Introduction and Dr. Susan Fox's Background

Welcome back to the super fertility summit we have today with us, Dr. Susan Fox. Susan, you bring 23 years of experience in helping people and couples realize their dream of having a family.

You blend traditional Chinese and functional medicine, and you provide in-person and online education to improve IVF and egg freezing outcomes, as well as natural conception.

Your methods include research backed protocols for targeted circulation to reproductive organs in order to improve egg quality and endometrial receptivity.

I can't wait to dive more into these concepts, though, if you don't know exactly what those things mean just yet, you will shortly. And implanting embryo.

All of which can be done in the comfort of one's own home. Integrating the five element principles of Chinese Medicine into your programs. You include mind body guided meditations, qigong exercises at each week of the menstrual cycle designed to lower stress and to allow a person to embody one's fertile health.

I want to welcome you, Dr. Susan. I'm so happy you're here today. Oh, Dr. Cleopatra, thank you so much for having me. It really is an honor to be here. I'm.

I'm excited about this conversation, always. And particularly with you. Thank you. I feel the same. So, mama, dad, dads, humans of all genders listening to us.

You are in for a treat. Because Dr. Susan is going to be talking about things that we haven't yet heard about thus far in this super fertility summit, and I'm really excited for you to hear about how you can apply Chinese medicine at home without having to run around to more appointments.

And that's one of the things that Doctor Susan is going to talk to us about today. As well as the emotional foundations of the Chinese medicine or traditional TCM understanding of fertility.

So stay with us, because we're going to be covering some really great things here. Dr.

Innate Fertility and Moving Beyond Labels

Susan, I love to start out asking the question, what's the one thing that you hope that the people listening to our voices right now will take away from today's interview?

That's a really good question. And it is that I want people to understand that they have innate fertility. And so regardless of what their outcomes will be they can improve their fertile health, their reproductive health, their whole health, their mind body health.

it really is a matter of, setting aside, moving aside the reductionist method of, you know, labs and, diagnoses and instead embracing, ourselves as whole, well, beings and then just finding our way back to that.

I love that so much, embracing ourselves as whole, well, beings and coming back to that, letting ourselves come back to that. And this is really a theme for us in this super fertility summit.

And this is something that I talk about constantly in the Prime Esther protocol. And at the Fertility and Pregnancy Institute, which is that our fertility is innate to us and that we don't need anyone to give it to us.

The only thing that's required is tapping back into it. And sometimes it's helpful. Often it's helpful to have a guide, have tools in order to help us do that in a more, in a straight line so that there's not as much trial and error and not as much time lost.

And to me, what you just said about recognizing ourselves as these whole beings and coming back to who we really are to our true nature, is such a beautiful reflection and embodiment of that.

So thank you for starting us off in this way. Of course. Yes. Thank you. You you said something also that that really interested me, which is the reductionist way of running labs and, you know, maybe prescribing things, etc..

I want to ask you. So in traditional Chinese medicine, as I understand it, and I've been, kind of a student of it since my early 20s. I love it and it my understanding is that there, that there isn't really running labs in included that the diagnostic practices, practices come from things like looking at the tongue, from looking at the pulse, listen, feeling the pulse, etc., and doing the things that help to bring the body back into harmony.

Do you need blood work, etc., in order to be successful? Well, I'm going to answer that a little equivocal, because I wouldn't say I don't know that we need it, but it's in terms of getting that straight line, you know, and accomplishing goals quicker.

I am an advocate for test. Don't guess. and oftentimes the testing proves with the observation. So it just is another data point. And you know, we are we are data driven, beings at this time in our lives.

And, that I think it really is a helpful marker. but but but what I try to do is distinguish from those markers and not turn them into a diagnosis, except that it is a it is something we're working with.

It's material that we're working with this diagnosis. It is not a life sentence. You have diminished ovarian reserve. You have PCOS. Is is it will stop someone in their tracks.

They forget that they are anything other than DR or PCOS. You said something so important that which is that we want this information as data points, but not to become an identity.

Five Elements and Emotional Balance in TCM

And it's really hard to not internalize a diagnosis, so much so that it becomes an an identity or the primary identity from which someone is living. And I think that in the fertility journey and in the fertility world, this is really common, where a woman is like any person.

But I see it more commonly among our female identifying students and clients, which is that they become so identified with these diagnoses and these labels that are given to them often really haphazardly, and they're not realizing what a profound weight they can be and what a profound impact that they can have.

Yeah. And I think I think we see this in the mental health space as well. Somebody gets diagnosed with depression and then this becomes a huge, if not a leading part of their identity, but being diagnosed as infertile or as you said, PCOS. DR It's really hard to not think about that every second of every day, especially when you're still pining for your baby.

Right? Right. It's almost a bit of a of a prison sentence for this person. while which which is diminishing of her own key life force that would then otherwise take this observation in and say, okay, how are we going to turn this around?

What can we do with this? We and it's ironic because we will act this way in other parts of our lives. We'll sort of push back against the, you know, the perceived injustices.

But there's something about the vulnerability, perhaps the existential crisis experience, perhaps, of this fertility journey that kind of puts us back on our heels to say, oh my goodness, that's now who I am.

How can you fix me? and that just that just diminishes this person's life force. in traditional Chinese medicine, there are five primary emotions, as I understand it, that you're looking at and how they correspond to specific organs and channels, and then how they relate to fertility and pregnancy outcomes.

And what you just said made me think of this because I wondered, is getting angry and saying, I'm going to prove them wrong. Like we do in other areas of our lives.

Like I was the first woman of color in history on the tenure track at the USC Davis School, and everybody said, not everybody, but most people. Most of the senior people said I would fail.

And I was like, no, I'm going to prove them wrong. And I did. But I wonder, does that is that is that anger diminishing to you and is it. No, quite the contrary.

Yes. Okay. So tell us about that. Quite the contrary. Because I think anger is the emotion. If, if I can geek out a little bit in Chinese, it's anger is the emotion of the wood element.

That would element in Chinese medicine represents our creative potential, our desire to grow and to create and to try something new. It's the energy that says, oh, I'm going to learn a new language, or I'm going to have a baby.

So, so when, when that energy gets suppressed, repressed, then it wants to push back because it's, it's still got its life force. And so that's the anger outburst.

And we see it with toddlers. Right. They have an outburst. And then they go skipping off and having some fun. That's that. And they're full of creative potential.

So that's the example of that wood energy life force that governs in in internally in our body, our liver system, not just the liver as a detoxifying organ, but but also as a, a system that is responsible for our hormonal, symphony, if you will.

Yes. I love that so much. So I'm gonna I'm gonna make this, this next connection, which is a little bit more complex. But one thing that I have noticed is that there seem to be there seems to be some evidence that certain personality characteristics can increase the likelihood of experiencing fertility challenges, and indifferent male, female and humans in general.

And one of those personality characteristics is the features of the type A personality. So hostility being time pressured. So there are other aspects of that.

But what I the reason why I wanted to connect this to what we just talked about is you could see it as possibly a type A personality having a lot of the wood element.

I think because there definitely is this kind of force of, of, of getting things done right. But there's, there also seems to be and maybe it's, it's kind of the, the in inverted you or the, the belt.

Right. Having too little or too much is makes creation harder. You need just the right amount. Which by the way we see the same thing with stress and both in terms of getting pregnant and having a healthy pregnancy, actually, a moderate amount of stress is the best amount of stress for your your future baby and your baby in utero.

Not too little and not too much. So tell us. Tell us about the difference. Maybe from the perspective of Chinese medicine between anger and hostility.

For sure. So I would say that that that you know again anger is, is intended to move us forward. But when we sit in the anger and stew in the anger and brew in the anger, it becomes its own hostile soup, if you will, and all of that excess energy spills over into what we call the next generating sequence in Chinese Medicine of the heart.

in the heart in Chinese medicine mostly relates to the spirit, not our pumping mechanism in our chest. And so when

you think about it, if you've got this all this energy stewing in brewing and it's moving into the heart spirit, that's when you see the Type-A because because that person has become imbalanced with too much energy, because the heart wants to be excited and joyful and, you know, and the life of the party that when there's too much, then she can become a little bit manic and a little too rigid.

And that so therefore that level of stress is distress. It's not the you stress of, yes, we need to, you know, live in a world where we move and don't just sort of sit there like a, like a piece of jelly.

so I think that that's what you're referring to, that, that type A personality is not just the wood element, it's the wood element in excess spilling over into the fire element, which really needs to cool down a little bit.

We use even use the words chill out. that's very interesting. Tell us more about the five emotions. Okay. So we so a would as is anger as I said and and and and the flip side being creativity joy joyful expression.

the heart element, the fire element is our, our our joyfulness, our ability to kind of come in and just in and be connected. but when it goes out of balance, it becomes a little bit manic.

It's the doctor Google search at 2 a.m. about what? What is the next set of supplements I need to take or the next right thing or. And who else out there in the internet world is going to save me?

And the third element is the Earth element. And that really has to do with our ability to, you know, to, to sustain, to nourish. you know, it is what we it's our it's our enteric nervous system, our ability to take in, assimilate nutrients and eliminate wastes.

But it's also in the emotional side, our tendency to worry, so we can either be thoughtful or we can be worrying. So. And when when we're in the worrying stage, it's going to have an adverse impact on our fertility because it has an adverse impact on our health, because we're raising cortisol levels.

And all of that stress response is interfering with the harmonic harmonic flow of our hormones. The fourth element is our metal element, and that relates to our lung and large intestine.

So we talk about taking in and expiring. You know, we inhale and we inspire and we and then we expire or excrete. And if we're not if those aren't flowing properly, then we tend to become more either had more accumulation, such as lung congestion or, or irritable bowel, or we have a deficiency and that we feel collapsed in grief stricken.

And we just can't get out of that sense of of just despair. It's kind of beyond depression to depression can sometimes be a little flat in that the creative potential is just, you know, just kind of under, under a lid, whereas the grief person is truly collapsed.

And and really, it's a struggle to get up and, and find a reason for living or find a belief that fertility is possible. And then finally, the fifth element is our, our, water element.

And of course, it's what we're mostly made of. It is the, the element that, that we begin with. We begin as a water substance. And so it is an important element to pay attention to.

It does govern the production of our hormones. and so it's very, very important in the fertility conversation emotionally, when our, when our water element goes a little bit sideways, we tend to have that level of fear and dread.

It's not startled. It's not, you know, the door slams and you jump out of your skin. It's that that's foreboding sense of, oh, when is the other shoe going to drop?

Home-Based Fertility Support and Targeted Circulation

You know, I I've done all the things and I'm ready for my egg retrieval or it's, you know, it's it's, you know, I got my

positive ovulation and I and I don't and I dread that it's not going to happen as opposed to I've done all the things and it can happen.

The potential is there. So that's that's how they one could maybe identify. Oh yeah, I tend to either, you know, worry like, you know, chew on the same thought like a dog with a bone or I'm, you know, all always fearful or I'm feeling a bit manic and we have all of these components within us. Right.

But there tends to be one that that we lead with that is our default. And if any of those feel like your default, then know once again that you can just find your way back to harmony with each of them.

We are. We are all of it. You know, we're not all just unicorns and rainbows. we have we have, you know, real life experiences as well. So it's not a matter of running away from those things.

It's a matter of recognizing those things feel out of balance and finding our way back to taking self-care. I love that so much. Doctor Susan, tell us about the process of once we recognize this, which one we lead with, how the process of coming back into balance that we can do ourselves in the comfort of our own homes as opposed to needing to be going to a weekly appointment or something like that.

So I refer to them as the Four pillars. Right? It's our nutrition. sometimes when we're feeling sideways, that is when we also then, you know, you kind of divert to processed foods, you know, a glass of wine, all of these things that, that, you know, feel like comfort foods, but they really take us further down the rabbit hole.

So it's a feed yourself as though you are feeding your baby. you know, because if you are eventually, you know, what you're putting in your mouth right now is going to affect the quality of your follicles. And it's all about quality.

When we talked about diminishing ovarian reserve, I kind of say that's a count. That's a quantity. Let's talk about quality. So it's it's nutrient dense foods.

you know if you can recognize that I picked that from the tree or pulled it from the ground or that egg came from that chicken, then then it's then that's food for us.

and but but if we have to look at ingredients and we can't pronounce them, that's not food for us. And hydration, you know, as I say, we're made of water.

So adequate hydration is super important. I think that circadian flow is really important to our sleep wake cycles. And I know that that is troublesome for some people just by the nature of their work.

But I here again, I say kind of do the best you can, knowing that if you have a night shift, it's suboptimal. So if there is a way to, you know, kind of to rise with the light and sleep with the dark, then that's better for us as just human beings.

And then finally, I talk about, this, this targeted circulation. And I'll and I'll go into a deeper dive if you'd like. yes. Please do. Okay. In in my program, you know, as a result of 2020, there was there was a lot of need to find a way to help people help themselves.

And so that was truly a silver lining in, in my mind. And so one of the, one of the things that I that I came up with, with this, with this support of a colleague of mine who's an amazing researcher, is to take a research protocol that that was done, using a Tens machine that stands for transcutaneous electrical neuro muscular stimulation.

It's often used in the physical therapy world. Then we created something called TI's transcutaneous electrical Acupoint stimulation. And designed protocols whereby a person could apply these pads, turn up the electricity just to the point of perception so that vasodilation can occur and really drive blood flow to the acupoints that I would be doing on the treatment table herself, in the comfort of her own home.

And I find this to be so useful and so empowering, because, you know here again that the experience is not

someone needs to fix me. It's oh, that's all I need to do.

And and and while I'm, you know, well, if it's, if they've got children home, all the children are, you know, napping or sleeping or sometimes even while I'm on my zoom call, I can be I can be having this occur.

So it doesn't it doesn't take the precious resource of time away from this person. So and then we use also, infrared light therapy because our goal is to try to, not have this person's body acclimate to any one set of instructions, but but we alternate, point prescriptions and, and application devices so that there's not an acclimation, but that there's still this constant, continuous daily, stimulation to ovaries and uterus.

I love that. That's beautiful. I talk about this concept of shuffle and glide, where you the goal is or Mrs.. And really keeping the body and organs and systems on their toes so that they remain in tip top shape.

That's part of how we're slowing and reversing biological, epigenetic, reproductive aging. And and it sounds like the way you're alternating the electrical stimulation, which I love, by the way.

And, and I like it I like it pretty strong, but I, I think it feels amazing. And then the, the red light therapy then that's, that's really a really powerful way of doing that.

That's so exciting. Doctor Susan, I love that so much. tell us about your experience with the traditional fertility community and maybe, for example, IVF.

I think that many IVF centers, at least in the United States of America and maybe other countries in the world, have also embraced traditional Chinese medicine, at least the acupuncture part of it to to a large degree, I would say probably less like herbal formulations, etc..

But what's what's been your experience and how what do you think are the barriers and the opportunities there? That's a great question. But having had the privilege and pleasure of of working in this field for 23 years, I've also had the privilege and pleasure of making professional friendships with many of the reproductive endocrinologists in my area, the San Francisco Bay area, and what I can say, it's it's really kind of been a night and day experience 23 years ago, the response was, you don't get to come in here.

And then that one study, that one Paulist study does not, you know, does not give you a key into our, our Sacred Hallows.

IVF, Egg Quality, and Preparing for Pregnancy

but over time, with more research and frankly, with the grass roots, effort by individuals saying, I'm doing this, they have come to, you know, recognize, embrace and trust because I think trust is a big part of it.

I am I am an advocate for IVF for, for, you know, for people for whom if they want no, they want multiple children. And the situation is such that that's going to give them a little bit of an insurance policy and their companies pay for it.

And all of these, all of these factors. then I'm, I say, you know, let's go for it, but let's go for it prepared. And agree with. IVF process is simply taking what you've got right now that the quality that it is right now taking it out, you know, stimulating more, you know, making an embryo and putting it back in.

And if the quality is poor, then the outcome will be less than desirable because you can't stem health into an egg. Right? You cannot stem health into an egg.

All you can do is stimulate more raw material to emerge, to be perceived that the quality is our work to do. And the semester before we go into IVF, before we go into natural conception, I can't, I can't stop saying that enough because I too, like you, feel that IVF is a hugely beneficial option for people when they're you.

If you're 40 and you want three super babies, then it's good planning for us to have you bank embryos so that you can space out your children the way you want without pressure and stress.

In fact, our our oldest mama to date is 48.5 years old. But we will break our own record with a 51 year old mama with her own egg and her husband's sperm.

From good planning we did when she was 45, so that that to me, was absolutely the right call. She didn't necessarily need to do IVF at that time, but knowing that she likely was going to want additional children, that was absolutely the right call.

But even at 45, 44, 45 going into IVF, your odds are less than 1% of success in any one given cycle. And then even across multiple cycles. Multiples at that.

At 42 plus, even after six cycles, you only have a 4% chance of bringing the baby. So, you know, at 40, at 44, in one cycle, your odds are probably next to zero.

So she needed she needed to do the work to prepare for the quality. And it was a really I didn't. See any healthy postpartum and a healthy baby. Yeah. Because all that we had right.

We're not just doing it for the positive pregnancy test. we're, you know we are affecting the health of our progeny. You know, when we're, when we're helping those eggs be in their most optimal health, that human being will be in its most optimal health as well.

You said something really interesting, which I would love to highlight for people, which is that when we're holding our super babies in our arms, we smell them.

We feel them. The love is like no other love in the world. And when you're they're holding not human, who came from your body, you would do absolutely anything for them.

And you kind of feel that way already when you're when you're longing for them. But sometimes it's hard to really make that leap. It's hard for the brain to make the connection that what I'm doing today, what I'm thinking today, how I'm feeling today, what I'm engaging with, what person I'm allowing to make me feel unworthy or whatever it may be, is directly impact impacting the quality of my raw material which will become that human I love more than anything.

And when they're here, you will have a much, narrowed bandwidth for any of that drama and boys, etc. we call it mommy mindedness. You will become laser focused on what really matters to you because you need to.

Your time is more limited. Your energy's more limited. This person needs you to be in your best state of mind and body and spirit. How can we remember this in a way that creates momentum rather than is crippling?

Like you talked about that you used a term that was so powerful when you talked about the five emotions, when you said, collapsed. So how can we how for the for those listening to us right now who are so deeply yearning for their, their babies and they need to keep up the momentum because that's the only way they get there.

But we but keeping up the momentum in a way that that doesn't become manic or collapsed. How do you do that? Well, practice with and with compassion because we don't do it perfectly and we don't.

Even if we do it perfectly one day, we're we're likely to not do it perfectly the next day. I would just say it's it's it is like any spiritual practice.

Right. It's that's the reason they call it a practice is to just each day make some commitment to yourself and your future baby, that that you will do the best you can, that you will, you know, eat healthfully, hydrate properly, you know, do your best to have proper circulation, targeted circulation and, you know, your sleep wake cycle.

And then if there is a moment where you go, oh, that I went, I went sideways. Compassion. Forgiveness, as you would your child. It's almost as though you're having a dialog with your child of the future.

And and what's wrong with that? You know, there's nothing wrong with that. I know there are people who are afraid to do that, and I would I guess I would caution against, perhaps taking it to, to a fantasy, if you will, you know, like, really just.

But if you're in touch, if you're in your spirit connecting with. You know, what I do today? How I think today I'm going to employ my mama bear energy and and do this for myself and for this potential child that I would love to have, who is as yet not even an ovulated egg.

So. So I got time on my hands. I love that so much. So we we call your your future super babies your seventh sense because their follicles that have been with you since your 20 week old fetus in your mother's womb.

So they they it's like biochemically they're eavesdropping on your every emotion, life experience, thought. And so they know us better than anyone or anything in the world.

So I love that, you know, being in relationship with them. We are being in dialog with them. We are. And that's so, so powerful. But I also love so much what you said about, we do it with compassion because we don't do it perfectly.

And even if we manage to do it perfectly one day, the next day may not be that way, but it's like any other spiritual practice.

Resilience, Trust, and Empowered Fertility

And I think any other practice of resilience and resilience is it's a funny thing because it's a bit of, a forgotten art in our world today where we want everything now.

We want it fast, we want it perfect. We want it to look pretty. We want it to compare well on social media, and at the same time, as someone who has had a lot of resilience in her life and has really had no choice but to have a lot of resilience, especially in early life, I can say that resilience really is a muscle and what I would, I what I dream of for myself, for and for all women and for all humans is, a type of resilience that is that is there for us that and that is graceful.

That doesn't have to come out of struggle. So it's almost like and allowing our resilience to come a little bit more easily to us. And I think that requires some level of patience.

It requires some level of commitment and acceptance simultaneously alongside one another, and it will probably also require some level of belief and trust.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah it. Is I, I love that that you are that you really delving into this word because I think we've, we have changed the definition a little bit in our modern day to say resilience is, you know, pick up, dust off and forge forward.

And that's not resistance. That's not resistance. Rather, it's not resilience. Resilience is the ability to move with grace through the various forces of life.

You know, it from from the you know, resilience is occurring at conception. Resilience is occurring through the birth canal. Resilience is occurring, you know, when you when you go from being, you know, crawling to standing and so on and so forth.

so it it actually is a life practice that is, again, innately within us. But I think tuning into and I'm using the term spiritual because I just don't have another word for it.

It's not religious. It's, it's it's getting in touch with that person inside of us that allows us to say, you know, I have a right. And here I have a right to feel the way I'm feeling and to do the things I'm doing and to be resilient and to persevere.

Absolutely. I love that so much. The difference between resilience and resistance, so beautiful. And the the examples you gave up and conception moving through the birth canal, going from crawling to standing are all examples of resilience.

So beautiful. Dr. Susan, as we wrap up today. And this conversation has been so good for the soul for me. I hope for you listening as well. Would you share with us if there was one, just one thing that you could recommend that someone do to improve their fertility and the health of their future?

Super baby what? That what would that one thing be? Boy, that's, How how do I answer that? I guess if I it to just start at the very beginning, it's it's to it's to trust and take action.

You know, trust and move your move your key. You know, you know what is the what is the one next step you want to do or compelled to do because again, that's trust with your in yourself, with your own ability to say, this is my right next step.

Is it to reach out to, you know, a coach? Is it to call the IVF center? Is it to have a conversation with your partner? just keep moving toward your dream and and and your dream will somehow be realized.

Of course, nobody's can guarantee a babe in arms, but your fertile health will have been healed and improved. And this is, you know, this is what life is about, is our facility is not does not only exist in our gonads, our fertility exists in our relationships, in our expression, so that we've got lots to offer the world, including babies.

But beyond babies. That's so beautiful. Dr. Susan, thank you for that. And one last question. What does super fertility mean to you? What does it feel like to you?

What does it look like to you. For me, I would say it lands with the word empowerment. When one is is super fertile. When one is feeling super fertile, she is feeling, that she's got this, that and that.

She's got support. Because I think that we, we try to do these things on our own too often, and that is that that diminishes our fertile expression. Sometimes we really are communal beings.

So I would say when, when we're feeling when we have super fertility, we know that we're we're in our right tribe. We've got the support, we're offering our own gifts to our tribe with that tribe, our doctor or our partner or our, you know, spiritual coach or or whomever.

But, I think that that's probably the best way I could describe it. It really just feels very empowering. And as such, not the kind of empowering that's I'm going to fight this.

It's the empowerment that says, I've got. This and. Live and life has me. I've got life, and life has me. Not that I need to fight or resist it. And maybe that's also another example of resilience that I've got this.

I've got life, and life has me versus I'm fighting it, which is resistance. So beautiful. And I also want to say that one of my earliest published studies, funded by, I think, multiple arms of the NIH, the National Institutes of Health, that study was showed that that people who had higher communalism had better reproductive and pregnancy outcomes and their their babies were better off as well.

So that innate understanding that you have just brought to us has also been shown and love. Through what we've and what we've always known to exist. Exactly. That's exactly. Right.

I love that when science discovers what has always existed. Well, what what our hearts and souls have always known and always needed. That's so, so very true.

Thank you so much for this, Dr. Susan. What an incredible conversation. I've loved it so much. Thank you in much the same. Thank you very, very much for having me.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for the beautiful work that you do. And mama, dad, parents of all genders, thank you so much for being here for this important conversation that we just had to be continued in our next super fertility summit talk.

Meet me there. Thank you so much.