

## Understanding the Positive Impact of Mind-set Coaching before and during Pregnancy in Women Over 35

**Clare Ford\***

*CEO and Founder of Beautiful Souls, Biddenden, Ashford, United Kingdom*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Clare Ford, CEO and Founder of Beautiful Souls, Biddenden, Ashford, United Kingdom.

**Received:** October 03, 2018; **Published:** November 30, 2018

It has been estimated that women over 35 now account for about 13 percent of births, or about 1 in 8. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the birth rate in women 40 to 44 years of age was 10.5 births per 1,000 and the birth rate in women over the age of 45 was 0.8 births per 1,000 in 2013. Rises in the birth rates for older women is due in part to increasing use of in vitro fertilization and other assisted reproductive technologies.

Studies have shown that as women grow older, they run a greater risk of miscarriage, premature birth, birth defects, having a low-birth-weight baby, and experiencing complications, thereby increasing the need for a caesarean section.

None of this means, however, that it's inadvisable to have a baby for women over 35 or even in their 40s.

I would recommend advising a woman attempting a first pregnancy at 35 or older may to take the following additional precautions.

If pregnancy does not occur readily, it is advisable to seek professional advice. If either partner needs treatment for infertility, the sooner it is begun, the better. Women over 35 might want to consider amniocentesis to determine whether there are genetic abnormalities in the foetus. Genetic counselling for couples is a good idea, although research around possible miscarriage rates varies.

Take steps to improve health before becoming pregnant—for example, avoid using tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, which can impair foetal development, except for medication taken at a doctor's direction. Stress control measures can be put in place to prepare the woman not just physically but mentally and emotionally, such as mind-set coaching, yoga, meditation, walking in nature; swimming; water therapy; gentle healing and a healthy diet. Let's consider these in more detail.

### **Pregnancy and Nutrition**

Nutrition can have a profound effect on maternal health and the baby in utero. Poor eating habits not only interfere with the baby's growth but can also aggravate some of the common discomforts of pregnancy. Recommendations about healthy weight gain vary somewhat among experts, but according to current guidelines from the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences, most women should gain 25 to 35 pounds: three to five pounds during the first trimester, and one to two pounds per week after that.

A large percentage of this weight gain is from the baby, the placenta, and the increased volume of fluid in a woman's body. Failing to gain sufficient weight can be harmful to the baby's health.

At the same time, pregnancy is not an excuse to become excessively heavy. Too much weight can complicate delivery, impede postpartum weight loss, and result in other complications such as hypertension. It is also harder to lose excess weight after pregnancy.

The National Research Council, which sets recommended daily amounts of nutrients, advises that pregnant women who eat a well-balanced diet don't need vitamin and mineral supplements.

Many women, however, may have trouble meeting the recommended amounts of iron, calcium, and folacin, and, depending on their diet, other nutrients as well. Women following a vegetarian diet, for example, may need additional zinc and possibly some B vitamins. Many doctors, therefore, will prescribe a supplement especially formulated for pregnant women to provide various essential nutrients. In my practice, I commonly help pregnant women come to terms with the amount of weight they are gaining... this can cause a huge amount of stress, and feelings around "doing something wrong", even when the baby is growing healthily.

## Pregnancy and Exercise

Proper exercise during pre-pregnancy and pregnancy can have many benefits. For a woman who enjoys working out, it can be important psychologically to continue with a regular exercise programme after she becomes pregnant to feel more in control as the body changes. Moderate exercise during pregnancy can also help prevent pregnancy-related complaints such as excessive weight gain, back strain, and constipation. Another potential benefit is that exercise may help ease or shorten labour and delivery, and help speed recovery after birth.

Walking and swimming are particularly good for pregnant women who have been relatively sedentary. Connecting with nature and floating in water also increase feelings of wellbeing and help to balance energy centres in the body.

## Pregnancy and Mind-set

### Positive Attitude

Positive thinking is an important component of improving the chances of getting pregnant, keeping the baby and feeling confident and prepared in labour. Keeping a positive attitude is so essential to getting pregnant because it improves overall mental health; many studies have found that positive thinking decreases levels of stress and the risk of depression, which in turn led to increased odds of getting pregnant. Likewise having support and coaching around coping with the emotional turmoil that pregnant women undergo is hugely beneficial. Pregnancy isn't always a joyful time and women have to learn how to manage anxiety, overwhelm, exhaustion and mood swings.

As much as we try to do everything right to ensure a healthy pregnancy, sometimes there are things beyond our control. Pregnancy complications and even a loss of a pregnancy cannot always be predicted. Suffering a miscarriage or serious complications in pregnancy can leave women feeling confused, scared and sad. Imagine the fear around being pregnant a subsequent time. It is crucial that the mum-to-be is helped to understand and acknowledge her fears so that she can manage the overwhelm and feelings of disconnection with the baby growing inside her.

The tips, tools and techniques that I include in my pregnancy coaching programme, "Mastering your Mind-set in Pregnancy" and book: "How to have a Positive and Empowering Pregnancy" are useful post-partum too, to alleviate depression, anxiety and overwhelm and to allow the new mum to rest and bond with her baby. I tell my own story of post-natal depression here.

### Positive thinking tips for getting and staying pregnant

Many women today lead hectic lives, leaving them overstressed and depressed. Mental health has a major impact on their ability to get pregnant.

However, improving mental and emotional health and well-being in order to improve the chances of getting pregnant isn't too difficult. Small changes can have a major impact on reproductive health.

Some positive thinking practices that I recommend for getting pregnant and enjoying a positive pregnancy include regular meditation, yoga, visualisation, positive affirmations and journalling.

### "Relax and Let it Happen"

One of the most common pieces of advice given to couples trying to conceive is: "You just have to relax".

Interestingly, Alice D. Domar, Ph.D., director of the Mind/Body Center for Women's Health at Boston IVF, assistant professor of obstetrics, gynaecology, and reproductive biology at Harvard Medical School, and author of *Conquering Infertility*, disagrees, stating: "...there is no evidence that relaxation per se leads to conception".

However, we know that emotions can cause a physiological response, releasing cortisol - the flight/fight/freeze hormone. Consider the fact that fear can make you dry-mouthed, cause your heart to beat faster, and your palms sweat, even if you're watching a scary movie from the comfort of your own home. Consider too, some promising results in which relaxation techniques lower blood pressure without

benefit of blood pressure medication. In 1990, Irene L Goodale documented decreased premenstrual tension in women who used relaxation techniques. The aforementioned Alice Domar cited a study in 1992 in which IVF patients who practiced relaxation techniques prior to the procedure had double the number of pregnancies.

In any case, the stress of infertility and the journey into pregnancy is very real. Janet L Blenner in 1990 described the eight step emotional progression of infertile couples, from the dawning of awareness that conception is taking longer than planned, to coming to terms with needing and having treatment, to feeling enraged by the unfairness of everything and eventually to letting go and moving on regardless of the outcome. Mind-set coaching at this time helps couples who are trying to conceive manage a whole plethora of thoughts and emotions, so that they are energetically aligned with calling in their baby as opposed to rejecting it.

In conclusion, "success" in conception, pregnancy and birth depends on how the situation is dealt with physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. When we look at Mind, Body and Soul being connected, aligned and working together, parents-to-be are able to prepare themselves confidently and calmly to fulfil their dream of having a baby and owning their birth-story.

**Volume 7 Issue 12 December 2018**

**© All rights reserved by Clare Ford.**