



# THE 4 WEEK FERTILITY FOCUS GUIDE

My four week plan to help you begin to  
reconnect with yourself and better understand  
your cycle and hormones.

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# Your 4 week fertility focus guide

*Issues with fertility and hormonal imbalance can feel, understandably, completely overwhelming, and leave you with a lot of questions. So I've written this guide to help you break it down, and focus on one issue a week to see how making small changes can help you in big ways.*

01

## Week one: Lifestyle

In the first week we explore lifestyle factors and how these may be affecting your hormones without you even knowing! There may be things in this section that you have not considered before, and so we will take some time to look more closely at them.

02

## Week two: Setting boundaries

This week we look at setting boundaries within your life. When you are struggling with fertility or hormonal imbalances, life can feel intense and difficult. Here we look at putting in some boundaries to give you space and time to process your feelings and put your own needs first.

03

## Week Three: Charting

Week three is a deep dive into your hormonal balance and how this affects your everyday life. We look at different ways to monitor your cycle and hormones to help you build a better understanding of what's going on for you.

04

## Week Four: Self Compassion

In the final week we will consider self compassion and kindness. We will look for pockets of time in your life where you can do the things you enjoy, where you can rest, and where you can use all of the things we have worked on to develop a self care plan.

## **The 4 Week Fertility Focus Guide**

Welcome to your Fertility Focus Guide, a free 4-week program that will support you in focusing on different areas of your life and will enable you to identify places where you can make small changes for big impact.

In this guide we look at you as a whole person, so please don't be surprised when you find yourself looking at relationships, thought patterns and beliefs as well as nutrition, sleep and hydration. All these things can impact upon our hormones and fertility as well as our wellbeing and happiness.

### **About the author:**

So, what do I know about hormones and fertility issues, you may well be asking? What qualifications do I have that can help you? Well, let me introduce myself:

I am Sarah Vaughan, Reflexologist, Reproflexologist and holistic therapist since 2012. My journey into this field of work came about due to my own struggles with fertility and hormones, which I endured for ten difficult, heart breaking, years. I was extremely lucky, in the midst of all of this chaos, to be able to be a case study for a reflexology student, and I know I am extremely fortunate to say that I am now a mother of three.

The support that I felt from my reflexologist emotionally, physically and spiritually during the emotional roller coaster that is infertility, undoubtedly played a huge part in helping me to heal and move forwards. Now I am privileged to be able to offer that support to others who are experiencing similar situations.

Over the years I have undertaken a huge amount of training, there is always something new to learn and it's always so interesting! Here are some of my qualifications:

ABC Diploma in Reflexology

Reproflexology training from pre conceptual care and natural fertility boosts to IVF and assisted conception

Maternity reflexology

Harness your hormones and menopause training – Red School

Certified Life Coach

Forest therapy practitioner (If you choose to work with me, sometimes my sessions are outside.)

### **How to use this guide:**

I have written this guide to take you on a journey into your own thoughts, feelings and health for the next four weeks. In our busy lives that it something that we often forget to do, we place our needs below those of others and rarely stop to consider the impact this has. This is your chance to start putting yourself first.

I have included journaling pages, prompts, and suggestions that you might want to implement. Please don't feel you have to do every single thing! Take what is useful to you, leave the rest, it might be helpful later.

The intention is that each week, Monday – Friday I give you something to do, think about or write about, just one thing a day. At the weekends I would like you to rest, drink plenty of water, eat well, do the things you enjoy and take care of yourself.

I would like you to also take some time before you begin this process, to really take stock of how you are feeling right now. What brought you to download this guide? How are you finding life since the arrival of a global pandemic? Has it impacted on your plans, fertility treatments, medical care, support networks or income? Perhaps it's had some positive effects too, like being able to spend more time with the people you love or giving you the opportunity to re-evaluate your life?

Undoubtedly, there has been a huge shift in energy and in the lives of many of us. Use this space to write down the impact of these changes on you, everything, good and bad. Get it out and on to this paper:

Keep going.....

Now, look at all of those things you have written.

WOW!! You have been dealing with so much. Let it sink in, just how much extra you have had on your plate. How are you feeling now? Congratulate yourself on all that you have dealt with, highlight some of the things that you might like to deal with later. Pause. Breathe. You have got this.

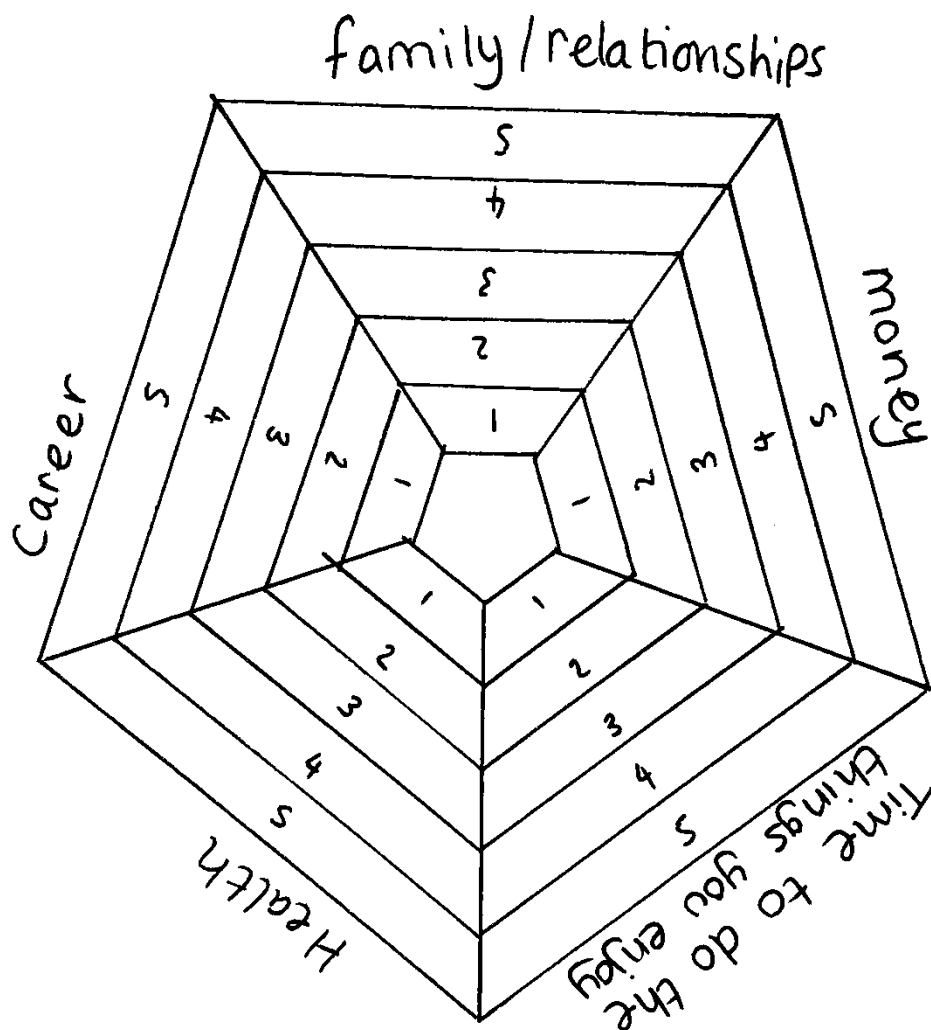
Now, are you ready to deep dive further into yourself? Yes? Then let's go!

## Week One: Lifestyle

As a holistic therapist the core focus of my work is supporting the whole person and every aspect of their health and wellbeing. Lifestyle can be important because small changes can have a significant impact both physically and psychologically. Feeling like we can take some time to put our needs at the top of the list, positively effects the way we see ourselves.

This week I want you to look after yourself as if you were still a child. I want you to parent yourself and treat your needs as urgently as you would for a toddler. If you are hungry, I want you to eat something that will nourish you (and maybe a little bit of chocolate too), I want you to make time to drink some water, I want you to play, go outside for a walk, jump in the puddles and... if you need a wee, go to the loo! Don't wait until you have done the laundry, sent the email and cooked the dinner, go immediately. Your needs matter.

Before we begin, I would like you to colour in the pentagon below. For each aspect I would like you to colour in how well that aspect of your life is functioning for you. 1 is the lowest score, it's not going well at all, 5 is the highest score, you are really happy with this aspect of your life. Some areas will be better than others, and that's great because it helps you to identify specific areas you would like to focus on. Some areas also interlink, such as career and finance.



Day 1:

Focus: Your nutritional choices

How well would you say you eat? Are your food choices nutritious? Is there room for improvement? This is one of the first questions that I ask when I am doing an assessment in my clinic, because what we eat has a direct impact on our bodies, how they function, how we feel, and most importantly for fertility, our diet directly impacts on our hormones.

There are lots of books and courses available if you really want to focus on this aspect of your fertility journey by people like Zita West and Emma Cannon, but let's start with the very basics first.

Eating and drinking well, as often as you can, is an act of self-care, and I want you to begin looking after your own needs as if you were looking after a child. That means, if you are hungry, eat something that will nourish you, if you are thirsty, drink something that will support your body and help with digestion. If you are tired, rest, if you are angry or sad, express it and, as I said before, if you are bursting for a wee, go to the toilet! How often do we ignore the signals from our own bodies and just carry on with what we are doing? It's time to listen to your body and do what it wants you to do.

Eating the best food that you can afford is helpful and improving the diet of both partners can have a significant impact on fertility. Dietary and lifestyle changes take around three months to have a significant impact on our health, particularly on sperm production, so if you are both making dietary changes, it's worth making ones that you are happy to keep.

The basic nutritional advice is this:

- Try to eat organic fruit and vegetables whenever you can, more vegetables than fruit. (5-6 portions a day.)
- Increase consumption of grains, nuts and seeds, such as pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, pecans, Brazil nuts, walnuts and hazel nuts.
- Cut down on red meat and include more organic poultry.
- If you are vegetarian, it might be wise to avoid naturally occurring phytoestrogens which are found in soya. Soya is often used in things like pizza bases, breads, cakes and pastries. If you are a whiz in the kitchen, why not make your own breads and cakes? Soybeans and soy sauce are fine to eat.
- Cut out as much processed food as you can. The closer food is to its original form, the better it will be for you.
- Take some good quality multi-vitamins, both partners. For women, please ensure the vitamins contain the correct levels of folic acid for pregnancy.
- Increase water intake, particularly women in the second half of the cycle, as the endometrium requires good blood flow to thicken.
- Caffeine is a tricky one to give up completely, it's in tea, coffee, chocolate and some fizzy drinks and other hidden places. I would suggest gradually weaning yourself down to two cups of tea or coffee a day, this will decrease your anxiety levels, as well as improving your physical health.
- Alcohol is the last thing on this list. In an ideal world, alcohol would be completely cut from the diet for both partners, but I understand that this is a big ask sometimes. Minimising alcohol consumption will have a huge impact. If you do drink the odd glass of wine or beer, try to find organic brands.

If you want to make some changes to your diet, list them below. Start with small changes that you are able to keep. It might be helpful to write a meal plan for each week and also journal how you are feeling with the changes, positive results will help you to stick with it! Planning your meals will help you to save money and waste less food as well!

NOTE: If you have any specific health issues, such as diabetes or severe allergies, consult with a health professional before making dietary changes.



Day 2:

Focus: Exercise and movement

How often do you purposefully move during the week? Do you do too much? Not enough? Or perhaps you have your fitness and movement levels exactly as you want them.

For those of you who, like me, don't exercise enough, gentle movement in some form is extremely helpful when it comes to fertility, and also mental wellness. I'm not suggesting that you sign up to Joe Wicks and make sweat come out of your eyebrows! (That happens, let me tell you!) But maybe yoga, brisk walking a few times a week, or signing up to a gentle exercise class could help you to be more active.

Being overactive also has an impact on our hormones. Too much exercise can impact on fertility and ovulation in women. Equally for men, sports like cycling, running and muscle building can impact upon sperm quality. Again, more gentle exercise might be better.

As a side note, it is wise for men to also avoid heat as it can damage sperm, so hot baths, tight underwear, saunas and steam rooms, and heated car seats are not recommended when trying to conceive.

What changes do you want to make to your week to incorporate movement?

Day 3:

Focus: Sleep

On a scale of 1-10 how well do you usually sleep?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not well at all							I sleep really well most nights		

Sleep can be a huge issue for many clients that I work with and insomnia from stressful lives and overactive minds can cause distress. The good news is that the work you are doing in these four weeks will almost certainly help you to sleep better and more soundly, so congratulations on taking a positive step into a happier life.

Sleep and rest help the body to heal and also allow the brain time to process what has happened during the day, so getting some good quality sleep undoubtedly supports our health and well-being. Importantly, for those trying to conceive, sleep also helps to regulate hormones.

If sleep is an issue for you, here are some simple things that might help.

- Avoid social media as much as possible, particularly in the evenings. Social media is designed to hook us in and make us engage for as long as possible. Try to use your social media apps only for set times during the day. (Easier said than done, I know!)
- Avoid watching the news before bedtime. I can guarantee you it won't be happy news and it will not induce a state of calm and relaxation.
- Don't check emails outside of work times. If you have access to your work emails at home, do not check them outside of work hours. You are not paid to do this, so you are essentially working for free, and it will most likely put your brain in work mode.
- Keep your bedroom environment for sleep and sex. Don't use it to work in, zoom call in or anything else! Keep it cool and comfortable and when its bedtime, keep the lights low. A sunshine bright LED light will not tell your brain that it's time to rest.
- Whenever possible, get outside as much as you can during the day. Let your body feel the weather and soak in the light, even in the winter. This will help to regulate your circadian rhythm, which wakes you up in the morning and makes you sleepy at night.
- Avoid caffeine after 3pm, instead try decaffeinated drinks or herbal teas.
- Eat smaller meals, earlier in the evening. Trying to sleep whilst digesting a large meal is not comfortable.
- Alcohol can also affect sleep, so this is another good reason to take a break.
- Exercise regularly, but not late in the day. You need to take time to unwind after exercise.
- Take some time in the evenings to do things that help you to relax, maybe some yoga or meditation. Ask your partner to give you a massage. Have a relaxing bath and go straight to bed.
- Sex! According to the sleep foundation "Sexual activity can often contribute to better sleep. After an orgasm, the body releases hormones like oxytocin and prolactin that can induce

pleasant and relaxing feelings. Sex also reduces levels of the hormone cortisol, which is associated with stress.” Sleepfoundation.org

If it's thoughts about other people's behaviour keeping you awake at night, we are going to look at setting boundaries next week.

I hope that you have found this helpful. I know that sleep can be an emotive issue for some people, and this is completely understandable. If you have any thoughts on sleep that you want to note down, I've left you some space below.

Day 4

Focus: Work

Work can be both a help and a hindrance when it comes to our health and wellbeing, especially if we are struggling with personal issues. If we have a job that we love, surrounded by a fantastic group of people, work can be our saviour. If we feel undervalued in a job that we don't enjoy, this will have a negative impact on how we feel about ourselves.

If you are a stay-at-home parent or carer, I would also count this as work. The work that you do is extremely valuable and very difficult at times, and often this gets taken for granted by governments and authorities who don't always recognise the important role that you play.

Today I want you to think about your work situation. How do you feel about it in terms of job satisfaction? How do you feel about your pay? How does your work impact your health and wellbeing? Write your notes below.

## Day 5

### Focus: Making time for joy

Life is finite, a fleeting moment in time and I believe that we should enjoy as much of it as we possibly can. The pandemic has had an enormous impact upon the world, and although it has undoubtedly caused huge grief and distress, it has also brought out some beautiful human traits such as kindness, compassion and moments of gratitude and joy. It is these that we will focus on.

Below I would like you to write down five things that you are grateful for:

1

2

3

4

5

And now write five things that bring you joy, even if you haven't done them recently.

1

2

3

4

5

I would like you to consider how you can incorporate at least some of these things into your everyday life to add extra joy. Think creatively, as if money and time were not an issue. What would you do?

Well done, you have completed week one. Next week we will be looking at setting boundaries and making sure that you can make time for doing more of the things that bring you joy!

## Week two: Setting boundaries

Welcome to week two, I hope that you have had a nice, relaxing weekend. This week we are going to be exploring ways to help you set boundaries in order to implement the self-care we discussed last week.

Setting boundaries can be tricky at first, especially when we are always keen to please others, but it is also important. So, this week we are going to look more closely at why we all struggle to set boundaries sometimes and who or what you need to set boundaries with.

Together we will look at ways you can firmly but politely say no to the things that you really don't want to do, and importantly, not feel bad for doing that.

This week I will be coaching you to use lots of different techniques to regain some control over your life and to make space for the things that you love and enjoy.

Let's go!

Day one

Focus: How are you using your time?

Today we are going to look at your time, the demands made of it by other people, where you choose to spend your time, and how you might make some small adjustments to regain some time to do more of the things you enjoy.

I want to be clear here, there is no judgement from me, and I don't want you to judge yourself. The way we spend our time is almost always influenced by our society, we see roles that we 'should be' fulfilling, we are told to 'work hard and play hard', we are bombarded with images of immaculate looking people with immaculate homes and clean cars!

There is also the pressure to multitask. We are sold this illusion that women, in particular, can have it all, the perfect house, perfect children, a full-time successful career, great friends, a brilliant marriage, great mental health, time to go to the gym every day, a healthy nutritious diet and a body that looks like it belongs to a super model!

Read that back... how many women do you know who have done all of that?

If you know anyone, then hats off to them, because I cannot think of a single person. Not one! What you are reading above are the goals of media advertising, who want to sell you things to make you look like you have got your shit together! Nobody, but nobody has always got their shit together.

And then there is social media, this is a time vacuum like we have never seen before. It is highly addictive (speaking as someone who is on it far too much), and it also portrays snippets of perfection alongside some very strong opinions that make you question why you were ever allowed to adult in the first place. My advice to you (and me) is to leave your phone in a different room as often as possible and focus on doing something you enjoy.

Anyway, enough with my rant about technology and media advertising, let's explore how time is used in our everyday life.

On the table that follows, I would like you to record the percentage, or hours of your waking day that you spend on the activities listed. I have left a few of spaces for you to add anything specific to your day that takes time.

Activity	Time spent doing that activity each day
Doing something just for you that you enjoy	
Housework and chores (Including life admin)	
Work (including travel to and from work)	
Cooking for others, and yourself	
Scrolling on your phone	
Time outside	
Doing things for other people (Running errands, shopping, listening, helping)	

Look at this chart. Are you happy with the way that it looks? If you are, then brilliant! If not, let's consider some things that you would like to change. What would you add, what would you do less of? What would you do more of? Write your thoughts below:

Day two:

Focus: How would you like to spend your time?

Yesterday we looked at how you currently spend your time each day. Today we are going to focus on how you would like to spend your time, so get your creative hat on, put yourself in the centre of your thoughts and complete today's activity.

This is your new chart; how would you like your days to look? Write a realistic version of a day on this chart.

Activity	Time spent doing that activity each day
Doing something just for you that you enjoy	
Housework and chores (Including life admin)	
Work (including travel to and from work)	
Cooking for others, and yourself	
Scrolling on your phone	
Time outside	
Doing things for other people (Running errands, shopping, listening, helping)	

How would you feel if you had more days like this? Let's take some action! Below I would like you to write down some small changes, or even big changes that you are going to make to help improve your days. It might be something simple, like asking for help with chores, or spending less time online. Equally it might be something big, like changing your job or signing up for that course you have been looking at forever! Whatever it is, write it down and start to implement it. You have the power to change your life.



Day three:

Focus: Who takes up your time?

For the first part of this week, we have been looking at the things we do that take up our time, and how we can make small (or big) changes to make our days more enjoyable and satisfying for ourselves.

Today's focus might be more challenging for some because we are going to be exploring the possibility that beyond what we do in our lives, the people that we have in our lives may also be affecting our health and wellbeing.

How much time each day do you give to other people? How much time do you spend supporting and pleasing others, possibly at the expense of your own wellbeing? Do they really need your support or are you being over responsible for others?

Maisie Hill, who is frankly a genius in menstrual health and life coaching, hosts The Period Power Podcast and in episode 34 she speaks beautifully about this very issue - I highly recommend listening.

Clearly there will be some people, such as children and loved ones, who do need a lot of your time and attention and that's a beautiful thing, but here I would just make sure that you have a support network of other people and agencies who can step in sometimes and give you some respite, because caring for others is tough. It's important that you look after yourself so that you are well enough to care for other people.

Here's today's task, and it might be tricky for you so take your time, come back to it if you need to.

Write down all of the people in your life that you devote time to, this could be your family, friends, work colleagues, neighbours or someone else.

Now consider how much time and energy you devote to these people. (This can include time you spend thinking and worrying about them as well as time you spend with them.) Write a list of their names and how much time you spend for each person.

Look at this list. Are you happy about it? If you are, then great! If you're not, tomorrow we are going to look at some ways to start gaining back some of your time.

## Day 4

Focus: Creating boundaries and saying 'no'.

How often do you find yourself doing things that you really don't want to do to please other people? Are you the sort of person that volunteers to help out, even though you have a million other things you need to do? Or maybe you're the person who is always called upon to listen to other people's problems and support them in their hours of need?

This used to be me, and sometimes it still is, but I am quick to reinstate boundaries so that life doesn't become so overwhelming that I am uncomfortable or worse, unwell.

If you are new to setting boundaries for yourself, this might be quite a challenge to start with, but the more you do it, the easier it becomes. You can apply boundaries to all areas of your life, which is particularly important when you are experiencing fertility difficulties, because it is a huge issue that you are dealing with, emotionally and physically and it's important to recognise that.

So, the fact that Brenda down the road has lost her cat and needs someone to drive her to the chemist to pick up some haemorrhoid cream, is not your concern. If Brenda phones you up, give her the number for a local taxi service and tell her you will look for her cat from your window. It is not your job to fix everyone else.

### **Setting boundaries at work:**

Many people find setting boundaries at work difficult, especially if you have a less than compassionate boss, that's a really tough situation. However, it's not impossible to deal with and there are things that you can do:

- Only work in work time. If you have set hours that you are paid for, stick to them, otherwise you are giving your time to your employer for free. Are you happy to do that? I know that this is particularly common in professions such as teaching and there is a whole conversation to be had about just how many free hours fund our education system.
- Do NOT reply to work emails outside of work hours. You do not need to be a martyr and reply to emails that your boss sends in the middle of the night. If they choose to have no boundaries, then fine, but you stick to yours.
- Don't take on more than you can cope with. If your boss comes in asking for an urgent report because their manager needs it yesterday, I suggest responding with "Okay, I can do that, but which of these things that I am also working on would you like me to de-prioritise?"
- If you need to leave to go to a medical appointment, then make sure that you leave on time. You don't need to work an extra five minutes, causing yourself stress, just to please your boss.
- YOU ARE IMPORTANT!

### **Setting boundaries with family and friends:**

This can be difficult, especially if everyone is used to you being a people pleaser and believe me, I found this really hard to begin with, but now I am so grateful. The key to setting boundaries is clear communication about what you actually want, so first you need to be clear about what you want. Maybe you would like to meet up with a friend for a few hours, but they always stay all day and don't go home when you need them to.

Or perhaps you have an overpowering relationship with a parent who always likes to dictate what you will do on a weekend in order to take them out somewhere or be at their house to complete a task.

These are difficult situations, because we have an emotional attachment to these people, and we don't want to upset them. However, your needs are equally important, and you need to be clear with your boundaries.

So, when that friend, who overstays their welcome asks you to meet up, take some control. Arrange to meet somewhere that isn't your home at a time that suits you. Tell them that you are staying until a set time, and then you need to be elsewhere. Stick to that arrangement. You will feel a whole lot better about spending time with that person and you will enjoy it much more.

As for the overpowering parent, you need to take on the role of the adult in this situation. When they are insisting that you will be there at 9am to pick them up and drive them somewhere for a nice day out, you need to set a boundary. This is your weekend, set a time that suits you. Or tell them that you already have plans and that you will do the task they want you to do on a different day.

If we don't express our own needs and wants, we become resentful towards other people, including our partners and family members. So, remember to be clear about what it is that you actually want, if you don't really know what that is, nobody else will know either!

Other ways to set boundaries are:

- Not replying to messages on your phone as soon as they come in.
- Planning days where you do exactly what you want to do, even if that's staying in bed, eating ice cream and watching Netflix.
- Biting your tongue when people are asking for volunteers. This has been the most liberating one for me. I would always volunteer to help everyone, whether it was babysitting, helping to set up events, cooking for other people, having people come to stay or driving other people to appointments, you name it, I did it. DON'T! The art of keeping quiet and letting other people step in is highly underrated.
- Avoid agreeing to things on the spot. Use phrases like "let me get back to you", or "I will check my calendar at home and let you know." That allows you space to think about if you are able to help, or not.
- Cancelling plans if you don't feel up to it. It's ok to do this. If you are physically and emotionally drained for goodness sake, stop! Cancel your plans and take some time to care for yourself.
- Talking to a professional. This might not seem like a boundary, but actually carving out time for yourself to talk to a counsellor is one of the best boundaries you can set.

I hope that this is helpful. Obviously, I'm not saying that you should never help out other people, of course you can, but don't do it at the expense of your own emotional and physical health.

On the next page I would like you to write down people that you feel you need to set boundaries with and then list the ways that you are going to do this. Plan particularly for the issues that cause you the most stress when they happen.



Day five:

Focus: When the 'should's' creep in...

There are undeniably, things that we need to do in our lives for ourselves and others and often we do those things without question. But sometimes we get that little voice in our heads saying, "I really should do this or that."

Some examples:

- I really should call (insert name)
- I should sign up for this course
- I should work harder and earn more money
- I should clean the car
- I should eat more healthily
- I should do yoga
- I should do more exercise

When we feel that we should do something, it often comes from a belief system that isn't our own. Think of all of those times where people have said to you, "Oh yes, you really should \_\_\_\_\_ (insert their opinion here). And we do it to other people too, especially when we truly believe that what is good for us will help others too.

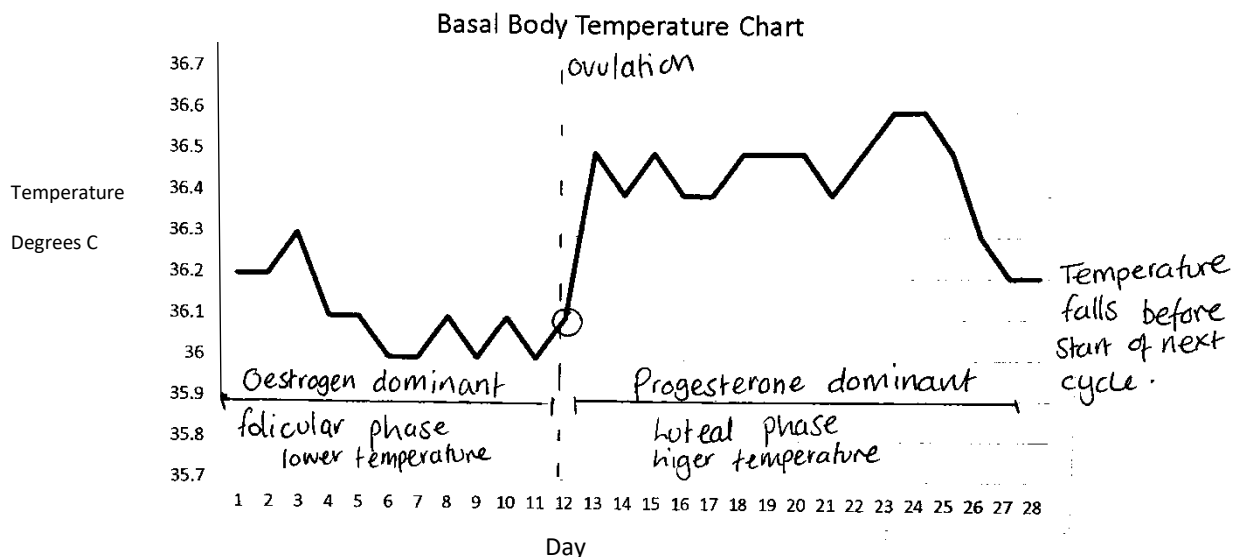
However, "I should" is usually coming from the beliefs of someone else, because if you really believed it, you would have done it without question.

So, the final challenge this week is to catch yourself when you are thinking or saying, "I should" and at that point, ask yourself "Whose belief is this? Who said I should? Is this my voice, or is it somebody else's opinion? What do I really feel about doing that task? Is it ok to say no?"

Write some examples of this below to see where and who these beliefs are coming from!

### Week Three: Charting

Charting your basal body temperature every day is something that sometimes triggers a lot of resistance in my clients, and I completely understand why. For those of you who are completely new to this concept, charting your basal body temperature involves taking your temperature on a digital thermometer as soon as you wake up, before you do anything else, every day. You record your temperature on a chart, and it gives you (and me) a better understanding of what is going on for you hormonally.



In a cycle where the person has ovulated, this is the sort of chart we can expect to see, but this is not always what charts look like. Each chart for each individual will vary every month. If you really want to learn more about your cycle and what is going on for you, I highly recommend reading *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler who also has a brilliant website where you can download printable charts and get support ([www.tcoyf.com](http://www.tcoyf.com)). I also recommend reading *Period Power* by Maisie Hill for an honest, straightforward guide to your hormones and how to use your cycle to your best advantage in life.

I recognise and know from personal experience, that charting can be stressful and sometimes difficult to achieve, particularly if you have children who wake you in the night or you work night shifts, the changes in your sleep pattern will affect your temperature when you wake up.

When I am working with clients using Reproflexology, it is really helpful to have these charts as we work because it allows me to understand where we are in each cycle, and that informs the treatment protocol that I use. It also helps us to better understand your cycle and see how the Reproflexology is impacting upon it.

There are other helpful ways to chart your cycle as well and this week we are going to be looking at some of these.

If you are really struggling with your cycle, if it's unpredictable, painful, distressing or it has stopped completely then please seek help from health professionals or indeed a holistic therapist or Reproflexologist near you. A full list of qualified Reproflexologists is available here: [www.reproductivereflexologists.org](http://www.reproductivereflexologists.org)

If, like me, you enjoy learning through courses, there is a brilliant FREE course called Hormone Harmony on The Red School Website, which is run by two fabulous ladies called Alexandra Pope and Sjanie Hugo Wurlitze. [www.redschool.net](http://www.redschool.net)

These two ladies are experts in their field, and they also have many more courses for menstruators and those who are menopausal. Not only that, but they have written a brilliant book called Wild Power and they have a Podcast!

As you can see, there is a lot of support and information available to you and I understand that sometimes this can feel a bit overwhelming, so I would suggest that you find the information that works for you, now, and just know that there is more that you can access as and when you need to.

Now, let's get into week three!



Day one

Focus: How well do you know your cycle?

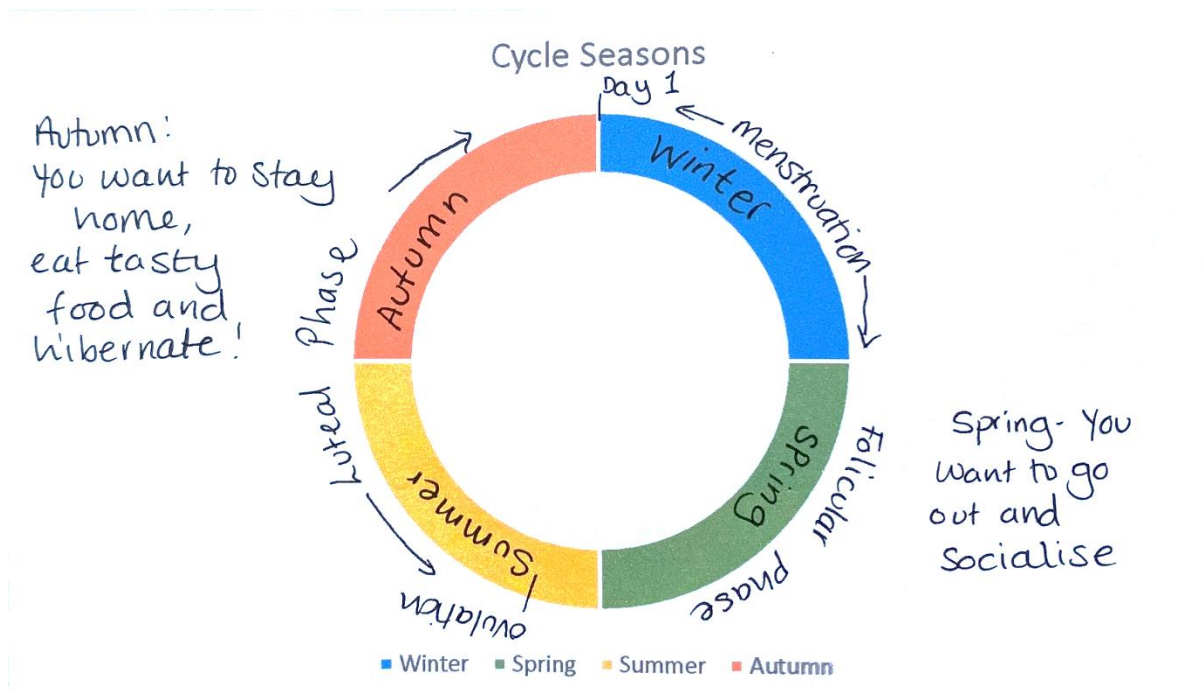
Starting with where you are right now, how well would you say you know your cycle? Some of you may have been on this journey a long time and you may know your cycle like the back of your hand, and some of you may be completely new to this journey – if that's you, then welcome!

Knowing your own body, how it works and how your cycle impacts upon your daily life is one of the most powerful and useful tools we have. It allows us to practice self-awareness and self-compassion and importantly, on our fertility journeys it empowers us with knowledge to share with medical professionals.

Today I have a few simple questions for you to answer:

1. My cycle is usually \_\_\_\_\_ days long.
2. I know when I ovulate. Yes/No
3. I know what my fertile signs are. Yes/No
4. I am aware of changes to my mood and body as I go through each cycle. Yes/No

It can be helpful for us to use metaphors to understand our cycle and ourselves more fully and one of the best ones I have found, which is used by The Red School and Maisie Hill, is to think of each cycle as a full year of seasons, with day 1 of bleeding being the first day of winter, spring being the run up to ovulation when you want to be out and about. Summer is the time around ovulation and Autumn is that time when you want to hide away and eat yummy food before you go into winter once more.



Where are you in your cycle?

Day two

Focus: How to chart your Basal Body Temperature

As I have already spoken about this, I won't go into too much detail, other than to say that it can be a very helpful tool to use for a few months in order to help you better understand your cycle and the best times to have sex if you are trying to conceive.

These charts, when used properly are more accurate than any ovulation kit you can buy, because they enable you to identify the time in the run up to ovulation where it's helpful to have sperm present. Ovulation testing kits pick up the surge in hormones later and so give you less opportunity to conceive when used in isolation.

To effectively use Basal Body Temperature charting you need to use a digital thermometer and record your temperature as soon as you wake up (ideally around the same time) every day. Make a note of the date and the temperature before you forget it!

If this is a real issue for you, you can buy devices that you insert into the vagina at night, such as Ovusense, that will record and track your temperature for you. Their website is [www.ovusense.com](http://www.ovusense.com).

When you have had your morning coffee or tea, you can plot your temperature onto a chart, either on paper or using an app. Be aware that apps are also not entirely accurate when it comes to pinpointing ovulation.

Alongside charting your temperature, it's also wise to record physical symptoms such as the quantity and quality of cervical mucous. Apologies if this is getting a bit graphic for you, but believe me you will be grateful for this knowledge.

In the run up to ovulation, your body produces more cervical mucous, initially it can be cloudy in colour, and as you get closer to ovulation it turns clear. This is all normal and how your body functions.

The clear, egg white quality fluid is exactly what you need, and this is the time to start having regular sex, even if the ovulation kit says otherwise. The mucous is sperm friendly and can keep sperm alive for up to five days, so it's ready and waiting when the egg is released by the ovaries.

After ovulation this mucous becomes cloudy again and gradually decreases in quantity until your next cycle.

Other fertile signs include actually wanting sex! I know you may have just spat your tea out, but honestly, trying for a baby is one of the biggest libido killers ever, and anyone who tells you otherwise is lying. When we have fertile mucous and we are listening carefully to our bodies, rather than thinking about tests and hormones, we might actually find that around the time of ovulation we want sex. If that happens, enjoy!

You can also feel the height of your cervix changing at different points of your cycle, as well as noticing changes to your skin, mood, appetite, and appearance. The body is an incredible thing, isn't it?

Your task for today is to consider if Basal Body Temperature charting might be helpful to you, just for a few months, to give you a better understanding of how your cycle is working and where effective changes might be implemented.

Day three

Focus: Other ways to record your cycle

Basal Body Temperature charting is one way to record your cycle and it's particularly helpful when trying to conceive, but if you are a person who experiences strong mood changes during your cycle, then this might be the thing for you. You can of course use what I'm about to talk about in combination with temperature charting to give you a really detailed knowledge of what is going on with your cycle.

Cyclical charting is something that I, personally have found extremely useful and it's something that I still use every day, to keep a track on where I am in my cycle and the changes I am experiencing at the grand old age of 41.

Cyclical charting is simple and takes about a minute a day. It can highlight patterns of behaviour that you have never recognised before and also shine a light on parts of your cycle where hormones might be impacting on your daily life. The best thing about it is that once you have an idea of what is happening for you each month, you can plan your diary around it, and give yourself some compassion on days when you have done something tough, despite your hormones not wanting to play ball. This type of charting has really changed my life.

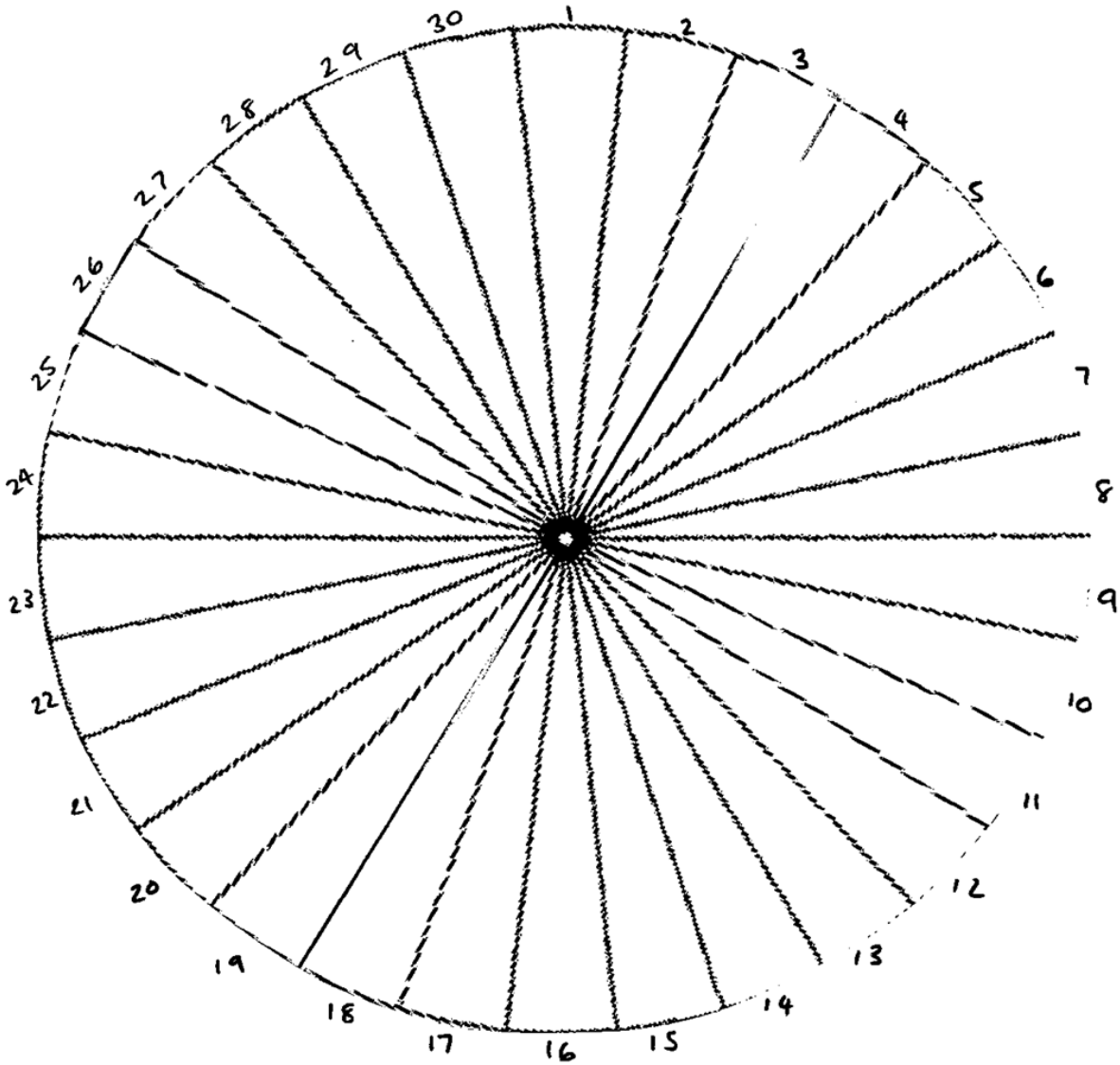
All you need to do is print off the chart on the following page, number add days of the week to coincide with where you are in your cycle, and then each day simply record a few words about how you are feeling. That's it!

The more you do it, the more you will start to notice patterns in your behaviour, and you might find that on day 21 for example, your mood suddenly changes as you go into Autumn, or on day 10 you are up for going out to see ALL the people!

This is a brilliant tool to have.

Start of cycle:

End of cycle:



Extra notes:

Day four

Focus: What if I don't have a cycle?

There are many reasons why people don't always have a cycle often relating to issues with hormone imbalances and the function of glands in the endocrine system, such as the thyroid and pituitary. Other causes can be linked to having recently had a baby, medication, contraceptives, stress, polycystic ovary syndrome, chronic diseases, or early menopause to name but a few.

The absence of periods in the menstruating years is known in medical terms as amenorrhea and this can understandably be distressing for those affected.

As a holistic therapist, I have worked with clients to support them in kickstarting their cycles once more, but I always recommend speaking with medical professionals as well so that you have the full picture as to the underlying causes. This gives you the knowledge and power to keep your hormones in check in the future and it allows me to offer you the best possible support.

If you are going to see your GP or another medical professional about amenorrhea, I would recommend going armed with as much information as you can give them about your experience. Write some notes on all your symptoms, what has happened in your life around this time and anything else that you feel is important. The more information you have, the more confident you will feel and the easier it will be for your GP to refer you for the appropriate investigations.

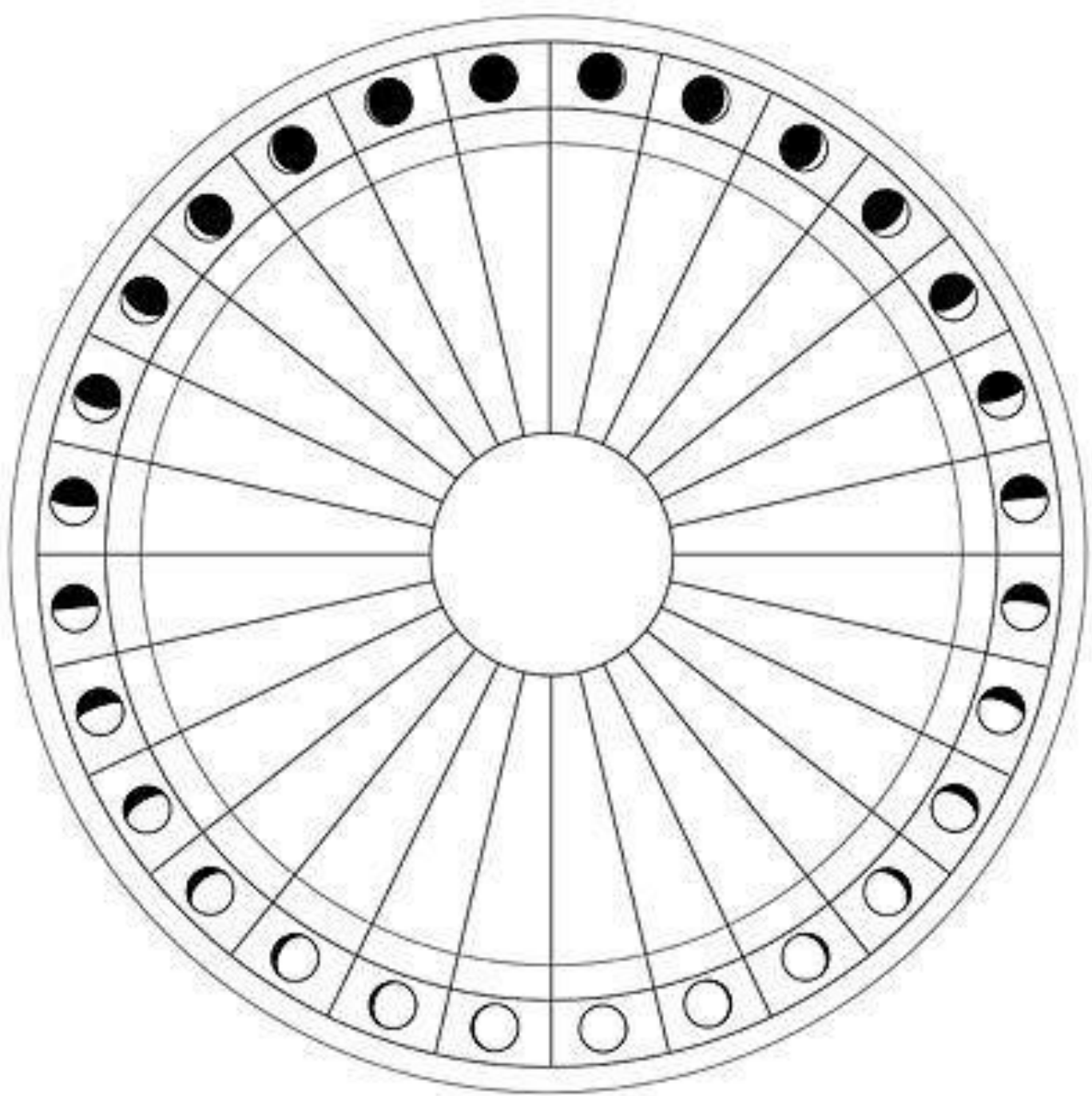
I hope that the tasks in this Fertility Focus Guide will also support you in kickstarting your cycle.

If you don't currently have a cycle, you can still chart your mood and even your temperature in line with the cycles of the moon. Make a few copies of the chart on the next page. Start on a new moon and use the chart to record your mood each day. After a few months compare the charts and see if you can notice any patterns in mood and behaviour, as well as physical symptoms like skin changes or headaches.

Charting alongside the moon will help you to feel connected to yourself and to the wider universe and nature.

If moon cycle tracking is interesting to you, you can visit [www.innerseasons.com](http://www.innerseasons.com) to learn more about how it can be used for those with and without menstrual cycles.

Moon Cycle Chart:



Day five

Focus: Your cycle right now.

Today's task is simple but will give you some insight into your own thoughts and feelings about your body and your cycle as it is now.

I would like you to write down how you feel about your cycle, good and bad, everything you can think of, put it on paper. If you don't currently have a cycle, how do you feel about that?

If you have concerns about your menstrual health, where can you go to get support? Do some research and write down what you find below so you don't lose it!

### **Week four: Reconnecting with yourself**

For the final week of this program, I am asking you to allow some time each day to reconnect with yourself – check in and see how you are really feeling. Life can sweep us along in a tidal wave of busyness and we often forget to pause and check in.

Alongside this, you are dealing with fertility issues and all the grief and emotional turmoil that comes with it. That is a lot to cope with and this week, I would like you to recognise the impact that it has on your daily life. Your feelings are valid and it's ok to step back from life for a while to just be still.

I hope that, if you are implementing some or all of the things we have looked at and worked on over the past few weeks, that you are starting to see some shifts in your health and wellbeing. I also hope that charting is giving you a better understanding about what is going on with your hormones and behavioural patterns.

The last task of this module is to complete a self-care plan using all of the work you have done to ensure that you continue to put your own needs first.

So, let's get started with our first check in...

Day one:

How am I feeling today?

What will I do just for myself today?

Do I need to set some boundaries today? Who do I need to set them with and how will I do that kindly, but firmly?

What am I grateful for today?



Day two:

How am I feeling today?

What will I do just for myself today?

Do I need to set some boundaries today? Who do I need to set them with and how will I do that kindly, but firmly?

What am I grateful for today?

Day three:

How am I feeling today?

What will I do just for myself today?

Do I need to set some boundaries today? Who do I need to set them with and how will I do that kindly, but firmly?

What am I grateful for today?

Day four:

How am I feeling today?

What will I do just for myself today?

Do I need to set some boundaries today? Who do I need to set them with and how will I do that kindly, but firmly?

What am I grateful for today?

Day five:

How am I feeling today?

What will I do just for myself today?

Do I need to set some boundaries today? Who do I need to set them with and how will I do that kindly, but firmly?

What am I grateful for today?

For the final task of this fertility focus guide, I would like you to complete this self-care plan that you can refer back to whenever life is becoming a little overwhelming. In this plan your needs are central, and I want you to feel confident to set those boundaries so that your needs are met first.

Name:

In the next five years, these are some of the things I would like to do:

In order to do these things, I know that I need to look after myself and my own needs first.

These are the changes I want to make to my lifestyle. (Nutrition, exercise, home, sleep, work and training,)

These are the boundaries I want to put in place with people and other things, such as technology.

These are the things I really enjoy doing that I will make time to do more of:

In relation to my fertility or hormonal issues I am going to: (Make appointments, chart, seek out some holistic support or counselling, chase up test results, read, research or listen to podcasts.)

When I need support, I can get it from:

I really hope that you have found this four-week Fertility Focus Guide helpful. If you would like to work with me directly, I can offer:

- Online or in person coaching to support you on your fertility journey. If you want to work with me in person, this will also include bespoke holistic treatments.
- Reproflexology treatments, which can be used to support individuals or couples who are trying to conceive naturally or through assisted conception. It can also support people experiencing menstrual cycle issues.
- Reflexology treatments to help clients relax and unwind.

For more information on all of the above and more, visit [www.naturalreflexionstherapies.com](http://www.naturalreflexionstherapies.com) or find me on Facebook or Instagram as natural reflexions therapies. (Links on website).

I would really appreciate any feedback you wanted to share about this fertility focus guide. You can email it to me at [naturalreflexionstherapies@gmail.com](mailto:naturalreflexionstherapies@gmail.com) or leave me a Facebook review.

I wish you all the very best for what is to come,

Sarah. X