

W Editors' blog

» FIFTEEN MINUTES WITH THE "FERTILITY GODDESS," JILL BLAKEWAY



In the new tome *Making Babies* (Little Brown) acupuncturist and herbalist Jill Blakeway, who specializes in fertility and women's health, teams up with reproductive endocrinologist Sami David to demystify the often fraught process of getting pregnant, covering everything from sex ed 101 to common causes of infertility and how to overcome them. Called a "fertility goddess" by the *New York Times*, Blakeway spoke to us

about her approach to alternative medicine, her patients and how men play into the equation.

Why did you decide to write this book now?

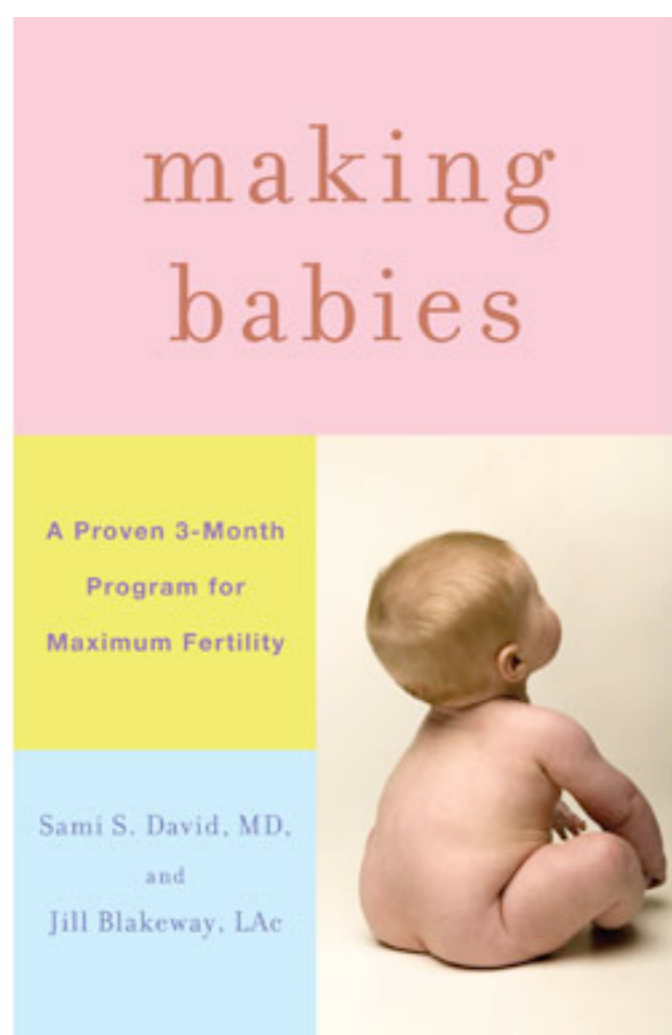
Dr. David and I have collaborated on patients for six years, so this book grew organically out of that relationship. We were frustrated that patients were being given unnecessary medication and undergoing needless procedures, and we were having great success at helping people get pregnant more naturally. [Ed. note: They claim to have helped approximately 4,000 women get pregnant between them.]

Have you always been a proponent of combining Eastern and Western treatments?

I have, and I'm unusual because of that. I've done in-patient acupuncture in hospitals so I've always collaborated with doctors. I think that's what people actually want: the best of Western medicine combined with the kind of wisdom that comes from Eastern medicine.

How do you and Dr. David work together?

We met through our patients. I found him extremely open, as doctors go, to learning about what I did, and he began to refer people to me. For instance, he'll ring me up a say, "Could you help increase this woman's endometrial lining? Her lining's a little thin, and part of the reason she's not getting pregnant is that the embryo isn't implanting." He understands that I can actually do that with Chinese herbs in a way that is very gentle.



You definitely take a cautious stance on IVF. Would you say you're against it?

Not at all. I think it's a wonderful technology for people who really need it but I do think women are rushed into it by fear that they're not going to have a baby. We had a patient who'd been told by a very reputable IVF doctor in New York City that she had a 3% chance of getting pregnant without IVF. I found a little hormone imbalance, which I set about correcting with Chinese herbs and Dr. David found a little infection, which he set about correcting with antibiotics. She got pregnant within three months of coming to see us.

What types of infertility patients do you see?

There are the people for whom I am the last resort—they've had four failed IVFs and everybody's given up on them—and then there are the people who start gently. I think of that as fertility enhancement, they're probably going to get pregnant anyway, but they come to me and we get them in shape.

What is it about acupuncture that increases fertility?

In Chinese medicine, there's a whole explanation about meridians and energy flow, but I think specifically what it's doing is bringing blood to the ovaries and the uterus, which is important. There is some evidence that acupuncture also balances hormones and people who have regular acupuncture feel mellower, which can help you get pregnant.

Are there small steps women can take to increase their fertility?

It's good to give up coffee. If you look at clinical research, it's pretty clear that coffee reduces fertility. It's good to limit alcohol. It's great to have lots of leafy greens. We advise people to have as little processed food as possible. It's very hard to work out how much of the chemical cocktail we're all ingesting is affecting fertility.

What about men?

Male infertility is actually one of the most overlooked problems. Exactly half of infertility issues are male-factor. Lifestyle changes really work for men because they make new sperm every day that come to fruition 72 days later. So they can change their reproductive reality in 72 days.

Portrait: Mark Seliger.

By [Jamie Rosen](#)

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