

Honouring Menstruation

There are few themes recurring so often throughout history and the modern world as the idea that menstruation is shameful and a curse. This pervasive view and the consequent silence and taboo that still surrounds menstruation belies the fact of menstruation as a healthy, natural aspect of the menstrual cycle, fertility, sexuality, creativity and inspiration.

Menarche, or first period, is a time of profound change, the beginning of 35 to 40 years of fertility, cycling and menstruation. This is a time celebrated in many cultures as a rite of passage into a new stage of life with new rights, responsibilities, knowledge and possibilities. Menarche is a vulnerable time, as all thresholds are, and attitudes and circumstances at this time can impact negatively or positively on later menstrual experiences.

Commonplace as menstruation is, the transformation of a child's body into one that can bring forth new life is momentous. A girl is unlikely to be planning to have her first child, nor will her practising-fertility body be likely to be able to conceive just yet, however this capacity is nonetheless powerful and transforming in and of itself.

As you guide your daughter on her journey towards menarche and the menstrual cycle, be open, creative and honest. Foster an environment where it's easy to communicate about menstruation. If you don't know something, give yourself time to find out. Being open about menstruation from the beginning will encourage curiosity - your daughter will ask questions as they naturally arise and you can answer them in an age appropriate way as you go along. As she approaches menarche it's important to think through what she needs to know and to address the particular concerns she may have. Some girls sport a convincing air of knowing-it-all, they don't.

Girls who have a positive experience of menarche and their ongoing menstrual cycle are able to grow into the in-drawing centredness, the confidence, the groundedness, that conscious, positive and healthy menstruating can offer. Menstruation is an aspect of their blossoming sexuality - an inward time to be with themselves, a time to explore their changes and start to get to know the fertile and infertile times of their menstrual cycle - before they embark on sexual relationships.

By exploring *our own* experiences of menarche, menstruation and fertility, and the influences of family and culture, and by getting to know, make friends with and honouring our own cycle we are able to help our daughters, and other girls in our care, to achieve a healthy menstrual experience. By honouring menstruation, in practical and philosophic ways, we can vastly improve our own experiences, discover the hidden creative potentials of riding our emotional and energetic rhythms, and bestow upon our daughters the experience of menstruation as blessing, rather than a curse.

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