



Spiritual conception: Kathryn and Freddie and, right, Dr Corda

KATHRYN Pearson had never believed in woo-woo spiritual stuff. Then she found herself undergoing a profound change as a shamanic healer traced her hands in the air around her body. Suddenly, to the sound of beating drums, she felt an overwhelming sense of emotional release.

'I started crying,' says Kathryn. 'It was so powerful, really intense. I walked out of there a different person. It was like I finally had the answers I needed.'

The aim of the practice was to release stress and unclutter 'emotional space', expanding her 'capability to receive'.

But Kathryn and her partner Dan weren't on the two-day retreat to achieve mental balance. They had one specific goal in mind — to get pregnant.

After three years of trying unsuccessfully for a baby, they'd been turned down for NHS fertility treatment because Kathryn's BMI was judged too high. Unable to afford to go private, they were willing to explore all avenues — including alternative therapies.

Today, she and Dan are proud parents to Freddie, a bright and energetic preschooler who recently celebrated his fourth birthday with a soft-play party and a visit from Spider-Man.

Kathryn puts his birth down to an unconventional fertility treatment plan which advocates not only overhauling your diet and lifestyle, but using crystals, shamanic healers, chakras and even exploring how past trauma might affect your gynaecological health.

It would be easy to be sceptical were it not recommended by a qualified doctor who's spent more than a decade as an obstetrician and gynaecologist.

In a new book called *The Conception Plan*, Dr Larisa Corda

'Fertility can be affected by trauma'

details what she calls a 'scientifically spiritual' 12-week programme that aims to improve a couple's chances of conceiving.

There's advice on monitoring your cycle, as well as how often to have sex (throughout your cycle and not just in the 'fertile' period around ovulation) and nutrition, encouraging couples to eat foods that promote good fertility.

These include red fruit and vegetables which have been linked to improved sperm count, and green leafy veg, which helps regulate oestrogen levels.

Dr Corda recommends avoiding synthetic fragrances, not storing foods in plastics, drinking filtered water and wearing clothes made from natural fibres. She also

Can crystals and shamanic healing really help you to have a baby?

That's the intriguing claim in a new book by a former NHS doctor who says emotional health is just as important when you're trying to get pregnant

by Clare Goldwin

explores epigenetics, a relatively new area of science that studies how behaviours and environment affect the way genes work. 'Previously it was thought that health and fertility were determined by your genes — which you couldn't change,' she explains. 'Now we know this isn't the case for the overwhelming majority of people.'

'Epigenetics explains why changes in your daily habits, food, exercise, behaviours, environment and even your emotional state will make you more fertile (but can also make you less fertile).'

Dr Corda also links the ability to conceive with past trauma and 'energetic' health. 'Suppressed emotions influence a cascade of biological processes that impact on your overall well-being and even your fertility,' she argues.

Dr Corda advocates 'chakra meditations' saying: 'Accessing the chakras [points where information flows between the physical and energetic body] can be a powerful way to improve fertility.'

She claims that a dysfunction in one area can cause a hormonal disturbance. In her book, she advises couples to 'activate' their chakras through daily meditation and breathwork, as well as spending five minutes a day visualising

themselves as parents. As for crystal healing, Dr Corda writes: 'Each crystal has its own electromagnetic properties, giving it frequencies that can be used to influence our energetic body.'

On shamanic healing, she says: 'Shamans were the original neuroscientists of ancient civilisations and they understand how to work on the energetic and spiritual body to bring old pain and trauma to consciousness and release it.'

There will of course be cynics. But Dr Corda, 41, is a passionate advocate of her methods. 'More and more people — doctors, nurses, midwives — are opening up to these new concepts, and the increasing evidence of their positive effects,' she says. 'Alternative therapy gets dismissed as just a placebo effect, but even if this is so, it points to the power of the mind to create physical change.'

She believes her approach could revolutionise ideas about conception. 'I don't believe in the crude limitations women are fed about not being able to get pregnant beyond the age of 40, or that there's this clifftop you suddenly fall off aged 35. Of course, sometimes there will be a biological reason why someone cannot get pregnant naturally or why they need to access IVF or other reproductive techniques.'

'But I'm a strong believer that far more people can be helped by techniques that don't cost a lot of money, that they can do themselves. And that there is potential to shift that fertile window into the later stages of life if you do things to look after yourself.' After

giving advice to women about their gynaecological health via social media and in her role as a fertility expert for ITV's *This Morning*, in 2019 Dr Corda launched an appeal for couples to try her conception methods.

Kathryn, 35, team leader for a call-handling service, and her partner Dan Edwards, also 35, a gas engineer, from Wrexham, had been together for six years and

'We were having sex every other day'

trying for a baby for three. While Kathryn had been diagnosed with polycystic ovaries and Dan with an enlargement of veins that could affect his sperm count, they'd been refused fertility treatment by the NHS as she was two and half stone overweight.

Kathryn says, ironically, it was giving up the Pill to get pregnant that triggered her weight gain.

'Having a family was something we'd both always wanted and at this point we would have given anything a go,' she says. 'As a woman, I felt pregnancy should be the most natural thing and yet I couldn't do it. I felt embarrassed.'

Dr Corda told them to go on a vegan diet — that also excluded gluten, alcohol and processed foods — increasing foods good for

egg and sperm health. They had to eliminate as many chemicals as possible — using natural toiletries and cleaning products and minimising contact with plastic — as well as upping exercise.

There was the spiritual retreat in Devon, where they experienced treatments such as reiki and yes, the shamanic healing.

Kathryn says they were also encouraged to have sex all through the month. 'A lot of couples don't realise you should do it consistently throughout the month as your fertile window may be unpredictable. We were having sex every other day, which was knacker, but the changes in our diet gave us the energy and motivation.'

To their delight, three months later, Kathryn discovered she was pregnant. 'I thought to myself: "Wow, is that [making Dr Corda's changes] all it took?" Dan celebrated with a bacon sandwich.'

Dr Corda left the NHS in 2021 to write her book and last year started a practice at the Women's Wellness centre in Chelsea, West London. She says it's too soon to give success rates but has been told by many women that her holistic advice has helped them get pregnant, 'including those who were given a poor prognosis by others'.

Kathryn is certainly an advocate. She says: 'I will forever be grateful that she put her trust in us to try something new. I can't wait to tell Freddie all about it one day.'

■ *THE Conception Plan* by Dr Larisa Corda is available now (Penguin Life, £18.99). theconceptionplan.com



Picture: KI PRICE