

Peace WITH ENDO PODCAST

PWE49: Fertility from the Soul with Dr. Natalie Masson

Aubree: Hi, love. This is episode 49 of the *Peace with Endo Podcast*. I'm your host, Aubree Deimler. I am an author, coach and energy healer who helps women with endometriosis naturally manage pain, increase energy and find peace with endo. On the show today I chatted with Dr. Natalie Masson, a psychologist who developed a specialty in working with the mind-body connection in her private practice as a psychotherapist over the past 16 years.

When Natalie encountered her own fertility challenges when trying to conceive her second child well into her forties she turned toward all the resources she had collected over the years to guide her through the physical and emotional challenges. She channels her expertise now into helping others who are open to a holistic, mind-body approach to fertility.

On the show today we chatted about the consideration of fertility and conceiving as more than simply egg and sperm, but a deeper meaning of soul connection; The power of acknowledging your emotions so that they move through you rather than gather inside of you especially those emotions of loss that come up on the fertility journey; the role of the mind-body connection when it comes to fertility and tips on handling the stress that can come when trying to conceive; Shifting perspective from seeing challenges like infertility and chronic illness as problems to invitations to dig deeper and explore. I hope you enjoy our conversation. Now on to the show.

Hey Natalie! Thanks so much for being on the show today.

Natalie: Hi, Aubree. Thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

Aubree: So will you share a bit of your story and how it led you to what you're up to now?

Natalie: Sure. I'd love to. So, I'm a psychologist and I work in private practice with adults dealing with a whole range of issues, so it could be depression, anxiety, relationship issues. I end up working with a lot of chronic health issues, and part of that is because my style of therapy has a heavy focus on the mind-body connection,

so I tend to look at the whole system of a person. I see emotional and physical as really connected together, and I help people work through things by not just thinking and talking about issues but by also listening to their bodies. So, I spend a lot of time teaching people how to listen to emotions in their bodies, and how to interpret physical symptoms that might be connected to an emotion, so this is where my practice has gravitated toward a lot of conditions that have an emotional component and a physical component, so things like anxiety, panic, health conditions, those sorts of things. So I'd kind of describe that I live in a space of respecting the body, trusting the body, listening to the body and learning from its wisdom, and I find that when we really listen we can see that the mind and body are so interconnected and they influence each other back and forth all the time, so we can gain so much when we partner with our bodies and treat them like a trustworthy ally, rather than something that's problematic, not working with us. We can really partner and collaborate and build that positive relationship with your body, with our bodies. Is this kind of making sense to you.

Aubree: Mhmm. Yeah. And I can totally relate to that, you know, living with a chronic illness and that's been a big part, you know, for me on the self-healing journey is learning to listen to those signs that your body's giving you.

Natalie: Right. Exactly. And my interest in fertility started just a few years ago actually when it became relevant for me and that was when we were trying to conceive our second child, so things weren't happening quickly the way they did with our first and actually months and months were going by. I was 44, going on 45 years old and I really didn't feel like I had months and months to spare (laughs) so I really dove into trying to understand what was going on in my body and how I could best support it.

I learned all about tracking my cycle, and what exactly was supposed to happen week by week physically and energetically because I wanted to practice visualizing my body doing what it needed to do to get pregnant and I knew from the start that I was only going to pursue this naturally. IVF wasn't an option I was going to consider and that was simply because I don't like to do unnatural things to my body if it's not necessary and I want to accept whatever my body's natural potential most of the time and I'm not judging anyone else for their choices. This was just the approach that matched for me and who I am.

I did have hormone testing done along the way and it showed that I was basically old and my chances were horrible (laughs) according to the fertility statistics and if you're familiar with these tests that are supposed to measure your fertile potential like egg reserve, AMH, FSH, my numbers were so bad they were laughable and I decided not to pay attention to the numbers, although I did find them interesting and I did re-test several times just so I could see where the numbers were going as time went on, so after about nine or ten negative cycles I did finally get pregnant but I miscarried at nine weeks, and at that point I went through a mental process that I've noticed is kind of common after a miscarriage.

I was sure that I was done and that I couldn't possibly face this again but by about two weeks later I was more determined than ever to make this happen right, in fact I became so obsessed that I could not get my mind to settle down and stop thinking constantly about things related to trying to get pregnant. I think my mind was just trying to get control over something that was really not under my direct control and it was exhausting. I was frustrated that as a psychologist that specializes in these kinds of things that I couldn't manage my own stress.

So at some point I got a hold of myself and asked myself what would I advise a client in my situation to do and that was when I starting writing positive affirmation statements and recording them to listen to. I specifically designed these affirmations to help me focus my mind in a direction that I thought would be helpful week-by-week. So, for example during the first week of the cycle there's often times feelings of sadness and disappointment that you're not pregnant if you're trying to get pregnant and so some of the affirmations were things like... My womb is releasing its lining to create a clear space for new growth of a healthy lining, which may become my baby's nurturing home. Another one would be, As the old lining is released any feelings of sadness and loss about this ending are also released, leaving room for new possibilities for what lies ahead.

So these were all statements designed to help me shift the way I was thinking about things and kind of connect with what I wanted to see happening in my body from a positive standpoint. It worked like a miracle as far as helping my mind calm down and I was actually really shocked how quickly it helped my mental and emotional state. I thought wow I'm really on to something. (laughs) I can't believe I have relief from that space that I was in my head and then I did actually get pregnant again just two cycles later, but that pregnancy also miscarried about nine weeks.

So at that point it was clear that getting pregnant was no longer the problem for me. It was egg quality. And I had testing that confirmed that both losses were due to chromosomal abnormalities in my eggs and this is fairly common as we get older. So at that point I shifted my attention to learning about egg quality and there wasn't a ton of guidance on what to do to improve egg quality, but I read on a website that there as a 90-day window before ovulation when you can influence your egg quality through the kind of lifestyle you have, like how well your body is getting nourished, so that was all I really had to go on (laughs) and I decided if that's all I had, I was going to run with it.

I looked back at my prior two pregnancies that didn't work out and I looked at my calendar and saw that the 90-day period before I got pregnant both times, I was super exhausted and run down. I was totally depleted. I had a toddler that would wake me up all night to nurse and I was not rested. That was the first pregnancy. The second one, the previous 90 days I had been pregnant and miscarrying, so I was really not well... well nourished in the months before each of those pregnancies and I thought about it and I figured I can do better at this if I make this my top priority.

So drew on everything that I believed about nourishing myself and I did this for three months. I intentionally made sure that I would not get pregnant. And this time I set it aside to be all about taking care of my eggs and I focused on all the strategies that I believed would help my system to be most healthy from a mind-body perspective.

So, long story short after that 3-month period I got pregnant right away and this time it was with a healthy egg. I was two weeks away from my 46th birthday when I got that positive test, so it really felt like quite like it was a long shot and it was a miracle and I always felt like if there's something in here that I did that made this happen for me that was beyond just random chance, I need to share this with other people, so I've kind of been on a mission since then to share everything that I've learned about not only getting pregnant naturally but also potentially improving egg quality through healthy lifestyle change and through a mind-body approach.

So that's what I've been busily up to in the last couple years and I really feel like there's a lot of... there are a lot of services around medical interventions to help women with pregnancy... with you know IVF and things like that, but not nearly as much for those who want to take a natural approach and even a lot of the natural alternative approaches focusing... are focusing on things like supplements, nutrition and acupuncture but they kind of gloss over on the emotional level, so I'm really trying to help fill the gap in the area so people can have a wider range of options to help themselves.

Aubree: I love that, and I feel that's needed as well, having a similar fertility issues and not wanting to take the IVF route and I think even that I think comes with some emotions because of society and maybe having that thought like Oh I'm not trying hard enough because I'm not doing what everybody else is doing, so I do think it's important for those of us that don't want to go that route to have a source, I guess, to go, and I love that you've named it Fertility from the Soul, so what... can you share a little bit more about what that entails that whole Fertility from the Soul piece?

Natalie: Yeah. It's really that filling in that gap that I see where the modern approach to fertility kind of loses sight of the whole person and the whole picture and that... you know what is this we're doing here? This trying to conceive, trying to get pregnant, trying to have a baby kind of stuff, you know? We make it so technical but isn't it about something kind of bigger than that? Maybe it's about souls coming together and wanting to create something really unique and wanting to have this experience in life together because somehow it might be soul nourishing. Maybe there's something in our soul that longs for this experience and to bring in a new life and to give love and share these adventures together.

So, I guess I picked that name because I just felt it was addressing the piece that I think is really missing from where many people are coming from when they approach this. I think it's more than... it's more than just eggs and sperm (laughs).

Yeah. Coming from the soul it just sort of gives that suggestion that there's a bigger thing out there and can we get out of the weeds and see a larger picture here.

Aubree: I love that and there is a lot of that emotional stuff that you mentioned, especially with miscarriage and I feel, you know, that tends to be a topic that not a lot of women always talk about. I think a lot of women have gone through it. It seems like it's pretty common, so do you have a place within that kind of addresses some of the loss part of the journey as well?

Natalie: That's so important for whatever it is that we're going through in life, you know, whether you're on a fertility path or some other path. We're constantly dealing with hopes, dreams, disappointments and losses and if we don't have a way to process these difficult feelings I really do think that they kind of get stuck in our bodies. They don't have a place to go and then they can come out in all kinds of ways. All kinds of physical things can manifest when we're not moving our emotions along.

So a lot of the meditations I'm creating are... right now they're around soothing and calming and I'm getting ready to move in a direction where I'm going to make more around deeper healing issues and I have some meditations that aren't specifically for fertility, but they're about this very process of taking care of any difficult emotions that we're having so that they don't get trapped, so we can turn toward them and nurture them, and a lot of that is... it can be challenging, but it's also elegant in its simplicity in the way that I look at it in that I see emotions as most needing attention and just acknowledgement, a simple acknowledgement, without analysis, without problem solving, without trying to change it into something else.

And so if you have sadness around a loss, that emotion of sadness or maybe there's anger or you know whatever emotions that go with that. It can be so valuable to just take time to listen to that emotion and find where it resides in your body. Breathe into it, allow it to be there. Allow it to be heard. And that can go such a long way whether it's loss from a miscarriage, or loss from not getting pregnant. That's a... interesting dynamic that I've thought about with fertility problems is that people understand when you lose a family member, you lose a child, you lose a parent, but it's really hard to put your finger on you lost by not having a child that you hoped for that you don't... there's no ceremonies around that (laughs) you know? There's no way to identify that, but it's just as much of a loss. It's a loss of a hope. It's a loss of a dream.

So, I think it's very important that we really create space for acknowledging all the feelings that come from whether it's miscarriage or lack of a pregnancy happening to take care of the difficult emotions that come up with that, and so I do have meditations around that are kind of all purpose for any difficult emotions, but they can definitely be applied toward fertility challenges and I'm creating more and more meditations to help with very specific challenges that come up with different situations like you know finding out you have a negative pregnancy test. What do we

do there? Going through a loss. What do you do there? So yes I do have a range of ways that I guide people through those difficult times.

Aubree: I love that, and that's so true that there's not... there is a loss with the fertility, especially dealing with infertility and not having the child and then of course that miscarriage piece as well, so I love that you're addressing some of that because you know we don't always address a lot of that. It just kind of gets shoved under because you know the whole advice to not let anybody know that you're pregnant in those first... I don't know how long it is, but how you're supposed to kind of keep that to yourself, just in case there is a loss, and then since you didn't tell anybody and you had that loss. I think a lot of women feel like they're dealing with it by themselves, or with their partners, so I love that you at least are addressing this from a soul type level and helping bring that mind-connection together.

Natalie: Yeah. And the miscarriage piece is a challenging one to figure out, to navigate how to get support around it because I remember I used to think that, Oh gosh you know if people would just be more open and share about people would understand how common it was. They'd support each other more, because it really is very common. They say like 25% of pregnancies end in miscarriage, some before people even knew they were pregnant, and if you get into your 40's there's even more than 25% ending in miscarriage, but I discovered when I went through my first miscarriage and I was fairly open in not a huge circle, but close circle of family and friends, people don't necessarily know the best things to say, and the best things to respond... the best ways to respond.

And I got a little flash of an insight there that oh I can see why there's a reason you might not want to say anything in the first trimester (laughs) and keep it to yourself even though I'm the kind of person who feels like oh it's much better to be open, let people support you. I was so sensitive during that time and people said all kinds of things that were well meaning. They're well intentioned. Nobody was trying to be rude or insensitive (laughs) but a lot of hurtful things were said just because we're not that great in our culture about understanding grief and how to support people and the things that you say about well it's... you know I won't go into (laughs) the kinds of things that people said unintentionally were hurtful, but I really, you know, and I don't have a solution for it, but it's a real challenge and I'll never judge anybody for making a choice to hold their cards close in a sensitive time because yeck there's all kinds of (laughs) ways that you may or may not get the support that you are needing at that time and it is a very delicate time for most people. Just wanted to share that little bit of perspective. I would have never known if I hadn't gone through it (laughs). Never would have known that perspective for myself.

Aubree: Totally. And I know what you're talking about (laughs) and I think it's the same just dealing with infertility and I still get a... I sent to lunch yesterday with my husband and it's even the simple question of oh, "Do you have kids?"

Like that's such a simple question that most people ask and it's still... I had this discussion with my husband and we were kind of disagreeing about it, but I'm like why is that like the second question she asked us like as we're sitting here to have a mean, you know, like "Do you have kids?" Like you don't know if that's going to trigger something or what someone's going through just a simple question like that.

Natalie: Right.

Aubree: And at the same time I know her intention isn't to, you know, she probably just wanted to talk about her kids and like find that connection, but I suppose you never know what someone's going through and you can be more sensitive during those times (laughs).

Natalie: Mhmm. Mhmm.

Aubree: And you just. You never know.

Natalie: Right. Exactly.

Aubree: So what have you learned then about the mind-body connection in your practice as a psychologist and how does that connect do you think with fertility?

Natalie: So I think it's really interesting when you look at the issue of the mind-body connection from a historical standpoint that we even have this term called the mind-body connection tells you that we tend to see them as separate and if you look at literally look at a person do you see their mind and then you see their body in a different place? (laughs) Of course not. It's all one unit.

Yet we really have this language and this belief system that separates them and if you trace it back, and this is something I learned in my... one of my graduate courses in the history of psychology. It just really fascinated me even back then is it dates back to an issue that... a challenge between scientists and religious leaders back in the 16, 17 hundreds where the religious teachings suggested that the body is sacred and if you tamper with it you're less likely to go to heaven, so scientists were banned from messing with the human body, and then sometime around the early 1700's I think Descartes, who was a philosopher and a scientist came up with this idea that we now call mind-body dualism, which is ah the mind, consciousness, is separate from the physical body, so we'll stay away from the mind and we'll work on the body and that will keep everybody Ok. (laughs) In terms of religion.

And somehow that flew and the scientists were thrilled and they really ran forward and made tremendous advancement in medical science, so the problem of course as you can see is that the mind just got left out and we have these hundreds of years proceeded forward with this arbitrary separation and we've never properly joined them back together: the mind and the body even though current research shows all kinds of evidence that there's... the two are interconnected. They interrelate in all

kinds of ways, but the... we just can't seem to overcome this early sort of arbitrary and your'e separation, so when we deal with something like fertility we're still left with this arbitrary separation that we're working on the physical body with fertility and somehow it's the mind that's this other thing and I experience this a lot of times dealing with modern medicine, where doctor's acknowledge that there's a relationship and they may say that it's important. Oh stress could be a factor. You shouldn't be too stressed out. We do see better results when people are less stressed out, but then nothing is done to connect that in, like the very way that the procedures are run is incredibly stressful, like it's not really integrated into how they work, so it's just kind of nodded to, given lip service to, but then we proceed as if the body is separate.

You know we can see fairly obvious connections where you know you hear people talking all the time about the nervous system and if you're highly stressed out that's like going into a fight or flight mode and the body's going to shut down things that aren't necessary for survival, right? I think that's common line of reasoning that a lot of people have heard by now, you know, if you're being chased by a tiger you don't need blood to help you digest your food. You need blood to help you run for your life. If you're not being chased by a tiger, but you're concerned that you may be the victim of random violence, which is happening all the time around us, unfortunately. Just knowing that and having the fear in the back of your mind. What does that... how does that affect your system? Is that subtly putting you into a fight or flight state? So that you're less likely to digest food and create new life? Things like that.

Or maybe it's even more subtle like every month you're trying to conceive and you're afraid about if you're having intercourse at the right time of the month and this is very stressful month after month. Is that creating a stress that is a little bit like getting chased by a tiger? You know just a little bit like that enough to trigger the nervous system to go into this other state that doesn't really favor things like digesting food, restoring energy, creating new life, so these are just some examples of how what's on our minds might influence what's happening in our bodies.

And maybe there are even more subtle things like what about if we feel ambivalent about becoming a parent, everything that that entails. A lot of changes happen in life. There's challenges. There are going to be challenges. There are a lot of things we give up. We don't... it's a lot of the unknown, you know, what if we feel just that disease of ambivalence. Might that have a subtle impact on our fertility to tip the scales away from getting pregnant, you know, we don't have research on things that are that subtle. It's really hard to measure and frankly nobody is interested enough to invest the money (laughs) that it would take to do research like this, so we can only guess that there could be a connection between these things.

So, you know, those are some examples of how I see you know very logical rational for how the mind-body connection could be playing out in our fertility and in the absence in that hard data to confirm what really makes a difference. My attitude is well it doesn't cost us anything to try to address these mind-body issues of bringing

ourselves into a better alignment with our fertility visions of taking stress out of our system. It doesn't hurt us anyways (laughs) to do those things, so why not? Why not add all those things in and just see where it might lead.

Aubree: Absolutely. And you hear that all the time with the stress thing (laughs). I guess this is another comment that you might hear, like you just need to relax.

Natalie: (laughs)

Aubree: But the whole process is just so stressful, like naturally.

Natalie: Yeah.

Aubree: So, what tips do you have for somebody who may be in that place and trying to conceive and feeling that stress, like what are some ways that we can help calm that down?

Natalie: Oh well I could go on and on about that for hours, so I try and keep it fairly succinct, because I don't ever want to characterize it as a simple matter, you know, I think there's this notion that like you said, just relax, and it's like, no. (laughs) That's not how it works if you've walked in these shoes, you know, you can't just relax. So I try to break it down into some practical things that can help people get there because it really isn't really as simple as just telling yourself to relax, and if somebody tries to tell you to just relax you kind of you know want to punch them in the face (laughs) because you know they don't understand.

So I'll go through five categories of things that I think can be helpful to kind of organize your thinking about what you can do for yourself on this path, anybody that is on this fertility path. So the first thing is very practical and I think it's just about understanding your cycle and knowing what's happening as far as ovulation and I recommend temperature charting so you can see what's happening with your cycle and really get familiar with your ovulation timing and not have stress around the simple piece of when is my fertile window?

I just don't think that that has to be this mysterious, stressful thing that you need a lot of gear and expensive gadgets to figure out. It's fairly straightforward it doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. It doesn't have to be a source of stress and I see a lot of people when I've watched the online forums getting a lot of stress around figuring out their timing and stuff like that so that's like a first just practical thing that I like to start with people is helping them figure out how to do that piece in a way that is just straight forward. You know when it's the right timing, so that you can just enjoy yourself and focus on that without feeling like you're not sure and your guessing and all the sudden you have to make time with your partner and you didn't see it coming and you know it becomes this thing that we never wanted it to be. So that's number one is understanding your cycle and your timing.

And the second one is practicing good, basic self-care and kind of keeping it... it... you can keep it simple, you know, I think a lot of what we do when we're trying to gain control over something like this is to kind of try and hyper control everything and get as much information as we can, dig, dig, dig through the research and that process in itself I think is kind of stressful so in terms of self care I really encourage just being generally knowledgeable about what helps your body thrive and what helps you be energetic and well nourished, including things like sleep, eating well, getting physical activity, reducing your exposure to toxins, taking care of your relationships, things like that, and not getting too much in your head about like there's this specific diet that's going to make the ultimate difference in your fertility or there's an exact kind of yoga practice that's going to tip the scale. I... I encourage a more general kind of self-care, but still being knowledgeable about what is most nourishing for your body and that's going to vary from person to person. So that's number two: self-care.

Number three is checking in with your energetic alignment so this is really getting away from the scientifically supportable kinds of stuff into the woo-woo, but I think there's a place for this in terms of allowing yourself to be curious about how am I aligned with this notion of creating new life? And taking some meditative time to listen inward and check in with how do you feel about this. How is your lifestyle aligned with this? How are you making space? Is there something that might be blocking you emotionally, energetically, if there is what's that about? So this is a sort of non-tangible just thinking in terms of if there was a fertile energy place that we could live where things flowed in a way that really supported the body and inviting this next phase into our lives. Are we really in alignment there? Is there something blocking and if you notice something then taking some time to attend to it and just turn toward it be curious about what that's about.

The fourth piece that I recommend is actually polar opposite from the last one is actually addressing medical issues that might be interfering with infertility and not be afraid to get some consultation and see different kinds of providers to find out from their perspective, do some testing, do scans and things to see is there something that's going on maybe you have a blocked fallopian tube and that can be cleared up with a simple procedure and you're not getting pregnant because the egg's not getting out there and that would be a shame to miss when there's actually a simple procedure that can help that you know that's just an example. So, I encourage people not to be afraid to go down those paths in exploratory way and realizing that each provider has different expertise, a different set of perspectives.

They don't necessarily have all the right answers for you, but you can consult them to learn from them and just be more empowered about the different possibilities for your body. So, I do encourage people to explore and if you have something like a known condition like endometriosis or a thyroid condition these are something that can impact fertility and I think that it can be helpful to find providers that you feel you can collaborate with to learn, you know, what they see from their perspective and check in with what makes sense for you as you figure out, kind of a strategy for

how to incorporate this knowledge about your body with the direction that you're wanting to go.

And the last, the fifth recommendation I have is to stay connected with the big picture of why this is important to you, what this is all about, like the big existential why so that you don't get lost in the weeds, you know, if this is about, you know, embracing life and creating experiences with your partner and the whole process of pursuing pregnancy turns your, you know, relationship into some kind of monthly nightmare where you're in conflict about things and it's stressful. You can't enjoy anything in life because all you can see around you is the pregnant people (laughs) who are having baby showers all the time and it's just stealing all your joy away, you need to come back to the big picture. We're trying to probably create joy and expansiveness in our lives and we can lose sight of these things, lose sight of the forest through the trees. So I think being able to kind of zoom out and recognize what our bigger purpose is and how that connects to this specific thing, specific vision that we have for ourselves.

So, that's kind of, you asked for, you know, tips for someone trying to conceive. I kind of covered a really wide (laughs) range there, but I think all of these things are... are valid and sometimes people get stuck in one little grove that they're focusing on and they miss other possibilities that could really help move things for them.

Aubree: Those are great tips and I think going back to earlier with what you said about the 90-day window and maybe not trying to try (laughs) for that period and really just focusing back on bringing that self-care and joy and all of those things you just mentioned and not putting so much focus on the pregnancy part of it, I think can help sometimes to just take that break.

Natalie: Yeah. I'm a big advocate actually for the TTC break, TTC vacation (laughs) because if you want to ask what's the best way to decrease stress of trying to conceive, it's stop trying to conceive (laughs) for a little while.

Aubree: Right.

Natalie: Because so much of the stress is coming from that... being on that hamster wheel and the cycle, 28-day cycle of hope and disappointment and to just have even one cycle where you're not waiting to see what the test is going to say can just like whew, you know, a big opportunity to exhale, and you don't even realize how much you've been holding your breath until you get one cycle off and go oh my gosh I'm not counting the days until the next test. Wow. Woo. Liberating.

It's very hard to stay centered and expansive when we're on that cycle of trying. It's very challenging. So, it's a tricky thing though to decide to take a break, because of course the reason people are afraid to take a break because they feel like they don't have time, so (laughs) there's that... that tradeoff. People thought I was completely

off my rocker when I was taking three months off when I was 45 and three-quarters years old (laughs) Nobody understood how that made sense, but I think it's something that intuitively you have to just check in with yourself and say what does my system really need? The heck with what everybody else says, you know, what does my system need, and for me it was clear at that time.

Aubree: I love that. So, Natalie what's a primary lesson then that you've learned along your journey and now working with other women in this fertility world, like what's a big takeaway?

Natalie: I think there's a real opportunity to shift from being oriented toward trying to fix a problem and to, you know, whether it's fertility or some chronic health condition. If we just made this minor shift to looking at the problem as instead a challenge that could potentially be a source of inspiration and motivation for positive growth and discovery, so instead of looking at wanting to get pregnant, or infertility or whatever or endometriosis as a problem that's getting in the way what if we looked at it sort of as an invitation or a flag waving that says pay attention over here. There's something to learn and we can turn toward it with more positive and supportive intentions.

So, like when I was doing my own egg quality work I decided that I was going to be doing all these self-care things that were going to benefit me whether I had a successful pregnancy or not, and so what started as a problem: I have poor egg quality, actually gave me so much focus and motivation that during those three months I cared for myself in a more thorough and conscientious way than I ever had before and even since then I don't think I've done as good of job as I did then. I was so motivated and you know what was kind of surprising was I was taking such good care of myself in every way that I discovered my energy came back like a lot of my joy came back, a lot of things that I had lost touch with for quite a few years actually and I literally felt like I was ten years younger. I felt like I had in my mid-thirties, but I was in my mid-forties.

And I wouldn't have discovered that if this crisis, this problem hadn't motivated me to really get my stuff myself together and rally around this mission. I would not have known that I would just have thought you know I guess this is just what forties feels like, all down hill from here. (laughs) And it allowed me to discover that I had another potential inside of me. It allowed me to discover things that I wouldn't have because you know there's a lot of things pulling our attention in many directions, but I got laser focused on this one thing that I was going to make a priority.

So, how many of our problems could actually be invitations to discover new things about ourselves, to learn, to grow, to be motivated and focused and to discover meaningful growth within ourselves? So I think there's that opportunity to shift from a problem focused to more of an invitation and maybe even an inspiration.

Aubree: I feel the same with my journey as well with endo.

Natalie: Mhmm.

Aubree: And it's changed my life. Sometimes you think (laughs) the worst thing, you know, can turn out to be the biggest lesson I think to... like you said, the invitation. I love that.

Natalie: Yeah and it can sound kind of corny when they say oh yeah this... this setback was a real gift, but it's true sometimes. There are chambers that open up within us that we wouldn't have known had we not faced certain challenges and adversity.

Aubree: Absolutely. So what words of wisdom then can you share for women out there who are trying to conceive and feel right now like there's just no hope?

Natalie: That's a great question and I really would start with focusing on what does no hope mean? What is... what is leading the person to feel that there's no hope? Is it something somebody told you? Is it a statistic that's been shared? Does somebody have a crystal ball? Do you have a crystal ball? What is telling you that you know what's coming next? And there's... I'm going to steal a line that I thought was kind of clever from a forum, a fertility forum where somebody was posting about how sad she was about her low chances based on the lab tests that she had done and that's a recurring theme in the over forty, trying to conceive forums.

I got these tests back and the doctor said my chances are so low. I feel devastated and one women responded, low isn't no, and (laughs) and I was like that's kind of clever. I like that. I'm going to borrow that, so I'm borrowing it right now and you know my AMH level when I had it tested when I was 44 normal range was considered like 1 - 4 and this is supposedly some kind of measure of your egg reserve and mine was not only was it below one, it was below 0.1. It was 0.07, and I thought that can't be right (laughs). I went back. I paid another \$100 to have it checked again and it came back at something like 0.059 or something (laughs). I was like no. It's just low!

And then you know I went through that getting pregnant twice and miscarrying and then that three months of nurturing my eggs. I got it tested again at the end of the three months of egg nurturing. I was like come on. This has got to boost it right? 0.099, ok that's still below 0.1 (laughs) for anyone who can't follow the math, 0.099. That's about 0.1. So it was lower than low and all the charts... I had gotten a print out from one acupuncturist who ran the first test that showed like a scale from one to ten where am I on the chart of how fertile, how likely I am to get pregnant and I was like the low side of one out of ten (laughs).

So, you know, low isn't no and there's another women who went through my 90-day egg nurturing program that I'm running now and I'm laughing because she didn't

actually go through the program. She delayed starting for a long time because she was still going through an IVF treatment and she's like well if this IVF doesn't work then I want to try this program and I was like Ok that's fine. She was 42, going on 43. She had gone... she'd been trying for 18 months. She had three IUI's and she was on her third IVF cycle and she emailed me at one point and said that the embryos didn't mature. We can't even do a transfer. They told me that they have no more options for me if I don't want to do donor eggs, so I'd love to join your program.

I said great. Let's give it try. Within a month and a half she got pregnant naturally and I can't say it's because of the program because we had kind of hardly gotten started (laughs) but she had been doing egg nurturing things on her own prior to coming to the program and you know just two cycles after a failed IVF she was able to get pregnant naturally so, you know, and the doctors said we can't do anything for you. You just don't have a chance, and it wasn't true. They didn't have a crystal ball. Nobody had a crystal ball and she still believed it was possible and it happened.

So, that's one message I have for feeling like there's no hope, you know, if you're still having a cycle and you're still ovulating, I don't think anybody can tell you definitively that you can't get pregnant you know there are... I'd like people to just keep in mind that there are many more valid perspectives besides just the medical approach and each approach has its merits and even if you feel like you've explored every option, there's a good chance that there's an angle that you haven't explored, so I encourage people to be open to the possibility of being surprised. Sometimes statistics don't tell the whole story.

Aubree: Absolutely. Well thank you so much Natalie for coming on and sharing some of your wisdom with us today. Do you have any final words of inspiration for our listeners?

Natalie: Oh yeah you know this is kind of the big sky kind of talk I think, I'd like to end with, and that is that **in life we can't necessarily choose our outcomes, but we can choose the way we proceed along our way.** So, you can move along with fear and desperation, feeling beaten down like a victim, or you can choose courage, hope and open heartedness. You can be proactive, knowledgeable and empowered. And if you opt for that fearful and beaten down stance, not only does that potentially make your condition worse physically, but it's also just kind of a bummer of a way to live life.

And if you go with the empowerment, encouragement and hope approach this might actually tip the scale in your favor to get you what you're hoping for, and even if it doesn't you might actually discover that there are other things in life that you can... that can also make for a rich and meaningful life for you. And I'm not saying that it's the easiest shift to make, choosing this more expansive outlook, but if you at least set your sights that that's possible, you can start heading in that direction and I've been a lot of work very intentionally to create guided meditations to make that internal shift, but just knowing that you have that potential to befriend the

challenges in your life, and really grow and blossom because of them, I think can really make a difference in these areas where there are things that, you know, things that we don't want to be so, so attached to because they're not totally under control, but we can hold them gently with care in our hands.

Aubree: That's beautiful. So how can our listeners connect with you further Natalie if they want to work with you? Where can they find you? How can they connect with you?

Natalie: For anyone who is on the fertility journey you might like to go to my website: fertilityfromthesoul.com. I have a couple of free downloads on there to get you started. One is called, "The Essential Guide to Getting Pregnant Naturally", and the other is "20 Strategies for Improving Egg Quality", and I also have a YouTube channel also called Fertility from the Soul and there are several recordings of my affirmations. Some of the same ones that I created for myself when I was going through this and several guided imagery, hypnosis recordings for helping you to bringing you into that alignment of connectedness within yourself.

If you're not pursuing your fertility path I also have a YouTube channel for a general audience. This is where I put a lot of the psychological tools that I use with my clients that are not fertility specific. It's called Harmony Within and I think for anybody dealing with... well I'm biased I think they're helpful for just anybody, but particularly if you're dealing with some chronic health issues that manifest into physical symptoms. If you're wanting to learn this approach that I talked about listening to emotions in your body, I've got some recordings on there around breathing and a practice I call somatic listening that I think can be really valuable to just about anybody.

So those are a few ways to connect with me in the future.

Aubree: Awesome. Well thanks again for coming on today and sharing us. I appreciate it so much.

Natalie: Thank you so much. It's been great being here.

Aubree: If you enjoyed this episode I invite you to subscribe to continue on the journey. Leave us a positive review and share with your friends so more endo sisters can find the show and get on track to finding peace with endo. If you want to connect with me further you can find me over at peacewithendo.com or on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @peacewithendo. Pop on over and share your thoughts on the show or simply say hello.

If you know my story then you know that I can definitely to the struggles that come along on the fertility. I can attest to the fact that the mind-body-soul connection is real and intertwined. I share more on exploring deeper into the spiritual meaning

behind endometriosis and infertility in my newest book, *Energetics of Endo*. You can pick up a copy over at peacewithendo.com or on Amazon.com.

Thanks so much tuning in. I hope you find some peace in your day today. Sending you so much love. Bye for now.

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