



CONSCIOUS TRANSITIONS

7 Guideposts for Managing Fertility
Anxiety and the Waiting Zone

Sheryl Paul, M.A.

Let me start by saying that if you've found your way here, I know you're suffering in some way and my heart goes out to you. Whether you've been trying to conceive for two months or two years, the longing to be pregnant and subsequent frustration at month after month of no positive pregnancy test eventually leads most women to a state of despair. The desire to bear and birth a baby is the most primal and natural desire in the world, and when the desire doesn't come to fruition it leaves you feeling like there's a hole in your heart and an emptiness in your womb that can't be filled.

This free report isn't about techniques for increasing your fertility or your chances for conception, as there are plenty of wonderful resources available to this end. It's about creating a context of comfort that you can sink into when you're feeling like you're at the end of your rope. Through my decades of counseling women through life's transitions – from getting married to breaking up to becoming a mother – I've learned that while the external preparations are important, it's the psychological framework that can change the way you respond emotionally to the challenges. This context of comfort is often a lifeline for women when the darkness of despair threatens to take over.

The women I interviewed for my [**Birthing a New Mother Course**](#) unilaterally expressed shock at how challenging the preconception stage of this transition can be. As Sophia, now a mother of a five-year old said,

“This pre-pregnancy “trying” process is blowing me away. I had no idea that this would be a journey unto itself with stages that need to be contextualized and talked about to make it easier. Yes, people say it normally takes about six months, but no one says what it feels like for those six months when no baby comes.”

It's normal to feel scared if you don't conceive in the first month or two of trying. When 90% of women conceive within eighteen months, it seems that we would have more ease around the process, but when a woman has waited her whole life to become a mother even one or two months of waiting can feel unbearable.

As with every aspect of this transition, when you approach the challenges consciously you realize that this is a great opportunity for growth. For when you break down *what* is being challenged, you see that there are several resources that are being called upon: **patience**, **trusting**, **faith**, and **letting go**. And here's a little known secret: all of the resources that you practice drawing upon are the exact ones that you will need when you become a mother.

The Waiting Zone

A woman who is trying to conceive is in the waiting zone, and nobody likes to wait! How do you manage waiting? It's difficult. The ego wants to know. The ego wants definites. The ego hates the unknown, being in limbo, in the undefined state of not pregnant but maybe pregnant. That's why there can be relief alongside the disappointment when your period starts. At that moment, even if you're grieving, at least you're in a familiar zone again. You know you're not pregnant and your period feels familiar. The familiarity is reassuring, and then comes the hope that the new

phase begins again, the pre-ovulation phase, the hope of a creating a new life.

How can you manage the Waiting Zone? The following eight suggestions can help – and, again, will facilitate the formation of your mother-identity as these are the very practices that you will call upon during motherhood.

1. Practice Patience

Patience is one of the most important qualities you will need as a mother. Babies, children, and adult children live life on their own timetable, which doesn't always align with yours! The cultivation of patience begins now, as you await the news of conception. This may be a matter of weeks, months, or, possibly, years, and the longer you wait the more your patience will be tried. The next two reminders will help you find your patience.

One thing that will help you practice patience (and it *is* a practice, meaning that when the stakes are this high it's not a resource that you will naturally draw upon) is remembering to trust that there is a bigger timing at play. In other words, we don't know what the best plan is for our lives, but we can trust in the path life has taken thus far. Life is good and has led you to the things that you needed (even if it's not what you've thought you needed). If you can trust that something greater than yourself knows what's best for you, you will find patience more easily.

Remember that you are beginning a journey that will last the rest of your life. Chances are very high that you will become a mother. But, like so many aspects of being a mother, the timing is not in your hands. Just as you will not control when your baby decides to be born (the baby decides) and you will not decide how many hours in a row your baby sleeps (your baby decides), so you cannot decide when you will conceive. It may be this month. It may be next month. It may be in two years. The timing is perfect. The timing is out of your hands. The timing is divine.

When you feel the tightness of impatience taking hold, I encourage you to take a deep breath and say the following affirmation to yourself, either silently or out loud, or writing in a journal. If you find that it helps, write it down on a piece of paper and keep it close at hand so that you can always draw on it. Sometimes a simple reminder of truth can change your inner state of mind from tension to ease.

I set my intention, I hold my vision, then I release myself to a wiser plan.

2. Connect to a Spiritual Source

Trust in something greater than yourself. Call on ***faith***. Remember times in your life when you wanted something so badly, you gripped and prayed and cried for it, and when it didn't happen you finally realized that it was a blessing. It's all handled in a realm much wiser than we can fathom. Talk to God (higher power, Nature, Source, life – whatever term works for you). Pray. Talk to the Goddess. Cry. Go into nature or wherever you feel most connected to the wisdom and vastness of the Universe. It's all handled. Surrender into the knowing that there are beautiful and wise forces at play. Sink into that knowledge as if it's a warm, large hug.

3. Make Peace With the Unknown

The ego wants to know. The higher self finds refuge in “one day at a time.” You don’t know. You can’t know. And that’s okay once you finally surrender to it. At each phase of this journey – the motherhood journey and the life journey – the challenge is about **letting go** and **trusting** in the broader plan of life.

In the video interview for Lesson 2 of the Course with childbirth educator Brandy Ferner, she discusses that at the core of her struggle during her 18 months of trying to conceive was learning to let go of control. As she says, “I finally realized that the less you resist, the less you will suffer because you’re no longer rigid and snapable, but instead, flexible and able to bend in whichever way the wind blows you.”

I think it would be fair to say that this is the core issue for most women at every stage of the motherhood transition. And at every stage – from preconception to pregnancy through labor and the first year – the more you learn to practice letting go of the areas that are truly beyond your control, the more you will find the serenity you seek.

The truth is that the very core of this process is about *not knowing*. It’s about what happens when we realize that, despite what we may think or have been conditioned to believe, we are not in control of every moment of our lives. There are some events that involve a large element of mystery, and becoming a mother is one of them. Our job is to learn how to relax into the not-knowing and trust that something larger and much wiser than ourselves is at play. It’s a reminder of our humility, of our small minds having little control about the timing and outcome. Instead of feeling diminished by this truth, we can find comfort in it. Instead of fighting against the order and timing, we can trust in it and use this time to cultivate the practices above.

This isn’t an easy task (none of this is easy) and it requires a real willingness to look inside and approach this challenge as an opportunity for growth. If you accept this opportunity and trust that when you view preconception through the lens that everything you learn will assist you as a mother (and will likely create a more fertile emotional ground in which to conceive a baby), I encourage you to practice the following exercise: Simply start to notice when you’re trying to control pieces of this journey. When you feel that tight place inside your body, imagine releasing the stronghold, like a fist being pulled open gently, finger by finger. Notice how that feels in comparison to how it felt before. The more you notice your physical signs of tightness and control, the more you will be able to make peace with the unknown and exhale into however this journey is meant to unfold.

4. Honor the Fear

Make room for it. It’s normal. Why would you not feel scared? You’re on the precipice of a huge cliff and you don’t know if you’re going to jump this month, next month, or never! That’s scary. When you castigate yourself for feeling scared, you compress the fear and magnify it. When you allow it room to breathe without letting it take over, you will feel more spacious and more ready to receive a new life.

Write about your fears. If you already journal, journal more. If you aren’t journaling,

start now. In the *Birthing a New Mother Course* I discuss how to journal effectively in depth. The fears may center around the process of getting pregnant – what if I never conceive? – or of becoming a mother. Whatever the focus, give the fears room to breathe and watch as they dissipate and eventually float away.

5. Focus on Your Marriage or on Yourself

Once you become pregnant, your focus begins to shift from yourselves and each other to the baby. And once the baby arrives, no one but the child matters for a period of time. So enjoy this time when your marriage is just your own, when you can go out to dinner whenever you want, when you can go to the movies, have dates, have sex, and cuddle up on the couch for hours on end without the constant radio buzz of a baby monitor as your soundtrack! Trying to conceive creates its own bundle of stress for a marriage, which means it's even more important that you take time to focus on each other without the topic – or the act – or trying to conceive filtering into your date.

Your task for tonight: Go out to dinner and a movie with your partner and actively revel in the fact that you didn't have to find a babysitter, that there isn't a baby at home wondering where you are, that you can eat whatever you want without worrying about how it's going to harm your unborn baby, drink some wine, indulge, enjoy. Celebrate your freedom while reminding yourself that there will be a time that you grieve its loss.

If you're not in a partnership, try to enjoy this time on your own. Your days of freedom are numbered, and when you can change the focus from "I'll be happy when I conceive" to "I'll focus on gratitude now", an essential space opens up inside that allows you to find more peace with the process.

6. Connect with Other Women

It's essential that you know that you're not alone through this challenging time. Reach out to message boards, forums, and local support groups. And on the Conscious Motherhood forum (which you gain access to through the Birthing a New Mother Course) you'll connect with other like-minded women who are discussing the emotional challenges that arise at the various stages of this transition.

7. Express Gratitude

When month follows month of no pregnancy, it's easy to focus on what's missing in your life: namely, a baby. But if you're ready to bring a child into your life then you already have much to be grateful for: your health, your stability, your friends, family, marriage, etc. Most of us lead highly privileged and abundant lives and, while the urge for a baby is as primal as it gets, it's also important not to lose sight of all that is present right now.

As I wrote in my journal on November 18, 2003:

Gratitude as the Antidote to Fear

Today, as I stepped out into the beautiful sunshine to take a walk, I was suddenly able to orient myself toward gratitude and focusing on all the blessings in my life, and then the fear and frustration with the baby-waiting went away. I realized that my life is so wonderful now, in this moment, and I don't need a baby to make it any better. A baby will be wonderful and challenging and extraordinary, and until s/he arrives, I hope to appreciate and enjoy my life – my husband, my friends, my work, my body, my kitty-cat, my home, my office, my time, my quiet, my solitude – exactly as they are, because I know once a baby comes none of those things will be the same every again. A very different attitude than yesterday!

I realized that for women who are actively trying – as opposed to accidentally getting pregnant – it's probably because they're at a place in their lives where they're ready and prepared to bring a child into the world. That means that a lot is working! Marriage, financial situation, home, work, family... not that everything has to be totally in order, but that it mostly works. And that's a lot to be grateful for!

Sometimes gratitude comes unbidden, in moments of spontaneous grace. And sometimes it's a resource that you have to actively practice, like patience and faith. Here's a simple exercise for connecting to gratitude: keep a journal next to your bed and each night take five minutes to write down three things that you're grateful for. Notice how it feels in your body when you focus on what's *present* in your life as opposed to what's missing.

A few final words, dear reader: Your time will come. In fact, your time is here, right now, at the onset of this magnificent journey into motherhood. Your baby will come. Perhaps he or she is here already, watching, waiting with you as you begin the process that will birth yourself as a mother. Someone is preparing you for motherhood. You can't see this presence, but it's here, holding you and witnessing as you struggle through this process, just as you will hold and witness your child in the years to come.