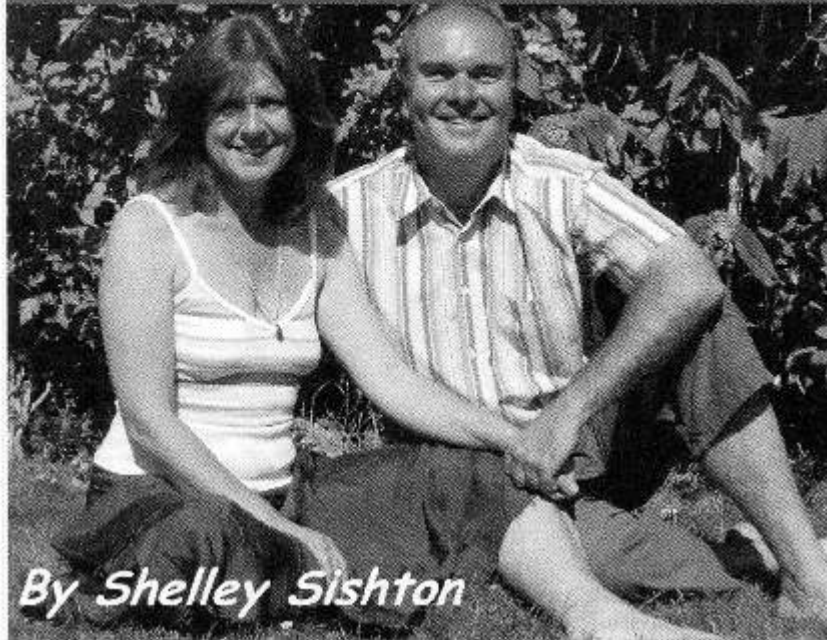


The gift of my infertility



By Shelley Sishton

I'm a flower essence consultant, teacher and producer, and intuitive counsellor. My husband Ian and I run a retreat offering inspiration for peace and well-being.

Fourteen years ago, my life was very different. Having studied science to degree level, working as a board director of a large London advertising agency, I was a total sceptic of anything non-medical, and felt very challenged by what I called New Age hocus-pocus stuff. I'd never heard of flower essences. I placed all my hopes in the hands of doctors to do something that would enable me to become pregnant after years of trying.

Feeling rock bottom, full of self-blame and anger, with a body that was crumbling at the age of 35, I finally peeked into the hocus-pocus world. Before that, I dutifully ignored all messages...

The beginning

One year after I was married, I stopped taking the pill, having used it for 11 years. Part of me felt excited – another part very apprehensive, and part numb. I decided to ignore those feelings – they were irrelevant. And what a physical state Ian and I were in, too. Stress was part of the norm. We had a poor diet, drank a lot, and Ian smoked. I had repeated colds and flu, felt tired most of the time and experienced severe headaches weekly. But others got pregnant in this environment, so why should it be any different for us?

When I mentioned to my GP we wanted to try for a baby, he recommended I have an MMR jab, which I did. (I had no idea then how toxic

this was to my system, let alone the yellow fever, cholera/typhoid and Hep A vaccines I had not long after, because of a holiday to the Far East.)

One year on, no pregnancy. My periods were irregular, drawn out, often lasting ten days – painful and heavy, with dark clots and old brown blood. I went to our GP again. He recommended Clomid for six months, to increase progesterone. No pregnancy. Back to the GP. He recommended I had a hormone test. (No one at work knew about the tests. I wanted to keep it all hidden. Part of me felt ashamed at having to have these tests, that my body just didn't seem to function normally. I was a responsible director person, who couldn't be seen to have a weakness.) The test result was normal. Another year on, and no pregnancy.

From GP to consultant

After asking "What next?", our GP referred us to a woman gynaecologist at a major London hospital. Her recommendation was to begin a series of tests:

*sperm hostility/post coital test
sperm count and motility (home freezing a sample)
another hormone assessment*

All normal. Sex had long since become mechanical and focused around ovulation. We were usually tired. Little emotional involvement from either of us – often anger, if anything, from me, at having to 'do it'.

More intrusive tests

The next stage was laparoscopy. For this, I found co-ordinating work

with the doctor's schedule and my cycle especially difficult. My work involved travelling a lot, entertaining clients until all hours. To announce to my fellow directors that I would have to be off work for four days was practically unthinkable.

After four months, I finally managed to dovetail everything, and went into hospital. I was put on a ward with women the same age as me having hysterectomies after two and three children. I would not admit to myself or Ian just how devastating it was to hear the woman next to me talk about her relief at having a hysterectomy, and what a trial her two children were.

The laparoscopy revealed 'slight' endometriosis, but I was told it was "nothing to worry about".

Again I didn't question it, after all, 'they' knew best. I realise now, I was terrified to ask – they might have told me then what I heard two years later.

Please fix me

We were now three years into 'trying'. I was 32 – Ian 34. The doctors backed up our concerns that we were getting old for having a family, and our local authority said "no" when we enquired about adopting a baby, due to our age. It was emerging (medically, physically) that nothing was wrong with Ian, so it must be down to me. I didn't allow myself to question how I felt about that – just felt numb again. I remember thinking "when they find something wrong at least it can be put right". I was always looking to the medical profession to 'make me work' and to enable me to become pregnant. They had the answer.

The next step offered was an HSG x-ray (hysterosalpingogram) to check the functioning of my fallopian tubes in particular. Result: normal

The next step – IVF

We had the option of waiting up to 18 months on the National Health Service for a first consultation for IVF. Due to our ages, we decided to go to a private clinic in central London, where the consultant was achieving a 25% IVF success rate. He was a very imposing man. I felt almost powerless in his presence. Probably a lot to do with me handing over responsibility for my body to him. He MUST have the answers, I thought. He'll make my body work.

I remember the first consultation involving an internal examination, with four male student doctors surrounding me too, peering at my vagina without emotion or voice. I realise now I simply closed down, almost left my body to cope with this. It was a small office, and Ian was sitting only eight feet from the table I was being examined on. I desperately wanted him to hold my hand, to be right up close to me, but dared not ask for this. This was a mechanical process by the man who would fix me, so I thought it was essential I did what he wanted and ignored my own feelings.

After the preliminary tests appeared 'normal' again, we started on IVF.

IVF the first time

Our first round of IVF was very stressful; having to sneak out of client presentations to sniff fertility drugs at specific times to suppress my own natural ovulation; then having Ian inject me with drugs each night to stimulate 'controlled' ovulation; having to visit the hospital for scans every other day to monitor egg growth, how many I was producing, their size and likely quality.

I was still keeping it quiet at work. I was always on my own for the tests, but that's what we had agreed to do. No point us both disrupting work.

Come the time to harvest my eggs, we were told I'd produced only three, when the consultant expected 12-15. On his advice, we decided to try IUI, with Ian's sperm being injected into my womb.

No pregnancy. We both felt very tired, and stressed; all that effort for nothing.

IVF – the second time

Six months on, THIS time it would work, I told myself (ignoring the fear I felt inside). I had increased dosages of fertility drugs, but still produced only three eggs. Not good enough to harvest. We did IUI again so as not to waste the eggs. No pregnancy.

I had flu at the time, felt very low on energy, and had a bout of herpes (now I realise this was old pain and guilt calling for my attention).

My body was getting cranky and not working well. My lower back gave out, and a couple of weeks off work with anti-inflammatory drugs and physiotherapy did nothing. Back to work, and sometimes at the end of the day I could barely walk. My GP told me to expect this pain for the rest of my life, and I accepted his verdict without question and with great fear.



Change begins

I decided to leave work. This was a dramatic step for both of us, because of the insecurity of future income. I also did the very daring thing (for me, at the time!) of seeing an osteopath, in Harley Street. But I still had no concept of me having any influence over my well-being and life.

After a few visits, he suggested I start Pilates, something very new then. I began to learn about my body from my teacher and to listen to its tension and rigidity. I was, for the first time, paying attention to my body as a whole.

During these early years of 'trying', friends were having children left right and centre. We were asked to be godparents ten times. We felt honoured by this, but it was often tinged with feelings of 'why not me?' And then they'd moan about their babies. How they had no time for themselves. How hard it was. I felt like screaming at them – at least they *had* a baby.

IVF - the third time

We tried IVF again in February 1995, with a body that was clearly out of balance with mind, emotion and spirit, but I was still closed to this. I thought it would be so different, because I was self-employed, at home most days, enjoying what I did, and less stressed. This time, I had the highest dose of drugs that was safe to stimulate egg production. Still only four eggs. My consultant was amazed: 'that's enough drugs to populate a rabbit warren', he said.

Once again my body was not 'doing what it should', and not performing, letting me, Ian, our consultant and his whole team down. I felt a failure.

Our consultant decided to harvest all four eggs. They were mixed with Ian's sperm. We got a call the next day to say two had fertilised, and although they looked a bit weak, he would implant them. I felt elated, but detached, as if it was not really me going through this process. I hardly talked with Ian about it at all. I realise now this was because it would bring up all my/our fears, and we were little equipped to handle them then. I wanted to blame someone or something for the state my body was in, this poorly performing specimen. But this was not the time. So just get on with this next procedure, and I'll be fixed.

A brief connection

Excited, I went for the implantation procedure. Ian was in a meeting. I think I even said 'don't worry, I can do it, no need for you to be there'. But BAM, what an emotional shock I had. I watched our consultant inject two live embryos at the 32 cell stage into my uterus. They were ALIVE! I was watching life in its infancy. Our babies, even. It was, for the split second I allowed my true emotions to flow forth, MAGICAL, a moment in time that was endless. We had created these two tiny embryos. WOW. But I was alone. I suddenly felt Ian SHOULD have been with me to witness the magic. But he was in a meeting. Enough said.

"Where are our priorities in life?" I wondered. "Is this what we both REALLY want right now?"

I rang Ian from a phone box after I left the hospital, and he said 'Have we had sex yet?' which at the time I thought was funny; but also, I felt immense sadness, and wanted to cry because he wasn't with me. Then as usual, I hurried the moment and its emotions within, and carried on home. For now, I had two embryos inside. The consultant told me the next few days would be crucial.

Surreal moment

I had a meeting scheduled six days after the implantation. I'd started to bleed the day before – just slight spotting. The hospital told me to rest. I thought 'a meeting can't hurt'. So I went. I began to feel pain half way through. The pain increased. I went to the toilet, and there, in the dingy loo of a factory, I had a miscarriage. I felt an immense wave of pain and a massive hot flush. I felt sick. A huge clot was released. I wanted to keep the clot on the pad to show Ian, as I had never seen one like it before. So dark, yet with a clear sign of the embryos. I was fascinated, also aware that my trip to the toilet was taking far too long, ten minutes by now. I threw the pad away, into a scrappy bin in the corner (thinking with great sadness 'what a way to end life'), and rejoined the meeting. I remember opening the door of the meeting room, and nothing else about that day.

I still had no concept of me having any influence over my well-being and life.

The consultant told me he could try IVF once more, and if that didn't work, I was unlikely ever to be able to have babies. I felt a deep dread rising from inside. What if he was right? I had not performed according to his standards so far, so what hope was there for the future? And he should know best.

I was now almost 35.

A new door opens

Six months later we were on a trip to my home country of Australia, and stopped off in Hong Kong to see some very old Chinese friends. Somehow I felt an incredible urge to share our situation with these friends, who offered us the opportunity of seeing their Chinese family doctor, who was also a specialist in fertility treatment.

Ian and I followed our friend Frank through the streets of Kowloon, down a back alley, to a tiny room, where an old lady sat at a formica table in front of a wall covered with hundreds of tiny drawers (very different to our plush London IVF clinic). Frank relayed our story to her in Chinese. She smiled constantly, listening intently, then looked at my tongue (how *ODD* I thought, what's *that* got to do with anything?), then took my pulse on both wrists (even more odd), and proceeded to ask a number of questions about my menstrual cycles. She was most interested in my overall health and energy levels. How confusing and irrelevant – my intellect judged. But at the same time, 'something' inside was excited – uncharted ground, feeling something big, new, to be explored.

She said my liver was very stagnant and overworked, my diet was not fresh enough, that I had too much dampness in my body, and the quality of my blood was very poor, sluggish and too thick (not enough Chi flowing – "what was Chi?" I wondered.)

She gave me two months' supply of what looked like gutter sweepings (as affectionately observed by an Australian Customs Officer on our trip), which I had to boil up and drink as a tea each day. The smell was vile. A brown, sludgy mess in a mug. Amazing what you get used to when you are ready to change – I even liked it after a while!

The safe route

Back home, I began to notice changes in myself, such as more energy. I didn't fall asleep in the day. There was colour in my cheeks even; less period pain; different blood flow. And lots of smelly colonic activity! I wasn't yet at the stage of linking one body organ or system to another. My issue was my reproductive system. The rest of the body was just fine, in my mind. Little did I know how toxic I was.

TCM continues, with 'new stuff' too

We saw a magazine article about Traditional Chinese Medicine and fertility, by a Dr Zhai, in west London, with details of her early findings and successes of using treatment which included acupuncture (never having that I thought, must be painful having needles stuck in you), and Chinese herbal medication. Ian and I saw Dr Zhai fortnightly over the next 2 years for herbal treatment and acupuncture. I observed continuing significant changes in my health during this time, and in my mental openness to new concepts and ideas. I also explored pre-conception nutrition through the Foresight organisation while seeing Dr Zhai, and began to adjust our diet.

At this time, a close friend was diagnosed with life-threatening cancer. Alongside her chemotherapy, she had begun talking with an old school friend, who was helping her with new and (to me) extraordinary ways of finding clarity in the moment, achieving deep peace, and connecting with her own healing forces ("what are THEY?" I wondered), and doing things like meditation and visualisation. My curiosity got the better of me, and so I met up with Barry Durdant-Hollamby to talk about my fertility, or lack of.

I went to the toilet, and there, in the dingy loo of a factory, I had a miscarriage. I felt an immense wave of pain and a massive hot flush. I felt sick. A huge clot was released.



I could feel the responsibility we have to ourselves, our bodies, and our foetus, to clear the womb at a cellular, molecular/energetic level, to make it a light-filled home for this child of God/dess to develop to their fullest potential.

And along came essences

Barry introduced me to The Australian Bush Flower Essences in 1996. Hmmmm. Energy in a bottle. Extremely challenging to my intellect at the time, but off I went with them. My interest in health and exploring new options began to snowball. My Pilates instructor suggested I try reflexology, and my reflexologist then suggested kinesiology to me (which I went on to study as a Foundation Course).

I started the Alexander Technique, and through Barry, began meditation daily and practicing visualisation. Through Kinesiology I became fascinated by diet and nutrition, changing diet radically, cleansing and detoxing, and feeling the amazing benefits. I experienced Reiki, and trained as a Reiki Master. I visited a Shamanic Healer and did a re-birthing course.

This hardened sceptic was turning into a New Age evangelist, telling all my friends about each treatment, and how GREAT it was, that they should have it too, for their own problems.

Behind all of these treatments two things remained constant - I used essences regularly, and met with Barry to develop personally and spiritually.

I then came across Clare Harvey's work at the International Federation for Vibrational Medicine (IFVM), and I signed up for her two year training course on flower essences.

As I started my IFVM training in 1999, it dawned on me that each time I came across a new therapy I was shifting my expectation of healing to my therapist/treatment. I was still looking *outside myself* for the answer.

Deepening the connection with MYSELF

As my relationship with essences deepened through the course, I was now really understanding that I was the only one creating my state of health, and, in fact, everything in my life too. Dr Bach (creator of Bach Flower Essences) believed that essences enhance our innate qualities. They are not adding or giving us anything we do not already have. They simply and gently remind us what it feels like to resonate at our natural harmonic *Soul frequencies* of joy, peace and love. Having spent a lifetime living out conditioned energy patterns of blame, guilt, anger, frustration and lack, I was aware of many deeply ingrained belief systems and emotional traits being shown to me through essences, and which I was now ready to change.

Through the IFVM course I explored Past Life Therapy, and began to examine issues around sexuality, and its relevance to fertility.

Journeying inwards on a new level

Once the course was finished, I began another treatment, called Therapeutic Body Work, which was to take me into a whole new dimension in terms of communicating with my body, and releasing pain and patterns which I could identify as my mother's pain, and not mine.

In meditations after these treatments, I began to journey back into the womb, even to the moment of my conception.

My own in-utero experience

I grew in a womb space where my mother had experienced four miscarriages prior to my conception. This was during the 1950s, when 'nice' middle class women simply brushed their emotions under the carpet and got on with life.

Unresolved grief, sadness, unexpressed desire, pain, were all left within the body, unprocessed, untreated and unacknowledged. Dr Christiane Northrup, in her book *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* states that women birth as they live. At the time of giving birth, suppressed pain and un-dealt with emotions rise to the surface.

Memories of being in her womb were always dark and suffocating. I think I nearly died in there - it was stifling, overwhelming. And the energetic space of her womb was further complicated through heavy drug use, which made the environment even more cluttered. (Mum was given diethylstilbestrol to prevent miscarriage, the wonder drug of the 50s and early 60s, banned later due to health problems in successive generations.)

After hours of painful labour, I was pulled out of the birth canal, and then separated from my mother for ten days because she experienced a haematoma and almost died. I felt absolute panic at being born. I felt lost. I didn't want to be here and became quite ill for the majority of my early years.

I came to realise I had no relationship with being pregnant myself. The thought of my being pregnant was terrifying. I had never acknowledged this to myself before.

In-utero imprinting

I saw that I carried the same dark energy in my womb. My mother's fears had become my own - about pregnancy, sex, love; about myself, and how little I value me, and about the fear of loss. My cells resonated with heavy pain.

Identifying me

After a particular series of body treatments and essences, I really started to identify what was not MY pain. I had carried my mother's pain from womb to now, and was living out her

I grew in a womb-space where my mother had experienced four miscarriages prior to my conception.

women birth as they live

energy patterns and beliefs.

In meditation, I began to receive information on the transference of energy in the womb. I could feel the responsibility we have to ourselves, our bodies, and our foetus, to clear the womb at a cellular, molecular/energetic level, to make it a light-filled home for this child of God/dess to develop to their fullest potential.

I realised that on some level I felt my mother's pain around my birth was my fault. I spent a lifetime trying to make it up to her, to take away any other pain she ever had - always trying to make her life ok for her, while at the same time, being traumatised if I was ever separated from her. I felt absolute panic as a child going to school. I was deeply afraid of being abandoned.

If I'm carrying this imprinting in my own cells, I thought, then with essences and an ever-deepening of the connection to my Soul forces, there is the opportunity to *change this energetic memory pattern*; to truly identify my SELF.

I believe I am breaking a cycle in my vibrational line, helping my extended family to do the same, through changing the vibration of my cellular memory, my DNA.

And recently...

I was asked this question: "After so many years of using essences, would you say they have not worked, after all, as you've not had children?" Far from it.

Perhaps my journey of awakening this lifetime has been to enable me to empower others to live to their highest potential, and to see their life challenges as opportunities to grow, explore and SEE the world for what it truly is, to invite others to consider a new view of conception, and to look beyond the physical, even the mental, and emotional level, towards the vibration of Spirit; and not to regard this as weird, wacky and irrelevant, but as an integral aspect of our well-being.

My journey has also led me to develop essences for people to express themselves without ancestral pain - for new babies to come into the womb space and not be swamped by the energies of generations past. And for adults to free themselves, and remember they are conscious creators of their life.

From hardened sceptic to flower essence consultant, producer and teacher of the power of mind, body, emotion and spirit, and the awesome design of nature - a quantum journey. And more to come.

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Flower essence consultant, teacher and producer of essence ranges.

Spa transformations

Awakening the Divine feminine

Mother & baby

Author: *The Energy of Conception*

Exploring fertility at the vibrational level

Ian and I live in an east house in the Kent countryside with two active border collies and lots of talkative ducks and chickens. Passionate about bringing knowledge and usage of essences into general awareness, I consult, write articles, give talks and workshops on the theme of energy and the many applications of essences for our lives today.

Photo on page 38 - Shelley and Ian.

