



KEREN GEFEN – Mind-Body Fertility

Dr. Karen Friedman, Director

karenfs@gefenmail.com

Cell: 972-544-601-689

<http://kerengefen.org/>

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Keren Gefen is a non-profit organization that supports and facilitates Mind-Body Fertility projects in Israel. The main project that it funds is Rimon Mind-Body Fertility Center at Hadassah Hospital Mt. Scopus that was established in October 2013. The Rimon Center offers a wide variety of Mind-Body treatments at no cost for women undergoing fertility treatments. The Center offers state-of-the-art methods that are being used in hospitals worldwide based on a successful model of operation that was developed at Harvard University.

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It is well known that women undergoing fertility treatments often suffer from anxiety, depression, tension, low self-esteem and tension in their relationship with their partner. Research shows that these stressful emotional states lower the fertility potential of women. With this in mind, it is clear that psychological support is an important factor in the treatment of women undergoing fertility treatment. Keren Gefen is unique in its ability to support women in a variety of approaches.

Here is a review of our Activities over the last half year:

A. New Activities:

1. **Expanding our Outreach:** In order to reach a larger population, we have expanded the areas we are serving, and now offer Fertility Workshops in the German Colony, Mount Scopus, Beit Shemesh, and recently opened a new workshop in Beitar Illit, for “Bonei Olam” women. (“Bonei Olam” is an Organization that provides Funding for Fertility Treatment & Research)

2. **Workshops for Unique Groups:**
 - 2.1. Mind-Body Workshops (10 weeks) specifically for Single women. We have completed the first cycle of the Mind-Body Fertility Workshop for Single women, and are currently running the second course.
 - 2.2. Mind-Body Workshops oriented towards women considering receiving an egg donation.
These women have to cope with a unique set of questions and difficulties, therefore we hold special workshops specifically for them.

In this workshop, they encounter other women in similar situations and focus on relevant issues.

At the end of this workshop we received very positive feedback from the participants, who claimed that the workshop was instrumental in helping them reach conclusions with the conflicts they were experiencing.

The most exciting feedback came from a woman who reported that she was very influenced by the workshop and the process that she went through with the group, and is now pregnant.

- 3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Workshops for Women of the Haredi Community**
Cognitive and behavioral strategies have been proven effective in helping women cope with fertility challenges. In the workshop, the women learn and practice these CBT techniques in a discreet and supportive setting, with experienced CBT therapists who understand the cultural needs and sensitivities of the group members

- 4. Poster Presentation – “45th Annual EABCT Congress”, September 2015**

In September 2015, we had the honor to take part in the 45th European Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (EABCT) Congress. The Conference featured world renowned CBT clinicians and researchers.

We held a Poster Presentation, which described the unique program of the Rimon Center. And Presented the work of Gefen-Rimon in a clinical round table.

- 5. Poster Presentation – “2016 NASPOG” – Biennial Meeting, Spring 2016**

A poster presentation by the Gefen staff will be given this spring at the 2016 NASPOG Biennial Meeting at the New York Academy of Medicine in New York City. The results of a research study conducted on Mind-body therapy groups will be presented.

- 6. Promotional Video**

Our first Promotional Video was produced, documenting the work in the Rimon Center at Hadassah Mt. Scopus, illustrating the story of one woman’s successful journey to fertility. This effort was supported by Hadassah Australia.

B. Ongoing Activity:

- 6.** Ten (10) workshops take place weekly: Fertility Yoga Workshops and Mind-Body Fertility Therapeutic Workshops. Some of the workshops are adjusted to groups with unique characteristics and needs.
- 7. “Boker Tov Rimon”:** Rimon has a staff member available in the IVF waiting area from 7:30-9:30 - the time when women arrive for their blood tests and ultrasounds. The staff member uses this time to connect with the women, explain Center services, and cultivate a warm, caring and consistent relationship. Rimon staff consults with the nurses and doctors regarding particular patients that might benefit from Rimon services. Once a week there is a coffee/tea station, and a musician plays therapeutic music, to lower stress and create a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere.
- 8. Collaboration:** We are continually reaching out to partner with other medical and social organizations, such as Kupat Cholim (Health Care Groups), The Jerusalem Municipality, Social and Religious Organizations and partnering with them:

8.1 Maccabi HMO: Together with Maccabi, we have opened a New Workshop - Yoga and Nutrition for Fertility in in the Beit Shemesh medical center.

8.2 Specialized Workshops for Communities with Specific Needs: The Program for the Haredi Population was built and adjusted for their unique and specific requirements. We are increasing our activities and services offered to this population, and our recognition and acceptance within the community is growing.

One of the Haredi Organizations who help us on this path, is **The Toras Hamishpacha Institute**, an institute that provides direct access to both medical and halachic information. Together we are currently organizing, a Mind-Body-Fertility workshop for the religious English speaking community.

Another partner organization is “Bonei Olam”, who helps Haredi couples facing infertility. We have held three cycles of Mind-Body Fertility Therapeutic workshops designated to their community, and recently we have opened an additional workshop for their group, in Beitar Illit.

Last month we organized an exciting meeting for the “Bone Olam” women, in which Prof. Arie Hurwitz, head of the IVF department, Hadassah Mt. Scopus, was a guest lecturer who answered their questions with warmth and sensitivity.

8.3 Kayma Organization, for those who choose to be single religious mothers: We hold Mind-Body Fertility Therapeutic workshops specifically for single women, and the Kayma Organization helps us spread the word and bring participants from their community to our workshops.

C. Special Programs:

9. We have recently launched two new unique programs and we are glad to share its progress:

9.1. “Transfer with Tranquility:

We offer one on one sessions with women who are going through the IVF process. Before the fertilized embryos are transferred back we meet with them either on the morning of the transfer or the day before to prepare them emotionally and physically. The session consists of mostly restorative poses, breathing work and gentle movement so the body and mind will be more receptive and relaxed. After the transfer we continue to offer between 2-4 one on one sessions so the clients stay relaxed and their stress level stays to a minimum while awaiting the results.

So far, we have helped 16 women before the procedure. We learned from the women that these sessions were instrumental in their relaxation process and even requested a follow-up session after the transfer and we happily created acknowledged the need for this.

Here are some of the wonderful feedback we have received from these women:

“The relaxation helped me a lot, to relax and clear my head. I felt a change physically as well – the effects of the hormones were less disturbing.”

“I felt like it was an “island of peacefulness” in there. A place where I could come clean on the inside. It helped me go through the anxious period of time of waiting for the results of a pregnancy test (Beta”

9.2. “Pagimoms”

Pagimoms is an innovative program offered to new mothers whose babies are in the Preemie unit. We help the new mothers reduce their stress so they're better able to cope, with the hope that when they are less stressed they transfer this calm feeling to their babies.

So far, we have helped 21 new moms.

This is some of the feedback we received:

"Before the sessions, I felt weak, tense, and worried about my baby daughter, who was born prematurely. After the sessions, I felt physically stronger, and more relaxed. I felt powerful, and able to cope with the difficulties that lay ahead. The sessions ended with relaxation methods that left me feeling calm and serene for the entire day and more."

"An amazing thing happened, at the end the session, I went to nurse my baby, and felt my milk really start to flow!"

D. Future Programs:

10. **Research:** We are working on an article for publication, which will summarize how we met the unique challenges of treating different sectors of society. We are collecting the information and impressions from all our therapists and comparing the efficacy of treatments in different sectors.
11. **Mentoring Fertility Yoga Instructors:** We are currently training Yoga teachers to become fertility therapists in the Gefen organization.
12. **Fertility Preservation**
We plan to open a new workshop for women considering egg preservation. These women cope with a unique set of difficulties which we plan to address. This workshop will be given in cooperation with doctors who specialize in this field and address the realities of this process in Israel today.