



*Fully Fertile Book Group Study Guide**

**This document is a work-in-progress – we hope it supports your experience of the Fully Fertile program. We welcome your input and notes on what works and what doesn't as you take this journey together.*

Introduction

What is the Fully Fertile Program™?

The Fully Fertile Program™ is the comprehensive, 12-week program outlined in Pulling Down the Moon's new book **Fully Fertile: A 12-Week Plan for Optimal Fertility**. The book is based on the practices, classes and treatments that thousands of women have used at our centers to increase their odds of conception.

As you read **Fully Fertile**, we hope you will find yourself called to explore the practices we describe. For that purpose, we've created this workbook to serve as a journal and workspace as you transform your body, mind and spirit. You can use this workbook on your own, or you can reach out to the fertility community by starting a Fully Fertile Book Group similar to the one we created in Chicago shortly before the book's publication.

The Fully Fertile Pilot Group

In the fall of 2007, we gathered eight women together to serve as our pilot group for a Fully Fertile Book Club. The idea was to create a space where the women could work together through the techniques and practices in the book, creating support and motivation for each other at the same time. The book provided the information and the outline, and the women became the teachers. Each week, a member of the group would become the "group leader" and lead the for discussion of the week's chapter. Activities ranged from teaching each other yoga (and laughing a lot during the process) to organizing fertility-friendly snack taste tests to creating meaningful rituals in celebration of gratitude.

The bottom line—it was a blast and the group is still meeting. Many of the activities in this workbook are drawn directly from these pilot meetings. Along the way, we created ground rules for participation that we would like to pass along to you:

1. If you want to start a group – GO FOR IT! Ask Pulling Down the Moon to provide you with a template for a flyer to advertise your group in your community. You can put it up at your local coffeehouse, doctor's office or library bulletin board.
2. A commitment from members to participate for the full 12 weeks is strongly encouraged. Our group in Chicago met through pregnancies, losses, holidays, and upheavals in their work, home and fertility lives. More than half of the women in Chicago did conceive during the 12 weeks and they continued to come. The group had committed in advance to opening their hearts to any very desired pregnancies that might arise.

3. Each woman must lead at least one chapter (more than one if the group is smaller than 12). The group leader creates an outline and sends out e-mails to the group if any homework is required for class.
4. Inviting experts is allowed. For instance, invite an Oriental Medicine practitioner for the acupuncture chapter, or a yoga teacher to help you work through the suggested practice in the first chapter with good form. You may also consider inviting a fertility doctor.
5. Field trips are also a good idea. The group can meet anywhere, including an inspiring place of worship or repose, outside at the beach or even at your local grocery store. Be creative!
6. Exchange e-mail addresses and keep in touch throughout the week. You have a built-in support network available to you!
7. Spread the word. If you find that your group is inspiring and meaningful to you, tell others about it so that they may start their own group or join yours. More women than you know have or had fertility issues and need a support system of others who understand their fertility journey.

Getting Treatment

At Pulling Down the Moon, we recommend treatments with an Oriental Medicine practitioner, personalized dietary counseling with a nutritionist and participation, if possible, in a fertility-friendly yoga class. Most of this is available to you through Pulling Down the Moon or other practitioners, but if you are unable to find or use them, do what you can and know that you will still receive tremendous benefit from the practices and information in this book.

Starting a Group

To start a group, please contact our Fully Fertile group coordinator at info@pullingdownthemoon.com. We will provide you with a flyer template and help you get the word out on our website and social network.

Necessary Supplies

Group members will need:

- copy of *Fully Fertile*
- Loose leaf binder or folder to keep weekly outlines organized
- Writing journal or spiral notebook for weekly in-class journal entries

Important Note:

Before applying any techniques described in this or any other nutrition, exercise, or holistic program, an individual should always consult and obtain professional medical advice, including from their doctor.

Not all of the techniques and exercises in this book and/or group may be suitable for all readers, and this and any other exercise program may result in physical injury. Women, whether pregnant or not, and men undergoing treatment for infertility should consult their doctor before beginning any exercise, yoga or holistic program.

Week One – Orientation and Ground Rules

This first week is dedicated to business, getting to know each other and, if time permits, reading the How to Use this Book section of *Fully Fertile*.

General Business Checklist:

1. Confirm dates, meeting time and meeting location with the group. Discuss any group cancellations for holidays, etc.
2. Create a phone and e-mail list so that group members can communicate with each other.
3. Assign chapters. Each participant will be in charge of leading a chapter, or more than one chapter, depending on the size of the group.
4. Review ground rules for participation:
 - This program is meant for everyone, so be welcoming of all fellow participants wherever they may be in the fertility journey.
 - Still come if you get pregnant. Sharing each other's joy strengthens the energy of the group.
 - Please e-mail the group in advance of absences. Make-up work/notes should be acquired from the group leader for any session missed.
 - Confidentiality and respect for co-participants is expected.

Program Flow

- Weekly Chapter Assignments
 - Everyone must read the chapter but the group leader will be responsible for leading chapter exercises, etc.
 - Leader can feel free to send out e-mails to the group with homework assignments.
 - We suggest participants obtain a binder keep their weekly outlines and notes organized and a notebook/journal for writing exercises.

Group Introductions

- Group members should share as much about their fertility journey as they feel comfortable doing.
- If time permits, read the “How to Use this Book” section of *Fully Fertile* aloud, taking turns by paragraph.

Homework

- Wear yoga clothes for next week! And bring notebook/journal for the journaling exercise.

Week Two, Chapter 1—Yoga Program for Fertility

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: The Voice

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person can share as much of her journal response as she would like.

In the introduction to the first chapter, Beth describes hearing a voice and how that voice impacted the direction of her life. Have you ever had an experience of “The Voice?” If so, what did it tell you? If not, what other ways have direction and inspiration arisen in your life?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is prana?
 - Where do you personally find it? How do you lose it?
2. Have you ever had a Satori or insight in your life? Either about your body, fertility or some other area of your life?
3. Who believes in the chakras? (See p. 34 for chart.) Can you feel them?

Suggested Activity: work through the breathing practices together

Finding Your Breath p. 36

- Move into the yoga room and get comfy with mats and blankets.
- Choose one person to read aloud the instructions for the breathing practices.
- After the breathing, discuss the way you feel and how this breath differed from the breathing you do every day of your life.

Recommended Class Ending:

Sit in a circle and have each person in turn share one thing they like or feel grateful for about their physical body (and you HAVE to come up with something)!

Homework: Ama cleanse (p. 62)

Week 3, Chapter Two—Oriental Medicine and the Philosophy of Fertility

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: The Tai Chi symbol

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

What do you think is the meaning of the t’ai chi symbol? How does this relate to your own fertility journey?

Discussion Questions:

“The Macrocosm in the Microcosm”—Oriental Medicine teaches that what we see in nature we will see reflected in ourselves. Here are some topics for discussion.

1. The moon is associated with the feminine principle (yin), the tides and the menses. Do you have any personal stories, myths or teachings about the moon passed down through your family?
2. Sages say that by looking at a piece of bark from the tree you can come to know the whole tree. By looking at a piece of your fertility journey, how can you come to know the whole you?
3. What does eating “with the weather” mean to you? How does this play out in your eating patterns?
4. Do you relate to the idea of yin and yang? Can you think of areas of imbalance in your life?

Suggested Activity:

Go outside and look at the moon—what phase is it in? Sit quietly as a group and observe the moon’s gentle light in the night sky. Once inside, share any thoughts about the moon and how you personally relate to it.

Homework: Qi drain/gain (p. 89)

Week 4, Chapter 3—Fully Fertile Diet

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Fully Fertile Diet

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

What is your current relationship with food? Would you characterize it as Fully Fertile? In what ways is it not?

Discussion Questions:

1. How does stress affect your eating habits?
2. At PDtM, we like to say that there’s a continuum of eating styles ranging from ordered to disordered, with shades of gray between. What practices do you feel are necessary/important for a healthy relationship with food?
3. How is food spiritual?

Suggested Activity: Fertility Food Show and Tell

With the knowledge you've gained through Chapter 3, you're ready to hit the market and do some shopping. Assign each group member a food group from the list below. Head out to the market and shop around for a food, recipe or idea from your assigned category to share with the group. Be prepared to show and tell, but don't feel obligated to cook or to create anything elaborate—just bring your bright ideas and any nifty products you might discover. (You might even discover that raw, gluten-free or dairy-free products, which are often recommended when trying to conceive, are actually tasty and healthy!)

Fruits/vegetables

Fats and Oils

Bread aisle

Non-bread grain product

Snack food

Nuts/Seeds
Dessert
Dairy alternative
Protein source

Suggested Ritual: Learn the mudra and blessing from **p. 102?**

Homework: Keep a food diary (p. 115)

Week 5, Chapter Four—In the Bedroom

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: In the Bedroom

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

At PDtM, we encourage patients to create a sacred space in their bedroom for the very important activities of sleep and sex. What elements of your bedroom support good sleep and sex? What would you like to improve?

Discussion Questions:

1. Feng shui is fun, but can be confusing and overwhelming. At PDtM, we think one simple exercise is to look at the symbols in the bedroom as they relate to fertility feng shui. Discuss the following:
 - What kind of art do you have on the wall and what message is it sending?
 - What colors surround you in your bedroom and how do they make you feel?
 - What about clutter?
 - Is your toilet seat cover closed?
2. What reoccurring dreams do you all have? Share yours and let the group offer possible interpretations.
3. Discuss the difference between creative and procreative sex—share funny stories about the joy (not!) of sex these days.

Suggested Ritual: Each group member will take out a sheet of paper and write down all worries, concerns and stresses of the day. When the whole group is

finished, take papers and tear up into tiny pieces. Place all the pieces in a big bowl, shake to mix and then dump on the table like tea leaves. What do you see? If nothing, good, go home and get some sleep!

Homework: Practice erotic massage with partner. Also, each morning when you awaken, keep a journal of any dreams you had and the kind of sleep you experienced (p. 135).

Week 6, Chapter 5—Strengthening the Letting-go Muscle

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Letting go of Stress

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

What are your personal stress triggers? How do you relieve stress?

Discussion Questions:

1. What yamas (abstentions) and niyamas (observances) do you practice?
2. Do you think stress inhibits our ability to get pregnant?
3. How do you define the letting go muscle and how do you strengthen it in your life?

Suggested Activity: Breath of Happiness

Homework: Mood-elevating yoga practice (p. 144)

Week 7, Chapter 6—Identifying and Eliminating Your Stressors

Check-in and Update – How's everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Stress Triggers

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

What stressors got triggered this week?

Discussion Questions:

1. It has been said that life is only 1% what happens and 99% how you react. How has this played out in your fertility journey?
2. Discuss the various stressors described in the book. Did we miss any? Was any one particularly universal in the group?
3. How could it be liberating if you did not identify with the ego and the labels we give ourselves?

Suggested Activity: Go around the circle and share the three most important labels that you give yourself and why they're so important, and what life would be like without them.

Homework: Find your stressor, recognize it in you, and then begin to formulate a plan to eliminate it.

Week 8, Chapter 7—Letting Go of Attachment and Disappointment

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Disappointment

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

What desires in your life have brought you the most misery?

Discussion Questions:

1. What tools have you used for coping with loss and disappointment?
2. What is your partner’s coping style? How does this challenge or complement yours?
3. Invite the demons in for tea. Discuss fertility-specific examples of the Kleshas or afflictions: asmita (sense of ego), avidya (mis-knowing/delusion), ragas (attachment), dvesa (aversions), and abhinivesa (fear). (See story below.)

The following is a story from Tibetan Buddhism told by the wonderful Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron.

Milarepa is one of the lineage holders of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He is one of the heroes, one of the brave ones and a very crazy, unusual fellow. He was a loner who lived in caves by himself and meditated wholeheartedly for years. He was extremely stubborn and determined. If he could not find anything to eat for a couple of years, he just ate nettles and turned green, but he never stopped practicing.

One evening, Milarepa returned to his cave after gathering firewood, only to find it filled with demons. They were cooking his food, reading his books, and sleeping in his bed. They had taken over the joint. He did not know how to get these guys out of his cave! Even though he had a suspicion they were just a projection of his own mind—all the unwanted parts of himself—he did not know how to get rid of them.

Being a monk, he first tried to teach them the dharma. He sat on a seat that was higher than they were and said things to them about how we are all one. He talked about compassion, and how poison is medicine. Nothing happened. The demons were still there.

Then he lost his patience and got very angry and ran at them. They just laughed at him. Finally, he gave up and just sat down on the floor saying, “I am not going away and it looks like you are not either, so let us just have tea.”

At that point, all of them left except one. Milarepa said “Oh, this one is particularly vicious.” (We all know that one. Sometimes we have lots of them like that. Sometimes we feel that is all we have.) He did not know what to do, so he just surrendered himself even further. He walked over and put himself right into the mouth of the demon and said, “Just eat me up, if you want to.”

Then that demon left, too. The moral of the story is, when the resistance is gone, so are the demons.

1. This tale illustrates our need for courage, fearlessness and a willingness to be present with whatever arises in our lives. To be curious rather than fearful about what comes up, to actually embrace and get to know it intimately.
2. Fear is our usual response to our demons. Unfortunately, modern demons are not easily instantly recognizable by their fangs and claws and bad smell. They come in more subtle forms—unwanted feeling, thought or circumstances. We want to get rid of them, so we resist them. An alternative approach, which can yield interesting results is to say, “Eat me. I am yours. “
3. When a demon, such as an unwanted emotion like craving, anger, depression, etc. arises, instead of an habitual response of acting it out or repressing it (methods of trying to rid ourselves of the uncomfortable feeling), we can just sit with the raw energy of the emotion—the raw energy under the story line—and get to know it. Eventually, little by little, it begins to dissolve, so that when the resistance is gone, so is the demon.

By Pema Chodron from Start Where You Are by Pema Chodron, Shambala Publications

Suggested Activity/Ritual: The votive candle activity to express gratitude (p. 173) or clearing ritual (p. 181).

Week 9, Chapter 8—Letting Go of Your Negative Attitudes and Thoughts

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Lies We Believe

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person to share as much of her journal response as she would like.

Write three lies that you believe, then ask the four questions on p. 185.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Tami’s St. Louis story (p. 184). Does anyone have an example of how a change in attitude brought a shift in reality?
2. Studying Your Attitudes exercise on p. 186: Answer the questions, then ask yourself if your stressors are based on false perceptions/ideas.
3. Examine your thoughts and how they form your relationships with people: Do you hold kindness in your mind and therefore radiate and attract kindness? Do you surround yourself with people who have a higher vibration than your own, which will raise your vibration up? Are there relationships in your life now that you are of low vibration?

Suggested Activity: Group leader reads visualization on p. 193

Week 10, Chapter 9: The Koshas: Giving Up Your Erroneous Definition of Self

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: The Witness

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person can share as much of her journal response as she would like.

The spirit in its perfect state wants to have human experiences and inhabits a physical body and acquires a mind, becoming the Witness. Have you connected with your Witness at some point in your life, if only briefly?

Discussion Questions:

1. “We are spiritual beings having a physical experience NOT physical beings having a spiritual experience.” What does this phrase mean to you? How do you relate to it?
2. Now that you’ve read about the five Koshas, how do you think the kosha model heals infertility or aids with conception?
3. We can’t control whether we have the ability to conceive a child but we can control how we react to our struggles with infertility. Have you started to penetrate your koshas? How do you deal with your infertility struggles?

Suggested Activity: Kosha Exploration (p. 202)

Week 11, Chapter 10: Learning the Value of Breath—Pranayama

Check-in and Update – How's everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Prana

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person can share as much of her journal response as she would like.

If you have ever felt really happy, healthy or content but can't say why it's likely an infusion of prana, or life force energy. What are some of your encounters with prana?

Discussion Questions:

1. Where's your prana—inside or outside your body?
2. How does your breath change as your life changes—when you're scared, stressed, aroused, calm, sad, thoughtful, etc.?
3. Of the seven ways mentioned to increase prana, which have you incorporated? How else do you absorb life force energy into your physical body?

Suggested Activity: Practice the breathing exercises together (p. 208). Go around the group and say which one(s) you prefer, and that you could practice everyday for five minutes. Explain why you feel comfortable with that exercise.

*For next week, wait and do the Forest exercise in class next week (p. 213)

Week 12, Chapter 11: Seeing the Forest from the Trees: Meditation and Visualization

Check-in and Update – How’s everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise: Seeing Through the Forest

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person can share as much of her journal response as she would like.

Go beyond having a baby and think about the other aspects of our lives that bring us happiness:

- 1. Career***
- 2. Home***
- 3. Spouse/partner***
- 4. Personal growth/leisure***
- 5. Family and friends***

or

Have you developed a negative (or obsessive) one-pointedness in relation to getting pregnant? How can/do you find balance within other aspects of life? What if you tried to get rid of the desire to control every aspect of the baby-making process?

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of vibrations do you send out? Do you believe in the law of karma?
2. How can you—in your life—climb your pyramid, or reach our own one-pointedness (as the yogis define it by saying that all things and life contribute to your overall happiness)? Which of the five koshas do you feel you’ve worked through?
3. What things along your fertility journey could you stand getting rid of in order to make yourself more fully fertile?

Suggested Activity: Practice ascending your pyramid with the four meditation exercises. Pick one to do together or try all four. Follow up with one every day.

Week 13, Chapter 12: Prayer

Check-in and Update – How's everybody doing?

Journaling Exercise:

Consider the following question and take 10 minutes in silence to journal your responses. At the end of the journaling period, go around the group and allow each person can share as much of her journal response as she would like.

Place three headings at the top of the paper: Heart, Mind, Spirit. List qualities you admire about yourself in each category and the qualities you want to cultivate.

Discussion Questions:

1. Dr. Domar asserts that most women who have difficulty conceiving experience a crisis of faith on some level. Can you relate to that?
2. What's your connection with your bliss body, the spiritual core of our being?
3. What is your dharma? (What's your one main reason you're on this planet?)
4. What's your current relationship with prayer? How has your religious upbringing affected that relationship (strengthened or diminished it)?
5. Who do you pray to? How do you pray
6. Do you have an Ishta Devata? What are the traits you value that your Ishta reflects?

Suggested Activity: Share a prayer that has special meaning to you and explain why.

Homework: Experiment with CDs/music of different hymns or chanting of Buddhists/monks.