



# How Trauma Impacts Fertility

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# A fertility journey isn't *just* a medical exploration.

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Too often, on a fertility journey, we can be directed down the route of hormone tests and physical examinations, without really addressing what is going on with our emotional wellbeing. Naturally a fertility journey can be quite traumatic, which can have an immediate effect on our body, however there are multiple layers within which we carry trauma, some of which will be shared here.

First, we need to understand WHY Trauma has such an effect on our physical bodies as well as our emotional. **Bessel van der Kolk** wrote the best-selling book “*The Body Keeps the Score*”, with scientific based evidence on how our bodies hold on to everything that happens to us throughout our lives.

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# Our Bodies Store Trauma

Evolution has provided us with a way to deal with trauma the moment it happens, yet our cultural training overrides our body's natural instinct about what to do. The result is that we often store the energy of trauma in our body, which leads to unexplained physical problems, emotional issues, and psychological blockages, all of which can impact our fertility.

Traumatic events, be they minor or major are classed as trauma to the body. To truly understand this, we need to hone in on the fact that people can be traumatised by any event they perceive (consciously or unconsciously) to be life-threatening. This perception is based on a person's age, life experience, and even their constitutional temperament. For example, sudden loud noises, such as thunder or the angry shouts of adults, can traumatise infants and young children. Of course, thunder and shouting are rarely life-threatening, but when it comes to trauma, the critical factor is the perception of a threat and the incapacity to deal with it.

For example, when we experience “trauma” we should pay special attention to our body sensations, such as tingling, muscle tightening or loosening, your breathing, and any increase or decrease in heart rate, temperature, and so on.

It's very important to understand that nervousness or anxiousness, or almost any response you might have, has to do with the arousal or activation of the energy you experienced during the original overwhelming event. When you are threatened, your body instinctively generates a lot of energy to help defend yourself against the threat. This is the energy we work with in the healing of trauma, so we need to be aware of it.

When an animal experiences trauma, for example an impala being chased by a cheetah, they will respond, usually with the freeze reaction, playing dead, and after the event, they will shake themselves off, clearing the trauma response from within their body. As humans, we do not do this, instead we disrupt the full process, and the trauma remains stuck within our body.

# Autonomic Nervous System

The lower part of your brain also holds the autonomic nervous system, so when your survival brain doesn't get to finish something, the whole lower part of the brain becomes dysregulated. The autonomic nervous system is responsible for our breathing, sleep, digestion, sexual arousal – all the things that happen automatically including conception.

Our Nervous System is always aiming to feel “**safe**”, constantly looking for signs of danger. When something triggers a neuroception of danger we go into action, placing us in the Sympathetic – Fight or Flight state or we may “shut down” into the Dorsal state.

Our Vagus nerve, the most important nerve with regards to the autonomic nervous system, travels all the way down into our cervix, connecting to our Reproductive System. Our Reproductive System is the only expendable system within the body, which means that if our body doesn't “feel safe” it will shut down, thus causing fertility issues.

In the animal kingdom, if an animal feels unsafe, the hormones switch off to stop that animal becoming pregnant. In humans, if we are stressed, feel unsafe (this is happening unconsciously) or not healthy enough, our bodies shut down too.

Many women have shared stories of how violated they feel by their Dr's in fertility examinations, often placing your reproductive system into a “freeze” state. process, and the trauma remains stuck within our body.



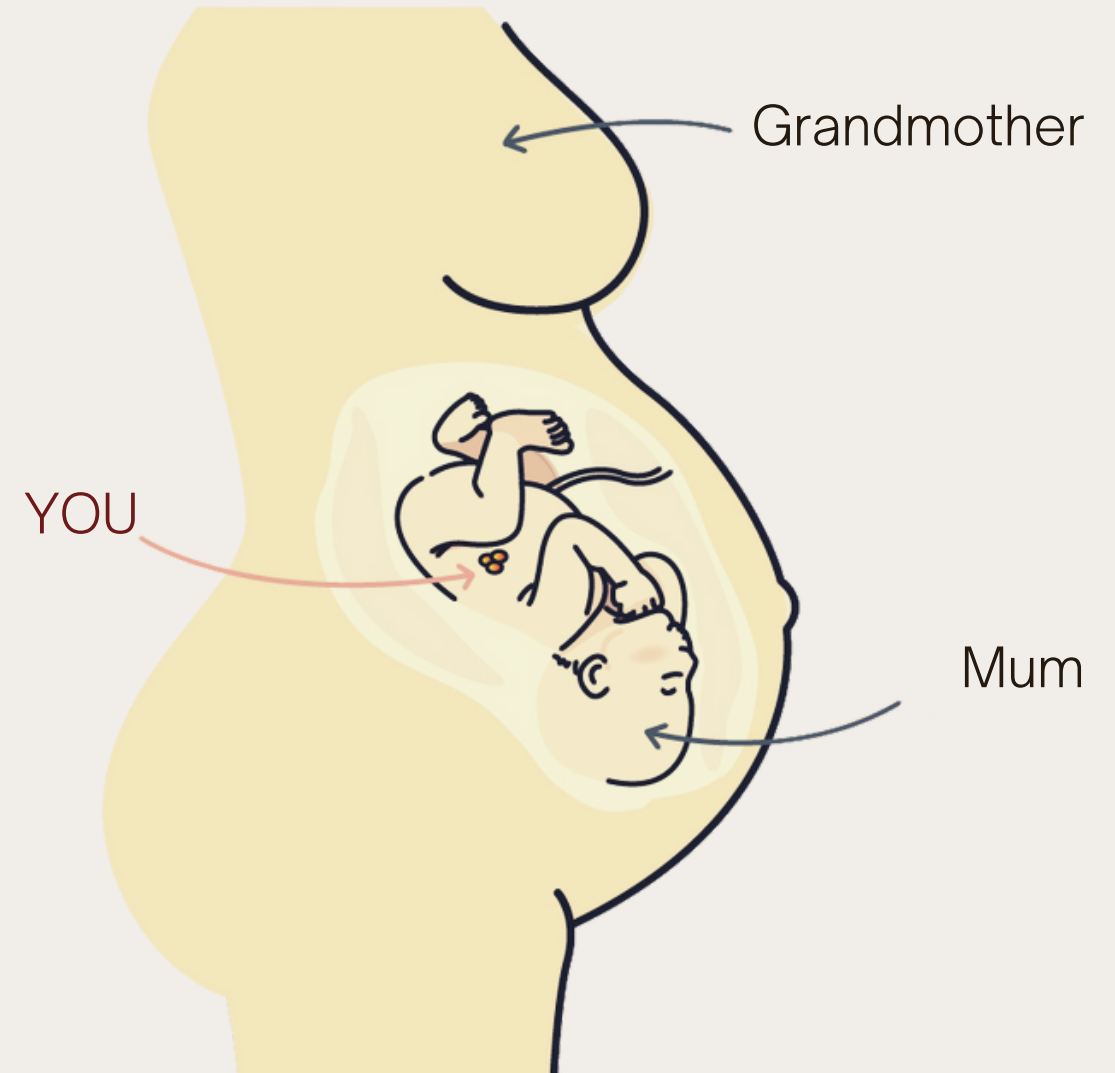
# 3 Generations of Trauma

It's not only OUR life events that affect us, but scientific research has also shown that we carry trauma through at least 3 generations, from both the maternal and paternal line.

**Bruce Lipton**, a pioneering cell biologist, demonstrated that our DNA can be affected by both negative and positive thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. He discovered that signals from the environment could operate through the cell membrane, controlling the behaviour and physiology of the cell, which could either activate or silence a gene.

Through his extensive research, it was discovered how cellular memory is transferred through a mother's womb to her unborn child, biochemically altering her child's genetic expression.

For example, when a mother is continually stressed or angry during pregnancy, it will pre-program her child as they adapt to their environment. Crossing through the placenta, the stress hormones cause the foetus to constrict its blood vessels, preparing for fight/flight, thus altering their genetic response.



# Studies

Researchers used mice in controlled studies to explore this further.

In one study, female mice were prevented from nurturing their pups for up to 3 hours per day during the first 2 weeks of life. Later in life, their offspring exhibited behaviours similar to what we would see of depression in humans, worsening as they aged.

Some of the males did not express the behaviours themselves, but epigenetically transmitted the behavioural changes to their female offspring. The key gene involved was CRF2, which regulates anxiety.

It is commonly known that human infants who've been separated from their mothers can experience similar challenges as a result.

During a study in 2014 with rats at the University of Lethbridge in Canada, researchers examined the effects of stress on pregnant mothers and delivering preterm babies, who also bore daughters that had shortened pregnancies.

Granddaughters of stressed grandmothers had shorter pregnancies than mothers who had not been stressed.

Another experiment that demonstrates how trauma can be shared through generations, was conducted by Emory University School of Medicine in 2013. Mice were trained to fear a scent similar to cherry blossom, known as acetophenone. Each time they were exposed to the scent, they would receive an electric shock. Over time they had a greater amount of smell receptors to that particular scent, meaning they could smell it at a lower concentration. Researchers could also identify changes in the mice's sperm. The next 2 generations, when exposed to the same scent, became nervous, jumpy, and avoided it, having never experienced it before. Their brains and sperm also had the same cellular response as the original mice.

These two studies demonstrate that both our parents and grandparents had an impact on our physiological bodies.

With this in mind, we'll briefly explore some of the generational and our own birth can affect our fertility journey.

# Inherited Ancestral Trauma

Knowing that we carry 3 generations of trauma, that takes most people's grandparents ages to be during the war time. This was a time when child loss or death in childbirth was higher, stress of losing loved ones, being separated from parents through evacuation or other wartime events was prevalent. Taking just these factors into consideration alone, can start to help you realise certain patterns and the trauma you may unknowingly be carrying.

The support wasn't there for women as it is now; women were stressed, overwhelmed and mothers were often "colder" "harsher" "more disconnected". This is known as a "break in the bond" between mother and child, which has a detrimental effect on us psychologically, even 3 generations down.

How does this really effect fertility? We can hold certain belief patterns about it being "unsafe" to conceive, whether that's because an ancestor had lots of miscarriages, died in childbirth, lost a child at birth, not enough food to feed the family, financial stress, fear of the war and loss or that giving birth is unsupported.

This is just a glimpse into the generational trauma that can impact fertility, however most of us can relate and can start to think to the stories of their grandparents for any clues.



# Our Own Birth Story



Our imprints start prior to conception, were you born into a family that “planned” you or were you classed as a “mistake”. My choice of language is precise.

A child that grows up believing they were a “mistake” holds a very different energy to a child that is known as a “surprise/miracle”. Language holds a lot of weight in our own beliefs and can impact where we sit in the autonomic nervous system.

What was your birth like and how was the story shared with you? A positive story will affect you differently than a negative one, especially with regards to holding subconscious fear around birthing. A mother that tells you she nearly died giving birth to you, or that it was so painful, or she “tore badly” will imprint a negativity around birth.

Over the years I’ve met numerous clients with an innate fear of giving birth; when digging deeper as to where this fear came from, it normally started with a generational or childhood story that wasn’t “theirs”.



# Womb Massage

Our wombs are our creative centres, creating physical life, ideas and visions.

Considering these different layers of trauma, we can start to unravel our own stories and traumas that are stored within our bodies and wombs.

Womb Massage is a sacred, feminine art that nourishes and nurtures the womb. Using a variety of tools in the sessions, invites an opportunity for women to heal their wombs.

*Heal the Womb*  
*Heal the Woman*



# About Clare Spink



Clare is the founder of **The School of Empowered Feminine** and the creatrix of therapies and courses in *Womb & Fertility Massage, Trauma Release, Embodied Rhythmic Massage & Entangled Roots Trauma.*

Clare's creations combine her three passions in life; Wombs, Movement and Trauma. This fusion supports women to truly know & heal their bodies, their wombs and their minds. Empowering women to unravel their emotional wounds and connect to their innate wisdom of their wombs enables them to live a fuller and juicier life.

Clare has taught 900+ therapists worldwide and has 11 International Teaching Associates who all share her passion in helping women to reconnect and heal their womb. Believing that our wombs are our creative centre whereby all life & visions are created, Clare coined the phrase

***"Heal the Womb, Heal the Woman"***

# Connect with Clare



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