How to Get off the Emotional Rollercoaster

Manage your emotions, reduce stress and improve your fertility with neuroscience.



Everything starts in your brain.

Most people have a biological drive to reproduce. Which makes sense, because it's how any species survive, right?

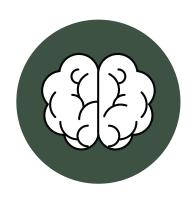
In addition to a biological drive, you probably have emotional reasons for wanting a baby like:

- Finding purpose as a parent.
- Carrying on a family name.
- Creating a family unit.

So if you're struggling to conceive, you may be thinking things like:

- My body isn't cooperating.
- What if I'm not meant to be a parent?
- Will I find purpose if I'm not a Mom?

Thoughts that threaten your ability to achieve biological or emotional needs signal your limbic brain to activate your fight or flight system.

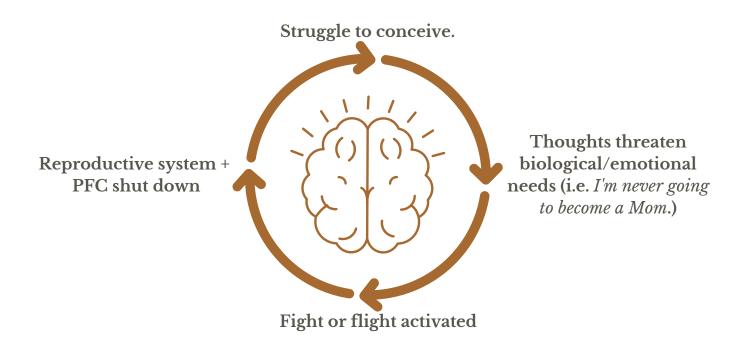


Your limbic brain is all about keeping you alive. It's the least evolved part of your brain, so it doesn't know the difference between an identity threat and an ACTUAL life-threatening event.

So what does this have to do with your fertility?

When your fight or flight system is activated, it floods your body with stress hormones and steals energy from your prefrontal cortex (PFC).

Stress hormones wreak havoc on your fertility, and when your PFC isn't gassed up, you can't think rationally, take in information or make decisions.



Obviously, the last thing you want when you're trying to conceive is shutting down your reproductive system.

But let's talk about why you REALLY need your prefrontal cortex (PFC) working well when trying to conceive.

Your PFC is the most evolved part of your brain. It plays an important role is executive functioning, so things like speech, memory and thinking.

It's the part of your brain that enables you to:

- Regulate emotions
- Plan effectively
- Make decisions

All incredibly important when you're dealing with:

- Tracking ovulation + timing sex.
- Deciding on alternative options and/or fertility treatments.
- Seeing constant pregnancy announcements.

So what can you do about it? Start with awareness.

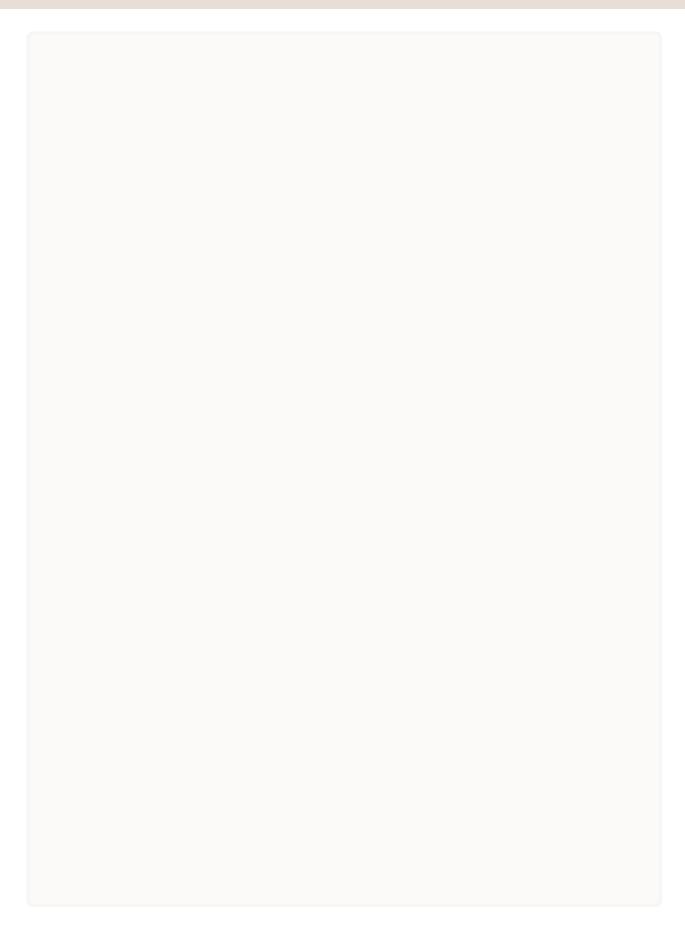
Workshop Prework

Step 1:

Take 15–20 minutes to reflect on your fertility journey up to this point. Think about times you've felt frustrated, angry, hopeless, etc. Using the space below, write down what was going on when you experienced these emotions. Describe the context and what thoughts were going through your mind at the time. You can do this alone, or connect with another group member to do this together.

Tip: Writing your thoughts in bullet points will make the live workshop go smoother!

Workshop Prework



STOP HERE!

We'll complete the rest of this content together during the workshop. Feel free to read ahead to get a sense of what we'll be doing, but don't do the activities! You'll get more out of this by doing it live and with group discussion I promise!

Step 2: Now take a few minutes to review your list of thoughts. Select one that feels the MOST defeating or limiting to you right now.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself if you need help choosing one:

- Which thought feels most limiting to my ability to conceive?
- Which thought creates a physical reaction in my body?
- Which thought seems to come up most often?
- Which thought causes me the most distress?

What we don't need in the middle of struggle is shame for being human.

Brene Brown



Write down the thought you've selected:

Now take 5 minutes and let your brain spiral. Reflect and ask yourself: "If this thought is true, what are the implications?"

I believe that...

And as a result...

Which means...

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this. I can take the next thing that comes along."

Eleanor Rosevelt





Group discussion: How did it feel to let your brain spiral? What came up for everyone?

Step 4: Take 5 minutes to reflect on your insights and answer the following questions:

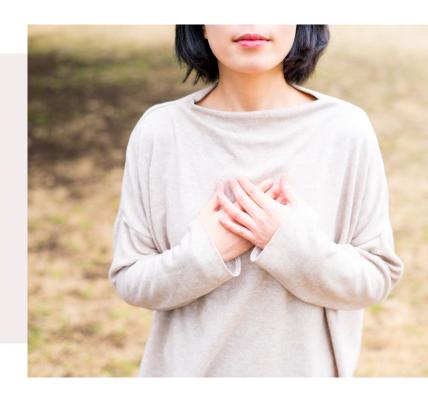
When you examine your thought, what are you most ashamed of?

When you examine your thought, what are you most afraid of?

Now put those into a sentence (Shame + Fear):

When perfectionism is driving us, shame is riding shotgun and fear is that annoying backseat driver.

Brene Brown





Group Discussion: If you feel comfortable, share your thought in the chat. What's coming up for everyone?

Step 5: What biological or emotional need(s) is/are threatened by your shame + fear statement? Health? Reproduction? Family? Safety? Community? Connection? Feeling heard/understood? Others?

To "be loved" is the most basic of human needs. Like a flower, it waters the human soul. But "to love" is a true blessing.

Olivia Newton John



Now do you see why the fertility journey feels like an emotional rollercoaster?!

There is a biological reason you're feeling stressed. It's not your fault. And you are NOT alone.

Now let's get to the fun part! Right now, your brain's alarm system is on. Before we dig into the juicy stuff, let's turn that alarm system down.

Step 6: Let's have some fun!

Play, laughter and creativity are great ways to calm your alarm system and gas up your prefrontal cortex.

Take the next 5 minutes to do whatever feels best for you:

- Color or create a piece of art
- Dance to your favorite
- Watch a funny video
- Snuggle with a pet
- Deep breathing

Do anything.
But let it
produce JOY.

Walt Whitman



How are you feeling now? Ready to get into the good stuff?!

Step 7: Write your shame + fear statement here:

Now that your PFC is gassed up, we're going to evaluate your thought for cognitive-bias. Choose 4–5 questions on the next couple of pages that you think would provide you with the most insights. Take 5–10 minutes reflecting on the questions you selected.

Is this thought based on facts or feelings? Is it possible that my feelings are preventing me from evaluating all the facts?

Am I making any assumptions?

Are there situations, people or other circumstances that might be influencing this thought?

How might someone else view this situation differently

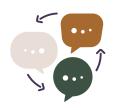
STEP 7 CONTINUED

Is my thought a likely scenario, or worst case scenario? How likely is it that the worst case scenario will happen?

Did someone (family, peers, educational and/or medical institutions, religion, etc.) pass this belief to me? If so, does this align with my own beliefs?

If this belief was passed to me by someone else, do I consider this person a reliable source? Why or why not?

Am I having this thought out of habit? Or do I have facts that support it?



Group discussion: What insights, ahas or revelations did you have while questioning your thought?

Now that you've gained some juicy insights, lets do something with them!

Basically, your brain will throw the bullshit flag and re-activate your fight or flight.

The goal here isn't to turn your thought into a positive one, but a POSSIBLE one.

Step 8: Using the insights you gained in step 7, re-write your belief using this framework:

When we try to simply flip a negative thought into a positive one, our brains will fight it.

Sometimes I think....



But now I've realized....

And...

Now that you've created a new, POSSIBLE belief for yourself, how do you FEEL? When our brains make new connections that feel good, reflecting is a great way to integrate and solidify new neural connections.

Step 9: Take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions:

How does this new, possible thought make me feel? As opposed to the original one?

What's possible for me if I felt this way more often?

You did it! You've done some serious brain work. Be proud of yourself for showing up and doing the hard work.

Step 10: To wrap up, I want you to pick 1-2 actions to take this next week to really integrate your insights and keep those new neural connections fresh.

- Teach what you learned today with a close friend or loved one.
- Connect with another group member to discuss your insights.
- Create a fun, colorful poster that includes your new thought.
- Put your new thought on your phone or computer background.
- Do this activity again with another limiting thought in another area of your life!
- Record yourself using audio and/or video reminding yourself of this new belief. Save and re-watch if you ever need a pick me up!
- Other?

The mind that opens to a new idea never returns to its original size.

Albert Einstein

