpy. It'll be bumpy from time to time. those bumps are not necessarily always have to be viewed as negatives. Those bumps are there to remind us that while we still have some work to do, we're still need to move forward, and maybe some things need to be adjusted or tweet.

But we get all concerned when everything's not perfect. And I very, very rarely ever see it go. You know, it's perfectly as we would have imagined or wanted.

And so celebrating those wins allows us to continue to move forward. And it's important that we're able to look back, oh, I was here. This is what my symptoms were before.

Now I'm here even though it's not exactly where I want to be. And maybe there's some things that still need to be improved. I'm I'm better off than I was last cycle or last week or whatever time frame that is.

And that's I think those are really, really important factors that we all need to kind of embed into our, our daily process or weekly or monthly process.

You know, we're constantly in my program, constantly asking couples, let's celebrate your wins. What's your win? It could be small, like, oh, I went for a walk this week.

Every day. Fantastic, right? We all have wins to celebrate. Sometimes it's hard to focus on them because it's so much easier to to point out the flaws in everything.

but it takes it takes retraining our minds to focus on all the positives. And so I do think it's an important thing to remind ourselves on a daily basis what those are maybe even twice a day.

The morning one, when you do it in the morning could be really simple, like, oh, I'm just grateful for waking up this morning and wait, grateful for my good night's sleep, or turning over and rolling over and seeing your partner there and saying, oh, I'm grateful to have them with me by my side.

Right? Those are all victories. and then at night before bed journaling, like, I like to keep a running list, like, what are all the things I'm grateful for?

Or my wins or successes, right? So, like, it could be one thing. What was the one positive thing today? We all have it. What is it? Let's find it right and write it down.

And I think all of that really it's necessary. And it retrains our minds to think in a different way, in the way that is really going to be more suitable for us.

I love what you said about how something that someone said to us, whether it's a friend who didn't realize the impact of their words or, diagnosis or a comment from your reproductive endocrinologist or ObGyn, that negative feedback or piece of information becomes almost branded in your brain, and it happens instantaneously, often without you even being aware of it, and yet overcoming it and rewiring the belief that it causes takes time.

And then similarly, you said that it's easy to notice all the flaws, everything that's not going well, and to gloss over or not even notice the beauty that is present in our lives and all of the things that we have to be in appreciation for, even when things are not perfect.

And it made me think a lot about how the human brain is wired, and it is wired to fixate on the negative, the potential threats, the potential harm, the potential risks to safety and survival.

That's why it hooks into negative information so strongly and so quickly, and is so slow to let ease up off of it. Right. And that's the reptilian survival brain.

And that's one of the principal pathways through which stress and emergency counter that energy and resources needed for creation. Right. And so sorry, this is a bit of a long lead into the question, but what I wanted to ask you, I love traditional Chinese medicine.

I've been a student, a lay student, since I was in my early 20s because I really, I think I told you this when we talked before, I really leaned on it to survive the early days of my PhD program, I was in a top four in the nation program at UCLA, and I was probably the only or one of the only women of color.

And, you know, I was just came in with a lot of, you know, disadvantages relative to my peers. No, no financial support from family. All the things. Right.

And getting acupuncture every week at the school clinic where it was really affordable changed my life. So I fell in love with it and really started studying it and have loved it ever since.

And I would love to hear from your perspective and and your training and your practice, how traditional Chinese medicine viewed the reptilian brain and that energy's the energy of survival and and its opposition to the energy of creation.

Yeah. It's that that the way that a lot of people would word it. And I like the way you worded it, but for those listening, they might hear it as, oh, overly stressed and, you know, you're too stressed and that's impacting your health or your ability to get pregnant and in Chinese medicine, they would, really focus on the liver in this situation.

You know, your liver is, the key is to pent up in your liver is not flowing properly. And that's impacting all the other areas because within Chinese medicine, if your qi is not functioning properly, if it's not flowing smoothly, it does impact everything else because it doesn't allow the blood to flow smoothly, it doesn't allow the digestive system to function properly.

We could go on to all the different systems. So that is such a huge and critical piece. And they recognize this thousands of years ago. You know that this process is not a new thing.

Maybe it's more extreme today. we're, you know, we're bombarded by so much more than we were before. But stress has always been present. Just it took different forms in the past.

And so Chinese medicine has been working on this for a long time, whether that's through acupuncture, through Chinese herbs, through, tai chi and qigong through movement.

Right. Like this. They recognized that flow was important. That movement increased smooth flow of all systems of blood, of all organs. They recognize how important and vital that was, that if we're not flowing smoothly, lation doesn't happen smoothly or properly, might not even happen at all.

Same thing with menstruation. If we're not flowing smoothly, if the cheese not flowing smoothly, blood's not circulating properly, your menstrual cycle is going to be disrupted in some way.

Maybe it's increased pain, maybe the flow is not smooth and consistent. Maybe the color changes. Maybe there's more clots, more breast tenderness. You know, those are things that are specifically looked at within the Chinese medicine framework.

And I can't, you know, everyone we work on needs some aspect of that, some much more than others. The thing that drives me crazy is when you have, you know, friends or family who will just say, oh, just relax and you'll get pregnant.

Just relax. You'll be okay. I mean, it's easy to say the words, it's not easy in practice to accomplish, but so I understand what they're saying because and it's not like it's not valid.

Right. We've all worked with those type A individuals that are trying to strangle their their successful pregnancy. They're trying to like, oh, I'm going to control this so much that I'm going to make it happen.

I've been able to make everything else happen in my life because I've been so regimented about how I do things, and right there, they're so Type-A and got to make it work.

Then I'm going to do the same thing, consciously or subconsciously.

Five Practical Fertility Foundations

I'm going to this is who I am. I'm going to do the same thing with my fertility. And I find that is the place where it doesn't work, that it's counterproductive, like it's been successful for accomplishing your professional goals and work life and so forth, and controlling your lifestyle.

Not successful for fertility. I have yet to see that approach be successful with fertility. You know, I have all these, I've had over the years, these individuals who have, you know, tried this approach and constantly, you know, sending a message or email like, okay, so how about this?

And if I do this and the oh, I nit picking on these little minute details, not saying that any of that is not important. It

is, but it's probably more important that we let go a little bit, that we create the space for conception if we're strangling.

I've found so much in life so many times in life that the more we try to hold on tight, lead to something, the less likely it is that it's going to be accomplished.

That if you think back on those times where you're holding on tightly and then you were like, I just need to let it go a little bit. Let me just relax about this.

Then all of a sudden, boom, it happens. Whatever that is, this is not going to be always the final piece for everybody. But I know for sure if we strangle too hard, if we hold on too tight, we're strangling it.

We don't create space. We know that life is created in space. We need we need space to create new ideas, new adventures, new humans. You know, the world is created in space, so we need to create more space.

Take steps back, relax, takes a little bit. Let go a little bit. Okay, so all the details aren't being followed so closely. That's okay. That's okay. You know.

So I think this is such an important concept for everybody which comes back to Chinese medicine because it allows us to relax a little bit in it. So when someone says, so just relax.

That's the way I interpret it. Like, let's not try to strangle too much. Let's, let's relax. So let's let it go a little bit. Like everything doesn't need to be micromanage or controlled to the same degree that you've done with other things in life.

Let's take a step back. Let's create space. Let's create opportunity for a pregnancy to occur. I love so much how you said life is created in space. New adventures, new ideas, and new humans.

That's a beautiful statement and so memorable. And I think you touch on something that all of us encounter when we're those of us who work in the fertility and pregnancy space encounter, which is that fertility and pregnancy are interesting in that they're not like all of the other things where input necessarily equals output, right?

Like the more effort you put in, the more you get out. I mean, there there still is. It still is needs to be an active process. For us. Prime mastering is super active, and yet it's more about working smart than it is about working hard because you can be spend all over the place making yourself crazy and still.

Getting your period after every two week wait over and over and over again. And you're right that you know, our our clients are incredibly smart, incredibly informed, incredibly educated, incredibly capable, and they have been able to make everything else that they sought to make in their lives happen, happen.

And this feels like such a betrayal of the body and sometimes of of life in the world when this is this thing that they were always told would be the most natural thing for them in the world.

And actually, wait, make sure you don't get pregnant because it's not easy to get pregnant when, yeah, in any one given cycle, it's actually not that likely to get pregnant, right.

And I think it's, it's, it's a, it's a, it's a bit of an identity crisis along with the just heartfelt struggle of wanting and yearning for your baby and not yet having your baby.

Yeah. absolutely. And and I think one of the reason why, this is why it's so important to have, a trusted individual that you are using as a guide. I agree.

Because to me, that allows you to create that space and let go. It allows you to say, okay, and I hear this all the time from from the couples we work with.

I'm tired of trying to make it work and, and, you know, trying to figure it out on my own. I need someone else to just tell me what to do. And that ability to let someone else guide you and and, you know, theoretically tell you what to do requires trust.

But if you if you can get to that place when you trust them and you can let go, it just opens up a world of possibilities, those things that you've been not allowing yourself to do, those things that you've been saying, I can't or I won't now you can because you could focus your attention on those things because somebody else is telling you what to do, and you just need to follow along, right?

Like you don't need to spend all your waking hours researching on Doctor Google or trying to see something else. Now you can just let go and you can focus on, let's just say, oh, you know, I can get back to doing those little hobbies that I love, or finding a vacation that I've been avoiding because I just didn't have the bandwidth for whatever those things are.

And that's where I do really think that that trust comes into play and finding a professional that you can use as your guide and mentor, teacher, coach, whatever word we want to use to help support you along the way.

I agree 100%. Like we always say, trying to mastermind this whole thing for yourself is is contributing to being in a state of survival and crisis, right?

And emergency. So I agree 100%. What are five things that someone can start doing right now, today to improve their fertility? I think these I'm going to make these are practical things.

you know, I'm sure that someone's going to say, oh, I'm doing those things. Or, you know, I've already heard those things, but these are practical and foundational things for a reason. and, even myself.

Like, it doesn't mean that I can't use improvement in some of these areas, right? Like, okay, you know, last week was a difficult week for me in terms of sleep.

I wasn't getting the same quality or amount of sleep as I'm used to, and I could feel it. So I have to reprioritize this week to say, okay, now I have to make sure that I'm going to bed earlier, that I'm getting plenty of sleep.

So these are reminders for everybody. maybe there's something new for somebody that you haven't paid attention to, but, because I mentioned I'm going to start number one with that one is sleep.

It's one that's often overlooked. it's the place because you brought up time earlier. It's so important. Time is so valuable. And we have a limited amount of it.

So the only place we can gain more time is from pulling time away from something else. And often that sleep. I'm going to wake up earlier. I'm going to go to sleep later because I've got to get this one more thing done or whatever it might be, right?

And that to me is like my sleep is as sacred of an item as I could make it. even though and even though I just said it, last week was a difficult week.

Well, that was for, you know, we were traveling, whatever the purpose, whatever was going on, different circumstances. But we're going to have those moments and then we have to reprioritize our sleep afterwards and get back on point.

So sleep for me is number one. Like it's essential. I can go countless stories about, you know, how sleep has impacted someone's fertility. And when they regulated it, they were pregnant. Okay.

diet to me is number two. it is super, super important. if we start thinking about the things in our life that we do the most, sleep is at night. And I'm thinking the most my time.

Right. Sleep is at the top of the list diet. And I'm going to kind of piggyback with that. And the things we consume both in, food and liquid. Right. So all of that, what we put into our body, how we nourish our body, it's super important.

But with that, I would say we can't be crazy neurotic either. You know, we've got to do the best we can. I'm often saying it's about progress, not perfection.

We could only do the best we can. So let's make sure that we're taking care of our health and our body by giving it the proper nutrition and good quality food.

And that is something I don't unless we want to. We don't have to dive deeper into. I think in general, our listeners understand what that means overall.

But what I will say when it comes to that is there is no one size fits all for diet. So just because somebody else got pregnant doing one diet doesn't mean that's going to work for you. Even though that's what they suggested.

and even though we might have five people in the room all doing or needing to do the same diet that we might give them, it's probably going to look a little bit different for each one of them based on where they live, their diagnosis, their needs, their allergies, whatever is going on.

Right. So it's going to look a little bit different. So diet is is number two. And then when I think of the third thing that we do the most on a daily basis, it's breathe.

And we do that very subconsciously. So I'm going to rope in here. I'm going to rope in like exercise in some way walking, moving to increase our ability to take in more oxygen, more air.

And I'm going to do that to dovetail that into number four, which is, you know, working on our mind body connection, our spiritual mind body spirit connection, which comes into some sort of meditation or prayer or whatever that might be.

Because for me, those things also are impacted by breath, by oxygen, by breathing. You know, if you're going to sit down and meditate, you're going to you're and if you're doing it right, you're really oxygenating your body, your lungs, your blood, and and you're doing that in a very conscious way.

Some people might not think of prayer in the same way, but I've got to tell you, if anytime I've seen anybody praying, there's a lot of breathing going on.

I've seen it right. Either they're exhaling, they're sighing, they're letting go, they're bringing in. There's a lot of breathing. So those things that that exercise, that active, you know, participation of, I'm going to make sure I'm moving, increasing circulation, getting more blood.

same thing with that spiritual component. Whether it's yoga, meditation, tai chi, qigong, prayer, whatever it might be. You know, that piece is also super important.

It's super important for a physical body, and it's super important for our mental and spiritual body.

What Super Fertility Means

Right? It's really important across the board. And we we started talking this conversation about belief. It all starts here. If we're not taking time out, whether that's in meditation or prayer, to start to retrain our belief that that's an important piece of that puzzle as well.

So those are the first four things that I think are really essential and practical things that we can all do. The fifth thing I think is going to vary from for each person.

I think the fifth thing could be, oh, I need to get the right coach. Right. it could be, I've known that I need to clean up all the chemicals I use in my house, all the, skincare products and beauty products and cleaning products.

But I've been kind of delaying it. Right? Or putting. It's so expensive and and switching and whatever excuse we give ourselves. I think that's a huge, huge thing that we can all do.

I think also the other thing that we can do individually is take inventory ourselves. So these four things I think everyone should start with and then what's the most important thing for me as an individual, I can intuitive to intuitively go through my day, go through my life, go through my body and scan, do a quick scan and say like, do you know what?

Digestion is more important for me? I need to focus on digestive health or boosting my immunity or cleaning up my household, whatever it might be. I think we can all kind of in to.

Maybe it's relationships, right? Like maybe it's the relationship with my partner which often gets put on the backburner, gets dismissed or ignored, and there's no more crucial time, by the way, for that to be focused on than when you're going through fertility, because I don't if if there is a stressful time in someone's relationship, it's when you're going through fertility treatments.

So I think that one has some ability to be flexible depending on the individual. I love this list, and I, I do think that really these are among the pillars of a good life and good health, regardless of what type of health you're referring to specifically, because there really is no one type of health, because we are assessed, we are a complex network and a system of systems, organs.

Like you said, that's how traditional Chinese medicine has always seen it. And almost every other type of medicine in the world sees it that way, too.

It's really a more Western approach where there's the the specialties. And so we think of, you know, the mind is separate from the body and the different parts of the body is being separate.

But we use the fertility and pregnancy system as a whole. And, you know, I think everyone can agree that these are foundations of a good life and of good health in every way.

And I, I really love the, the in taking inventory part and, you know, figuring out like, what is it that your body and mind are really asking you for?

if you were going to tell someone to if you could only give somebody one thing to do to improve their future, their their fertility and the health of their future super babies, what would that one thing be?

Is it from this list or is it something else? It's for sure from this list. It's hard. if I had to pick one thing, given the world that we live in today and everything that we're exposed to and trying to accomplish, I would say sleep. Yes.

I figured you were going to say that. So good. Especially because it was number one on your on your list. I gave it away. all right, last question, Dr. Marc, this has been such a great conversation and a conversation that has gone, taking us to places that we haven't yet covered in the Super Fertility Summit.

So thank you for that. when you hear the term Super Fertility, what does it mean to you? What's the feeling that it evokes for you? Power. Success. Yes. Hope.

I mean, those are, I think the key, the key things that it that I think of when I, when I hear it. I love that so much. Power. Success. Hope. mama. Dada. Everyone listening.

Thank you so much for being here with us today at The Super Fertility Summit. And for Dr. Marc's conversation and we can't wait to see you at the next one.

So join me there. But for now, we send you off with Super Fertility power success, hope. Thank you so much, Dr. Marc, for being here today. Thanks so much for having me.