

Spiritual Midwifery, Empty Chair Meditation, and Prenatal Memories: Helping Clients Navigate Pregnancy, Birth, Lifelong Stress, and Communication

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Abstract: Practicing daily meditation, which I studied at Berkeley Psychic Institute (BPI), intensified my state of consciousness and triggered my recollection of some of my prenatal memories. I help facilitate safer births as a trained Spiritual Midwife, by practicing spiritual healing and daily empty chair meditation with my clients. These are very useful tools, not only for pregnant women and family members, but also for people of any age who have emotional difficulties; both can promote releasing stress and can allow better communication with others.

Keywords: holistic childbirth, spiritual midwife, empty chair meditation

I learned meditation at Berkeley Psychic Institute (BPI) in the summer of 2003, then embarked on their Spiritual Midwife and Clairvoyance Program in 2005. The meditation methods taught to me are quite similar to the *empty chair technique* in Gestalt psychology, where students practice having a conversation with a person's image sitting in a chair in front of them (rather than with the person present). These techniques, combined with Tibetan Buddhist Meditation techniques for developing compassion and loving-kindness, can help to release emotional stress and clear one's mind.

Rev. Satoshi Ueda was born in Fukushima in 1963. He graduated from Musashino Art University with an AA in Graphic Design, BYU-Hawaii with a BA in Fine Art, and Berkeley Psychic Institute (BPI) with their Meditation, Clairvoyant Healing, and Spiritual Midwife programs. The practices of meditation helped him realize the cause of problems were the negative emotions deeply embedded in childhood, prenatal memories, and also in past-life memories and experiences. After working at Stanford University, he established Shasta Healing Academy in Japan, wishing to alleviate negative emotions by teaching meditation since 2010. As a Spiritual Midwife, he guides pregnant mothers through meditation and healing techniques to stimulate holistic childbirth and helps to build a better relationship between parents and children. His ultimate goal is to search for, and guide his clients to, the purpose of life in this current lifetime.

While practicing these techniques at BPI, I started to recollect vague images of my prenatal memories. Although I could not decipher the meaning of those memories, I had a feeling that obtaining this information provided some clues to issues that I was not aware of at that moment. Continuing to meditate through this process, I slowly realized that the deep root causes of my currently-stressful life were due to the environment I experienced while I was in the womb. Trying to make sense of this, I asked my mother if she could remember any details of her emotional environment while I was in utero. She told me that our family was financially struggling around that time, and she blamed herself for not being able to provide better care for our family by accepting an arranged marriage with my father.

I continued to meditate daily and release my emotions. It eased my stress, and in the end, I was able to start taking total responsibility for my emotions and behaviors. It almost seemed like my mother sharing her emotions with me allowed negative prenatal experiences from my subconscious mind to come to the surface of my awareness. With these hidden experiences revealed through meditation, I next shifted my focus to find any other cryptic messages. As time went by, I was able to make life decisions with more certainty and confidence. These behavioral shifts improved my personal communication skills with others and positively affected my relationship with my mother. Practicing daily meditation also gradually guided me to show greater empathy and compassion with other people.

Implications between Spiritual Midwifery and Prenatal Memory

A spiritual midwife assists to actuate safe and holistic childbirth, which encourages building a better relationship between parents and children. Although I am practicing as a spiritual midwife, I don't physically assist with delivering newborn babies. My responsibilities are to support pregnant women and fetuses by expanding their potential for a positive birth experience and to build a better relationship with the family members through practicing daily meditation and providing energy healings.

Fetuses are sensitive and easily influenced by their mother's emotions. Even though a mother's emotional shifts may occur subtly or temporarily throughout the pregnancy, these changes could greatly influence the emotional state of the fetus and affect their emotional and physical development even after birth. Fetuses remember their surrounding environments during pregnancy (Ikegawa, 2010). In spite of the fact we may not recall our experiences while inside of our mother's womb, any emotional shock can be deeply ingrained in the database of our subconscious mind, which then can influence us throughout our lifetime.

There are some young children who naturally remember their prenatal memories and experiences. A statement such as, "When I was still in mom's tummy, I knew my mom was crying a lot because my dad

was mean to her,” was reported by a prenatal memory researcher, Dr. Akira Ikegawa (2010, p. 33). It indicates that a child could recall their experiences in utero tied with the emotional shock of their mother.

Fetuses often mistakenly believe that their mother’s emotions are their own, and may unconsciously start blaming themselves (Ikegawa, 2010). If a mother and all of the other family members are welcoming of the baby, this alone can transform a baby to feel happy to be inside of the mother’s womb (Ikegawa, 2010). Negative emotions while in the womb greatly influence the fetus. Even if one may not be able to recall their memories and experiences, these negative senses deeply embed into one’s memories, turning into challenges that may last until adulthood.

Case Studies of Spiritual Midwifery and Releasing Trauma with Meditation

When a pregnant woman is having emotional challenges, I facilitate communication between the mother, her baby in utero, and her partner. This helps her to understand her current state of mind, then guides her to a more peaceful state by releasing stress. While I meditate with a pregnant mother, I consciously communicate with the baby in her womb and try to interpret messages from her baby.

Case #1

I held counseling sessions as a spiritual midwife for a pregnant woman in her mid-30’s, who had been informed of the possibility of miscarriage by her obstetrician. She expressed emotional difficulties with going through with the birth of her baby. During the meditations, I found that her baby was feeling anxious and was trying to support the mother by mimicking her and her family’s negative emotional state. The mother was amazed and said she recognized she needed to handle her emotions more effectively in order to have a healthy birth. The mother and her husband started to communicate better, talking positively about their relationship. They expressed the understanding that they must mature and prepare to be the parents for their baby.

If both parents firmly decide to start building a positive family relationship for their children, they will be able to release solidified emotions of the past (Ikegawa & Ueda, 2016). It is very hard to imagine how to become a parent when you are expecting your first child. Although it may be difficult for parents to picture their baby in utero, they can start to communicate with their baby, exchanging happiness and excitement. In fact, anyone who encounters a pregnant woman could communicate positively with unborn babies to welcome them into our society. This action alone will help create harmonious communities, allowing mothers and babies to feel comfortable in their daily lives.

Case #2

In 2012, a mother came to visit my office with her 4-year-old son, who displayed a developmental disorder accompanied by shyness and nervousness. While I was talking with my client in the session, her son was hiding the entire time. I asked the mother if she could recall any emotional disturbance that occurred while she was pregnant. The mother thought for a moment and answered, “Now that I think of it, I was scolded loudly by my mother-in-law in the midst of a public space while he was in my womb. Is it possible this incident contributed to my son’s shyness?” I told her that in fact, it could. I suggested that both she and her son practice five minutes of daily meditation while contemplating the prenatal environment where he gestated.

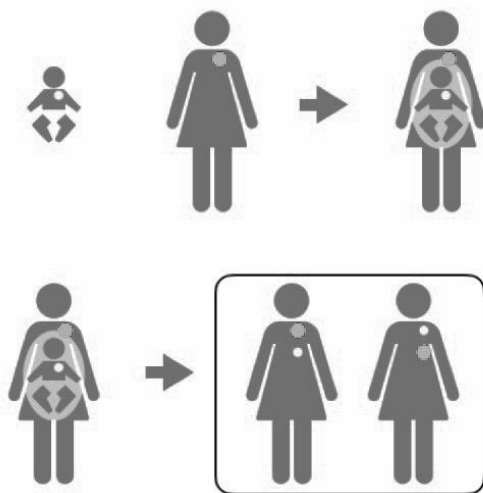
The next time I heard from this client was about three months after our initial session. The mother indicated that practicing daily meditation gradually improved her son’s shyness and nervousness. When the mother brought her son to me for her next session, he spoke with such confidence that he seemed to be a totally different child. His mother had accepted the past incident with her mother-in-law and let go of the spiritual and emotional shock that accompanied it. This in turn, changed her son’s emotional environment at home and helped him become more emotionally stable.

This client also shared that the regularity of practicing meditation made her feel more confident than before, and her son was continuing to show improvements. As a result, he was able to structure complex sentences and he no longer displayed shyness. This case indicates that having a daily practice of meditation and contemplating the prenatal environment can release hidden emotional issues created in the womb and help solve current personal issues.

Releasing a Mother’s Emotions

Why is it important for one to release their mother’s emotions? The answer is quite simple: The nature of the human being is focused on the quest of finding out who we really are. We adjust ourselves to our society by mimicking other’s emotions and behaviors. Mothers often tend to view their unborn babies as if they are part of them. Babies also like to mimic their mothers while in the womb by imitating their mothers’ emotions. These are some of the reasons babies usually develop a strong emotional attachment with their mother during the time in the womb. The baby tends to unconsciously accept the mother’s emotions as their own, so it is very difficult to separate their own emotions from their mother’s emotions. Even after birth, a baby continues to mimic their mother and displays the same emotions. (Figure 1) The mother’s emotions will deeply remain in the child’s consciousness and affect not only their baby’s childhood but, if left unconscious, also their adulthood.

Figure 1. Mother and her baby tend to be recognized as being one group even after birth.



I would like to suggest an effective method to separate strong emotional attachment from one's mother. The main idea of the *empty chair meditation* (described in more detail below) is to identify differences and similarities with one's mother by having a silent, imaginary dialogue with one's mother. We tend to seek comfort and happiness by receiving positive emotional interactions with a family member. However, this emotional security blanket sometimes creates walls between us and society; it may not allow us to truly listen to our own inner voice if we are reacting to our automatic subconscious program. One of the effective ways to separate one's mother's emotions from the self is to practice the empty chair meditation, creating a passage to release negative emotions, break down walls, and have better communication with others.

The Empty Chair Meditation

The meditation technique I created and practice is based on a combination of the theory of the empty chair technique in Gestalt psychology, techniques I learned as a spiritual midwife, and Tibetan Buddhism's practices of compassion and loving-kindness. This meditation method helps to separate and release emotions that clients have carried unconsciously for many years from their mother while they were in the womb, which in turn clarifies the client's authentic identity.

There are two sections in my practice of the empty chair meditation. The first part is to ground and release unnecessary energies, which I learned at BPI. The second part is to increase compassion and loving-

kindness, taken from Gestalt and Tibetan Buddhism, which ultimately raises awareness of consciousness and leads one to a contented and meaningful life. These techniques of the empty chair meditation may be useful for many practitioners. Practicing this first part of the meditation will help create a positive environment for both clients and meditation facilitators. The following instruction is the first part of the meditation:

1. Ask the client to quietly sit on a chair and place their feet on the ground and their hands on their thighs with both palms up.
2. Invite the client to imagine their spine is extended as a golden tail that heads towards the center of the earth.
3. Invite them to bring their consciousness to the center of their brain and imagine that they are surrounded by the energy, which is like a big balloon.
4. Invite the client to imagine using the power of gravity to release negative energies into the center of the earth.

The second part of the empty chair meditation will help clients develop a consistent expansion of compassion and loving-kindness. I recommend a daily practice of meditation for all meditation practitioners, even on days when there are no clients receiving treatment. This guided meditation technique is very effective in discovering the meditator's genuine emotions arising from their heart and the emotions of their mother that may have lingered around since their time in the womb. Here is a guided meditation instruction to compassionately release the mother's emotions:

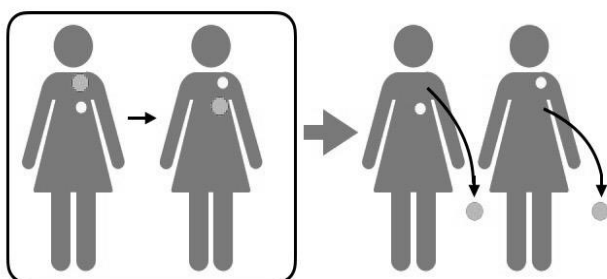
1. Ask the client to sit on a chair with their eyes closed.
2. Guide them to create a mental image of a chair in front of them.
3. Invite the client to imagine their mother being pregnant, sitting on this chair, and carrying the client inside of her womb. (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Imagine your mother sitting on an empty chair.



4. Guide the client to use their imagination and objectively look at their imaginary mothers. Ask the client to identify details of their mother's physical and emotional state in their mind.
5. Ask if any emotions arise in the client's own mind.
6. Invite the client to compare and contrast the emotions—both similarities and differences—with their mother's emotions.
7. Invite the client to imagine that the mother's emotions are now leaving from both the imaginary mother and the client's emotional spaces. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Recognize and release the exact same emotions inside your mother and yourself.



After going through these meditation steps, one may identify that there may be some unconscious stress that has originated from their mother. The empty chair meditation technique may be useful for releasing and separating those hidden emotions from the mother. Once a client mentally imagines and separates from their mother, they will begin to recognize their true self emerging from within. Although they may be able to recognize the mother's old emotions and release the negative energies,

there's no need to deny or feel disappointed that they existed. Instead, I would like to offer the possibility of accepting individuation from others. We can admit differences with others and support building better parent-child relationships by releasing negativities and supporting positive images of ourselves (Ikegawa & Ueda, 2016).

I have explained how to separate a mother's emotion from the meditating client. However, Tibetan meditation techniques involve showing how to develop perfect equanimity; they suggest that we can choose *any* person or entity, preferably someone close to us like family or friends, to sit on the chair. One can later expand their focus to the community level, then to the national, global, and universal level, to sit on the chair. Before starting this meditation, we need to understand equanimity for developing compassion for the sentient beings that are miserable or who hurt us. We must wish them to be free from suffering in order to eliminate attachment and hatred. The main reason for having negative feelings within us toward others is usually based on our narrow-minded ego. If we view things from a broader perspective, we may have more equanimity in our minds than hostility (Dalai Lama, 2001). Here is how to begin developing perfect equanimity through meditation:

1. Invite the client to follow the empty chair meditation steps above, but instead of imagining one's mother, choose someone else they wish to sit in the imaginary chair.
2. Examine if any negative emotions arise.
3. If so, invite the client to release those emotions down into the center of the earth.
4. Invite the client to imagine that both they and the imaginary person on the chair are covered by golden mist and a celestial hue that is blessed with a positive energy.

Case #3

I used the empty chair meditation technique for a pregnant woman with toxemia, who was in danger of losing her own life and the life of her 23-week-old fetus. I visited the Maternal-Fetal Intensive Care Unit in Kyushu for spiritual healing on July 11th, 2017, the day just before the planned cesarean operation for this pregnant woman and her baby. Immediately, I guided her to practice meditation to calm down and help recognize negative emotions. After I led her through meditation, I began my empty chair meditation techniques to release her emotions, her

husband's emotions, and her baby's emotions in utero, and also to contemplate my own consciousness.

While I was meditating, I kept wondering and asking myself questions, such as, "What would I do if I were in her shoes?" and, "What is keeping the negative emotions here and how can I release them?" I continued to hold a conversation with the fetus and mentioned that the family wanted, and was ready to welcome, the baby. In my conscious mind, the baby answered that he wanted to be born into this world. I assured him that he had nothing to worry about and could come to experience our world. I felt as if he released built-up emotions of fear and negative energy. The next day when I visited the hospital, the mother had given birth to a premature, but healthy baby boy via caesarean section.

Two years after his birth, I had a chance to talk with the mother. She explained that she struggled raising her premature baby, who had been hospitalized for a long time. Her doctor initially told her prior to the birth that there may be damage to the baby's brain and that the premature birth could result in future surgery for underdeveloped organs. Against all odds, the baby was born without complications and did not need any medical equipment to sustain his breathing after birth. The mother shared her feelings that, despite parenting having been challenging, she could overcome any future hardship and remain compassionate, since her baby showed her a miracle through his birth, fighting with all his might. Parents and children who go through physical difficulties together can build strong bonds.

Case #4

Unknown tragedy during pregnancy may be the cause of emotional issues. One of my clients was a woman who was 42 years old and had difficulties with making decisions, memorizing her schedule, and keeping promises. She came to my meditation seminar in May, 2017. When she asked me the cause of her personal issues, I explained how important it is to understand the prenatal environment and the mother's emotions. She took my advice and asked her mother if anything extraordinary happened during pregnancy. She found out that an older sibling had a traffic accident that ended their life while she was in her mother's womb. As you can easily imagine, the woman's mother went through a horrifying experience and a huge emotional shock. The woman's mother didn't tell anyone about it, however. After her mother shared her secret story, they hugged each other firmly and wept for the loss of this soul. It was a sacred moment as they both agreed to practice daily meditation.

As my client realized the unknown cause for her stress, she became very calm and relaxed, emotionally stable, didn't make mistakes like before, and improved maintaining her memories. She shared, "I never thought I had emotional issues that stemmed from my own prenatal

memories and experiences.” Her mother commented to her daughter, “You have always tried to help me out, but I have caused you to take in my sorrows of the loss of a child, and made you struggle for a long time.” It was very emotional for both of them and they were able to grieve together.

This memorable moment revealed the spiritual meanings of their life stories. This tragic event brought so much sorrow into their family life. The biggest challenge of her mother’s life was to overcome the loss of a child. The daughter’s mission had been to support her mother since she was born. These realizations made the woman happy; she felt it was proof that her purpose to be born into this world was to directly support her mother. She realized the way she mimicked her mother’s emotions since her prenatal time in her mother’s womb was the key to solving her own personal issues and revealed her original mission in life to help her mother.

Many impressive stories of children have been reported in Japan that explain that they are born on this earth to change the way of society (Ikegawa and Ohkado, 2015). Children are born with certain missions in life, and Ikegawa (2010) believes that most are born to make their parents happy, especially their mothers. This particular client’s very emotional experience made her confident that her purpose to be born into this world to support her mother emerged when she was in her mother’s womb. She also sensed her life had been supported by many souls, including her sibling from the invisible realm. These meditation practices not only provide great support for a pregnant woman for holistic childbirth, but also apply to those who have emotional difficulties later in life.

Purpose of Life

We often believe our current lifestyle involves working harder to be financially stable and achieving higher goals in this world. However, trying to achieve these goals is often impossible for many of us. Instead of achieving an impressive financial status, being eager to own excessive material things, or attaining fame, there must be logical reasons to have a happy and healthy life (Waldinger, 2015). If so, what is the purpose of life, and what is the reason for our existence? The 14th Dalai Lama (2001) states that we could increase happiness and reduce suffering through education of the heart and mind.

By educating our hearts and minds with meditation, we can increase our happiness and quality of life with positive interactions among people. Positive interactions create better relationships, which in the end, help us live a happy and healthy life (Mineo, 2017). It is sometimes difficult for us to genuinely and honestly communicate with our family members. However, with the empty chair meditation technique, we may reveal unexpected causes to personal issues and find that some emotions stemmed from memories in the womb and in childhood. Once we recognize

the root cause, healing can take place beyond time and space, solving emotional burdens cross-generationally.

Conclusion

I have been practicing the empty meditation technique for more than 10 years for both my own healing and the healing of my clients as a spiritual midwife. I have noticed practicing daily meditation while contemplating a prenatal environment can release hidden emotional issues that have been created in the womb and during childhood, while also solving current personal issues.

The empty chair meditation is a helpful method for anyone who wants to release prenatal challenges, or help others to do so. This meditation technique can help create healing dialogues between parents and children, and family relationships can greatly improve. When there is no longer a negative boundary between family members, we can subsequently take down the walls between individuals and society. This will be one of the keys for us to help create a peaceful world filled with love.

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