

**UNEXPLAINED INFERTILITY AND THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION:  
FOOD FOR THOUGHT  
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When I first went into practice in 1979 as a psychotherapist serving infertility patients, the scuttlebutt was that any inability to conceive for which there wasn't an explanation meant that research hadn't yet clarified the person's specific problem. Today, much has been clarified and medical experts believe that if a correct diagnosis could be guaranteed, the number of those labeled "undiagnosed" would be very small indeed, rather than the 10% to 30% or more (depending upon whose statistics you look at) who fall in this category now.

Whether the diagnosis is incorrect or unknown, any couple who is told that the reason for their questionable fertility is unexplainable suffers in double time. Each undiagnosed person with whom I've worked over these many years has said, "I wish I had a diagnosis – at least I'd know what I'm up against, and the doctors would know what to do."

Medical reasoning, while it has merit, leaves out of the story what could be going on having to do with how our minds and bodies communicate with each other, often below our conscious awareness. While we may not be mentally aware of how our subconscious mind interprets our experiences, our bodies hold this information for us. Tuning in to our bodies by way of our intuition is how we stand to discover what our experiences mean to teach us.

Case in point: Many years ago, a woman came into my office and even before she was sitting on my couch asked, "Could this infertility be my fault?" I told her that I was opposed to her blaming herself, but I was curious why she was inclined to do so. A story tumbled out having to do with a medical condition which had made it impossible for her to get through the night without wetting the bed -- until she was 16 when the problem, finally, was surgically corrected. Meanwhile, her mother's harsh criticism and judgment had had its impact. After hearing her story I simply said to her, 'Are you afraid that you

will *be* the kind of mother that you *had*?' She burst into tears. And she conceived during the next cycle.

While we cannot say for sure that this is why she conceived, it is clear that her tears were tears of relief. When our minds feel relieved, our bodies are less tense. What else might loosen up besides our muscles and our breathing? This lovely lady, by following her intuition and making an appointment with me, gave herself an opportunity to discover her greatest fear. Lodged just below her conscious awareness was the byproduct of her life experience which manifested in the fear that she would imitate her mother's style of mothering and her child would suffer the way she did. She was even more relieved to come to understand in our session that with conscious awareness, determination, and perhaps a little guidance, she'd be a fine mother. Her longing for parenthood came out from under her fear of repeating history.

The harshness and judgment with which this woman had been raised had come out in the form of self-blame, not a surprise when a small child assesses the environment and concludes that she's not okay, not loveable, not worthy of kindness and compassion. The up side of blaming herself is that it led to her discovery of what her body was holding for her – fear of being like her mother.

There are infinite intricacies to the interplay between mind and body. I am not saying that a personal issue causes infertility. Fear of conception, even for a very good reason, may not be in your story at all. And even if it is, you can't be held responsible for something of which you are unaware. You can choose to be responsible to yourself by following a hunch the way my patient did.

Here's the food for thought: Why do some fail to conceive even *with* the correct diagnosis? On many occasions besides the one reported here, I have witnessed people choosing to face a fear which sits at the juncture between conscious and unconscious awareness, waiting for recognition so the body can release the grip it has on us when it's trying to get our attention. From my vantage point as a mind/body therapist, I invite you

to give yourself a chance to “listen in” on the conversation that *your* mind and body may be having. Would something release in you?