

# MOON MAGIC



**Workshop  
on  
Puberty**

**Kesa Kivel**

# Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty

*A Facilitator's Guide for Helping Girls  
Come of Age*



**Curriculum Developed and Written  
by Kesa Kivel**

**Cover Illustration by Lynn Eames**

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**Note:** Despite the abundant assistance on this project, I claim all of the blind spots, minefields, and typos. I am solely responsible for the contents herein.

## **Who This Curriculum Is For**

This curriculum is written for female facilitators to use with girls. I have found that girls are most comfortable learning about menstruation from a female instructor and in an all-girl setting. An environment of privacy, safety, and comfort will help ensure that girls participate fully in the workshop. Of course, boys need information about menstruation, too; however, it's best if boys and girls are taught separately.



## **What You Can Add to the Curriculum**

This curriculum focuses on the practical, emotional, and cultural aspects of menstruation and growing up female. It does not contain specific information on the biological changes that take place for both girls and boys during puberty or on premenstrual syndrome (PMS), ways to relieve cramps, information on alternative menstrual products, toxic shock syndrome, masturbation, sexual attraction of adolescents to people around them, and the attraction that some people feel to people of the same sex. Consider constructing a presentation that covers all of these basic topics and including it in the workshop. The Lesson Plan on page 9 (see "Puberty: The Basics") can help you determine where in the workshop you might include such a presentation.



# Introduction

Black Jewel Girl,  
the breeze coming from her as she runs is beautiful...  
Her black jewel moccasins,  
the breeze coming from her as she runs is beautiful...  
Before, behind, it is blessed,  
the breeze coming from her as she runs is beautiful.

*Special song sung to a Diné (Navajo) girl during the vigorous runs she makes as part of her coming-of-age ceremony.<sup>1</sup>*

We know from the work of archaeologists<sup>2</sup> that female functions such as menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth were recognized as sacred experiences by entire tribes and communities in earlier times. Some Native American puberty rites, such as the Diné (Navajo) Kinaalda ceremony, have withstood the onslaught of outside cultural forces and are still carried out. Such traditions can teach us all a great deal about the value of celebrating a girl's first period and acknowledging her spirit, energy, wisdom, and courage as important contributions to the community.

I created *Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty: A Facilitator's Guide for Helping Girls Come of Age* for these reasons: (1) to offer a positive alternative to the negative attitudes in our society regarding menstruation, and (2) to help girls celebrate themselves at this important time in their lives, since secular celebrations for girls coming of age are lacking within the larger culture. In doing so, I have brought forth what I feel has been missing from most instruction on puberty: the positive, joyful, empowering aspects of this important developmental phase. I wanted the girls I taught to feel more confident and to be more informed, and I wanted them to feel honored. Since 2005, I have offered the workshop through the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside's Girls in Action (G.I.A.) program, a free leadership and empowerment program for middle school girls.

In the Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty, girls learn about some of the practical, emotional, and cultural aspects of menstruation and of growing up female. The workshop includes discussions, a critique of menstrual product ads, a "read-around" of puberty rites from around the world, and a fun Butterfly Activity. At the conclusion of the workshop, a Red Jellybean Celebration is held. My hope is that girls who participate in the workshop will discover things to love and cherish about being a girl growing into a woman, become more aware of the cultural context for the challenges they face, and become more empowered to face these challenges.

I would appreciate any feedback you may have about your experiences in using the *Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty* curriculum or on ways to make it more accessible to the community. Please contact me at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com) or fill out and return the curriculum evaluation form at the back of the guide. Future editions will be enhanced by your responses!

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst*, by Carol Lee Flinders. HarperCollins, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Marija Gimbutas and others.

# Moon Magic Workshop: Facilitator's Overview

**Contemporary Issues:** Our culture, as a whole, does not celebrate puberty or provide helpful, timely information for girls about menstruation and growing up female.

Many parents and guardians are not comfortable talking to their daughters (and stepdaughters/granddaughters/foster children, etc.) about menstruation, which increases the likelihood that girls will be confused and embarrassed at menarche.

Menstrual product advertisements focus on the negative aspects of menstruation, such as leakage and odor, and this focus may cause girls to feel anxious. In addition, sexual harassment and the entertainment media's sexual objectification of females make it difficult for girls to fully enjoy their femaleness, let alone celebrate their metamorphosis from girls into young women.

## Goals:

- Provide a safe space for girls to learn about menstruation, share their menstrual stories, and ask questions (which will be answered either by the girls themselves or by the facilitator).
- Help girls examine the interplay between individual needs and cultural values. For example, a girl may be excitedly anticipating her first period but may find that she cannot talk about it easily with others because of cultural views on menstruation.
- Offer a fun rite of passage to help girls celebrate puberty and being female.
- Present "life" skills to the girls, such as ways for them to access and use their intuition during this important but often difficult developmental phase.
- Share some positive aspects of being female: for example, the opportunity to connect, through menstruation, with nature's rhythms and cycles.
- Provide resource materials about puberty for girls to take home to their parents and guardians.

**Teaching Methods:** This curriculum offers a variety of teaching methods, including discussion, brainstorming, interactive exercises, and artwork. (Using the film recommended in Lesson Plan: Part One, on page 9, is optional.) The Butterfly Activity and the Red Jellybean Celebration are instructive and useful, but equally important, these activities provide girls with an opportunity to relax, be creative, and have fun. This variety provides students with abundant opportunities to learn and to shine.

The diverse curriculum also offers you multiple opportunities to add your own ideas. For instance, when the Butterfly Activity is presented to students, you might talk about the parallels between the metamorphosis of a pupa in a cocoon into a butterfly and a girl's transformation into a young woman during puberty. Sharing your own first menstruation story at some point during the workshop -- as well as talking about a time when you leaked and yet lived to tell about it (!) -- can help bring a sense of both universality and humor to the topic.

**How to Use the Curriculum for Your Group of Students:** The *Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty* is based on my work with the girls I have taught and the issues with which I'm familiar. When you are teaching any particular group of students, you may wish to tailor the methods and content to best convey the material to them.

- Use your unique skills and talents in order to bring the material to life. For instance, if you sew and have sufficient time, you could help the girls make pouches to hold menstrual supplies.
- Extend or eliminate activities as needed. Since the time frames for the individual activities are approximate, if a discussion extends past the designated time, you might choose to eliminate one or more of the upcoming topics. However, I do suggest keeping the section on dealing with leaks (p. 12); it's of great interest to the girls!
- Do a three-part instead of a two-part workshop, if possible. Although I have provided a sample lesson plan in the curriculum for my usual two-part workshop, my preference is to present the material in three parts, allowing ample time for discussion and questions and for optional activities (some of which are included in the curriculum).

# Creating a Safe Space

**In Advance -- Facilitator Writing:** Explore the feelings you had when you yourself were going through puberty. One way to remember past experiences is to write down your memories of that time and of what it felt like to you. What were the fun parts about it, and what physical and emotional challenges did you encounter? Did anyone tell you in advance what to expect about getting your first period? Do you remember waiting patiently or impatiently for it? Were you the first of your friends or the last to begin menstruating? In either case, how did that feel? Where were you and how old were you when you got your first period? If having your first period was traumatic, this may be a time to reflect on your experience. If needed, seek healing for yourself, both for your own benefit and so that you can be more supportive of the students you teach. (The preceding ideas are from *Before She Gets Her Period*, by Jessica B.Gillooly; see "Resource List for Parents and Guardians," p. 30.)

## FOR FACILITATORS -- PROMOTING A SAFE SPACE

**Supplies Needed:** Suggestion box, pad of paper, pens

- Place a suggestion box somewhere easily accessible to students and invite them to submit suggestions and/or comments about the workshop anonymously whenever they wish. Review the contents periodically.
- Tell students at the beginning of each session that you're going to wait three to five seconds before calling on or responding to students who raise their hands so that everybody, even shyer students, gets a chance to think and respond. (This technique, which is from David Sadker's film *Gender Equity in the Classroom*, promotes an atmosphere of inclusion, safety, and equality.)
- At some point during each session, it's useful to ask: "Is there someone who has not shared very much who would like to share now?" This promotes a sense that everybody has value.

## FOR STUDENTS -- CREATING A SAFE SPACE

**Supplies Needed:** Butcher paper/marker. Write "I AGREE" in big, bold letters at the top of the paper.

**Say to Girls:** *Let's create a Safe Space Contract. What ground rules can we all agree to so that we will have a safe space for everybody in the workshop? I'll write your responses on the paper.*

**Responses may include:**

- *I agree to confidentiality. The information that someone shares during the workshop stays in the room unless I get permission from the girl to share it.*
- *I agree to listen respectfully without interrupting, rolling my eyes, or doing anything else that shows disrespect.*
- *I agree to allow every opinion to be expressed.*
- *I agree to speak respectfully, with no put-downs of others.*
- *I agree to speak from my own experience (I think, I feel, I believe) rather than talking about someone else's experience.*
- *I have the right to pass if I don't want to talk.*

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Talk to the girls about anything on the list above that they have not mentioned. Everything on this list is extremely important, especially the issue of confidentiality. Then, have the girls signify their agreement with the Safe Space Contract by signing the butcher paper contract. You can sign it, too!

**Explain to Girls:** The only exceptions to the confidentiality agreement would be if a girl in the workshop said that she might do harm to herself or to another person or that someone is/was abusing her. You, as the facilitator, might want to -- and may be legally required to -- report this. Also, if you sometimes talk with staff about things that come up in workshops, say so to the girls. If other exceptions apply for your particular teaching situation, inform the girls of these exceptions.



# Lesson Plan: Part One

## SAMPLE LESSON

**3:15-3:25 Girls Create a “Safe Space” Contract (see p. 8)**

**3:25-3:45 Menstruation, Then and Now: Exercise and Handout (see pp. 10-11)**

**3:45-4:05 Puberty: The Basics**

Construct and share your own presentation for this time slot. Topics might include:

- Biological changes that take place for both girls and boys during puberty
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and cramps, as well as ways for girls to help themselves feel better

**Note:** Because of the negativity surrounding menstruation, some girls, upon hearing a facilitator say they *may* experience PMS or cramps, will understand the statement to mean that they *will probably* experience these things. It will therefore be helpful to present stories of positive menstrual experiences, as well as to explain to the girls that menstrual experiences may change in a good way over time, for a variety of reasons.<sup>3</sup>

- Information on alternative menstrual products
- Toxic shock syndrome
- Masturbation
- Sexual attraction of adolescents to people around them
- Attraction that some people feel to people of the same sex

**4:05-4:20 Dealing with Leaks: Discussion (see p. 12)**

Girls brainstorm how to prepare for and handle emergencies and bloodstains.

**4:20-4:30 Period Power Calendar: Explanation (see p. 13)**

Girls learn how to chart their periods on a calendar and how to anticipate when their periods are likely to start each month.

**4:30-4:40 Questions Asked**

Girls write down questions about puberty anonymously and place the questions in a basket. (The facilitator will provide answers during the next session. Girls will also be encouraged to provide answers and give support to one another.)

**4:40-5:20 Butterfly Activity: Writing and Artwork (see activity, p. 14, and photo, p. 15)**

The Butterfly Activity helps girls who may feel insecure during puberty to develop their intuition (their inner wisdom), a valuable resource at a vulnerable time. The activity also provides them with an opportunity to relax, be creative, and have fun.

If the pages of the butterfly booklet are pre-cut and assembled in advance, the girls can quickly do the writing exercise and the cover art. If you want the girls to cut their own butterfly-shaped pages and assemble the booklets themselves, allow another 30-40 minutes for this project.

**5:20-5:30 Clean-up**

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<sup>3</sup> “Teaching Undergraduates About the Menstrual Cycle: Refining Our Pedagogy,” by Margaret L. Stubbs, Natalie Palmer, and April Yandrich. A paper presented at the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research, Tucson, AZ, June 1999.

# Menstruation, Then and Now: Exercise

(15 Minutes)

**Contemporary Issues:** The prevalence of negative cultural beliefs about menstruation, a lack of accurate information and resources on the topic, and negative menstrual product ads all make it difficult for girls to feel positive about their menstrual experiences.

In addition, most girls do not know about times in history when female functions such as menstruation were honored and women were celebrated. This makes it difficult for contemporary girls, living in a sexist world, to imagine -- let alone strive for -- a society in which respect and appreciation for females and female functions are the norm.

**Project Description:** Read-around and discussion. For the read-around, the girls will take turns reading aloud the numbered sets of sentences in the "Menstruation, Then and Now" handout (with the first girl reading all of the material in number one, and so on) until all the sets have been read. Students can opt out of reading aloud if they prefer.

**Goal:** To help girls reflect on their own menstrual experiences and to look back tens of thousands of years ago to times when menstruation was celebrated, in order to reclaim female pride and power.

**Supplies Needed:** Copy a "Menstruation, Then and Now" handout for each girl (see p. 11).

**Explain to Girls:** The Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty was developed to help girls think about the practical, emotional, and cultural aspects of menstruation and growing up female so that they can have the best menstrual experience, or period, possible. Both words -- *menstruation* and *period* -- refer to the same experience, and both words will be used in this workshop.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** At this point, list the topics you have selected for inclusion in the two- or three-part workshop so that the girls know what to expect.

**Explain to Girls:** The Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty will help them value menstruation the way it has been valued by other people in the past. They will learn accurate information about menstruation and gain an understanding of cultural influences. The goal is for them to leave the workshop with more confidence in themselves, new ways to manage and think about their period, and a growing appreciation of being female.

Menstruation is the letting go of blood, fluids, and tissue from the uterus and the vagina that occurs about once a month. All of this good stuff -- blood, fluids, and tissue -- is formed to accept and nourish a pregnancy if one should happen. Some people call this material a "nest." If there is no pregnancy that month, this nest material is released, and another nest is formed the next month (or thereabouts). Menstruation usually starts anywhere from age 8 to 16, and it usually ends between the ages of 45 and 60.

Tell the girls that menstruation, or having their period, is an opportunity to:

- Increase their body awareness by becoming familiar with their unique body as it changes during the month.
- Learn how to plan ahead and be responsible for themselves in order to prepare for their period.
- Think critically and respond creatively to negative societal attitudes about menstruation.
- Connect, through their period, with nature's rhythms and cycles.
- Experience a natural rite of passage into womanhood.
- Consider the miraculous ability of females to bleed without being injured.
- Identify with other girls and women around the world and throughout time because of the unique ability of all females to menstruate.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Pass out the handout to each girl for the read-around and discussion.

# Menstruation, Then and Now: Handout

## READ-AROUND

**Say to Girls: *Let's consider how menstruation has been thought about in the past.***

- 1) For tens of thousands of years in many early societies all over the world, female functions such as menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth were recognized as special, sacred experiences.
- 2) Because of women's ability to bleed without being injured, to bear children, and to produce milk from their bodies to nurse their babies, women in some of these early societies were associated with the goddess.
- 3) We have this information because of the work of archaeologists<sup>4</sup> and others. Archaeologists are scientists who study earlier cultures by digging up artifacts (such as bits of religious art and household pottery) from the earth. How people lived in early societies can be understood by the artifacts found in their households and at their gravesites.
- 4) For instance, female figures and symbols have often been found in central positions in artwork.<sup>5</sup> Artifacts found at some of the gravesites reveal that women had more important religious roles than men.<sup>6</sup> In many cases, women's gravesites were placed in positions of greater importance than those of men. These things indicate that women were given a great deal of respect in many early societies.
- 5) Although women had a great deal of respect and, in some cases, more important religious roles than men, men were considered important, too. These communities were what social scientist Riane Eisler calls "partnership societies," in which women and men for the most part lived in harmony.<sup>7</sup>
- 6) We can also learn about early societies from what is *not* found in these same locations. For example, archaeologists studying these sites found no weapons, no artwork showing wars, and no walls built around the communities to protect the citizens.
- 7) Although the peace-loving, women-honoring societies ended about five thousand years ago, we can reclaim a connection with these female ancestors and the early societies in which they lived.

## DISCUSSION

**Say to Girls: *You have just heard about how females and menstruation were regarded in many earlier societies. Let's consider your own menstrual experiences and those of other girls and women in our society today.***

- *In your home, has your mother, grandmother, aunt, guardian, etc. ever talked with you about menstruation? If so, please share your experience with the group. For instance, did you both feel comfortable discussing the topic? Did you feel that brothers or fathers should or should not be present during the discussion? Or, did your father initiate a discussion?*
- *Have you and your friends talked together about menstruation? Please share your experiences.*
- *Have you ever bought pads or tampons? If so, please share your experiences and your feelings about buying menstrual products. Why do you think you have had the kinds of experiences that you've had?*
- *If you have already had your first period, were you honored and celebrated in any way? Do you know anyone who has been honored and celebrated for getting her first period?*
- *Do you think there might be any relationship between how menstruation is thought of in our culture and how females are treated in our society? Note: Girls may not know how to respond to this last question, but it may get them thinking about the connection.*
- *Can you imagine a time in the future when girls and women might experience the same respect that was given to girls and women in some ancient societies? What do you imagine would be different from the way things are right now?*

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<sup>4</sup> Marija Gimbutas and others.

<sup>5</sup> *The Chalice and the Blade*, by Riane Eisler. HarperCollins, 1988.

<sup>6</sup> *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body--New Paths to Power and Love*, by Riane Eisler. HarperCollins, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

# Dealing with Leaks: Discussion and Handout

(15 Minutes)

✓ **Note:** If you are following Lesson Plan: Part One (p. 9), then "Puberty: The Basics" (also on p. 9) should be presented before starting this exercise.

**In Advance for Facilitator:** 1) Create a poster showing a diverse array of unwrapped pads and tampons in different sizes, and either pass the poster around during the workshop or display it. 2) Copy this handout for each girl and distribute the copies *after* the discussion.

**Say to Girls:** *I'm going to ask you some questions about how to deal with leaks when you're having your period. Let's all brainstorm the possible answers to the questions.*

**How can you be best prepared for getting your period, especially if it's not regular?**

- Keep an extra pad, tampon, and/or pair of underwear in your purse or backpack, or in your locker. You can also keep a spare pair of jeans in your locker.
- Wear dark clothes on days you think you might be getting your period.

**What if you get your period at school when you're in class?**

Raise your hand and ask the teacher for permission to leave the classroom. Then go to the bathroom to use your supplies, which you either have brought with you or will purchase from a dispenser, if there is one. If no supplies are available, in an emergency you can wrap toilet paper into a wad and place it in the crotch of your underpants. You could also ask another girl if she has an extra pad or tampon. Most girls will gladly lend you menstrual supplies. (Teachers and school nurses may also have pads to give you.)

**What if there's a bloodstain on the back of your clothes?**

- If you're wearing a skirt, you can move the back around to the front and then use your purse, backpack, or a notebook to cover the spot.
- Have a friend follow close behind you when you walk to the bathroom.
- If you are wearing a sweater (or anything long-sleeved) over a shirt, you can take the sweater off and tie the sleeves around your waist so that the sweater covers the spot in the back. Then, go to the bathroom and get a tampon or pad.
- Once you get to the bathroom, you can try to wash out the spot. (Use cold water, because hot water will turn the blood spot into a stain!) Or, if possible, call someone to bring you a fresh change of clothes from home.

**What if your parents are divorced and you're at your dad's house when you get your period?**

Find a place to keep menstrual supplies at your dad's house in case you get your period when you're there. If you have a stepmom, you can ask her for products if you have run out of supplies, or you can ask your dad to help you buy supplies. Dads will know about menstruation. Your positive attitude about menstruation as a natural sign of health and fertility may lessen any potential embarrassment between you and your dad.<sup>8</sup>

**What are some other things you can do to manage menstruation?**

- After showering, use toilet paper to wipe between your legs (a towel may become stained).
- Don't try to flush pads down the toilet, as they may clog the plumbing! Most tampons can be flushed, but *not* all applicators can be. Check the labels on the products you use. Most public bathroom stalls have a small metal container in which to place used pads and applicators.
- If you notice a student or teacher who has leaked, tell her so that she can deal with it!

**What if you feel embarrassed or ashamed because you've leaked?**

If you feel embarrassed or ashamed because you had a bloodstain that was noticed by others, remember: *You have not done anything wrong or shameful!* Menstruation is normal, and leaks happen. Any feeling of shame is driven by our culture's negative attitude toward menstruation. Talking about the experience with someone you trust or writing about it in your journal can help you to honor your feelings, put things in perspective, and move forward.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Period Book: Everything You Don't Want to Ask (But Need to Know)*, by Karen and Jennifer Gravelle. Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 1996.

# Period Power Calendar: Handout

(10 Minutes)

MARCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	<del>17</del> ♡	<del>18</del>	<del>19</del>	<del>20</del>	<del>21</del>
<del>22</del>	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	<del>13</del> ♡	<del>14</del>	<del>15</del>	<del>16</del>	<del>17</del>	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**In Advance:** Make copies of this page and distribute one to each girl.

**Activity:** Explain the material in this handout to the girls and respond to any of their questions.

### Menstrual Cycles

The purpose of using a calendar is to chart your menstrual cycle over time. Since your body goes through rapid changes during puberty, charting your period may help you to feel more in control. Also, when you get a medical exam, the health professional will often ask you the date of your last period, so it's good information to know.

Your period may or may not end up being regular. Even if it is regular, it may not be 28 days, which is the average, but perhaps 27 or 30. Also, your menstrual cycle can be affected by many things, such as diet, vigorous exercise, stress, medication, and illness.

It can take a year or more after the first period before your periods become regular, and they may not become regular even then. Still, if your period is very irregular, talk to your parents/guardians and/or a health professional to make sure this is normal for you.<sup>9</sup>

### Using the Calendar

Let's say your period starts on March 17 ♡. Use a sticker or make a red check mark to note its arrival. Then, draw a line through that day and each day afterward that you are still bleeding. This will show you the length of your period each month. If your period begins on March 17 and fades out on March 22, that is a six-day period. You can also note on the calendar whether your period was heavy or light on each day and how you were feeling, both physically and emotionally.

The menstrual cycle includes ovulation and menstruation and goes from the first day of bleeding of one period to the first day of bleeding of the next period. Figuring out the length of your menstrual cycle can help you determine when your next period will start, if it is regular. In the sample calendar above, the number of days from the first day of the March period (March 17 ♡) through April 12, which is the day before the April period begins (on April 13 ♡), is 27 days. If your period becomes regular, you can count 27 days from the day a period begins to figure out what day your next period will start.

### Other Ways to Know When Your Period Is Coming

Whether or not your period is regular, you may experience certain physical or other changes before your period arrives. These changes might include being more emotional, creative, or intuitive; becoming bloated; or getting pimples. When these things happen, you'll know that your period is likely to arrive soon.

**Note:** Developing an awareness of these kinds of changes, whether or not you are expecting your period, gives you important feedback on how you are doing and feeling.

<sup>9</sup> *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health*, by Robie H. Harris. Candlewick, 1996.

# Butterfly Activity: Writing and Artwork

## (40 Minutes)

✓ **Note:** If you are following Lesson Plan: Part One (p. 9), then "Questions Asked" (also on p. 9) should be presented before starting this exercise.

**Contemporary Issues:** Intuition (direct knowledge of something without benefit of evidence) is not valued in our society. For the most part, people do not learn about intuition in school, at home, or elsewhere. Without this important resource, adolescent girls -- who are likely to be feeling insecure due to cultural pressures and the emotional and physical upheavals of puberty -- have less support than is their birthright. Without this resource they are less likely to know their true thoughts, to speak from their hearts, and to live authentic lives.

The following factors contribute to the lack of value placed on intuition in our society:

- Logic is the preferred tool for solving problems, gaining knowledge, and "getting ahead." Textbooks, news reports, and statements by experts are the favored sources for helping us come to rational and reasonable decisions. Intuition, which connects us to knowledge from a nonlinear source not bound by conventional thinking, is not widely taught or encouraged.
- An overstimulating external environment, with an abundance of music videos, video games, iPods, large-screen TVs, text messaging, and digital billboards, calls incessantly upon us to pay attention outside ourselves rather than within, where we might receive intuitive guidance.
- Social conditioning thwarts our intuition. For example, peer pressure and gender stereotyping by their very nature discourage listening inwardly and responding authentically, which might result in our "going against the grain."
- Prejudices exist about intuition. Making use of gut feelings, hunches, images, dreams, and "free-flow" writing exercises in order to obtain knowledge is often thought of as irrational or unreasonable, and intuition is frequently considered an inappropriate tool with which to make meaningful decisions. Knowledge gained in such ways, especially by women, is often dismissed as lacking merit and not worth paying attention to.

Girls in the throes of puberty, however, can -- with our assistance -- develop their intuition in order to better navigate their lives, in addition to using logic and other ways of knowing. The benefits of using their intuition intentionally will likely be both profound and practical. Intuition can help girls feel more confident when faced with bewildering, contradictory, and stressful situations. It can lead girls away from potential danger and through risky situations, as well as toward right actions. Intuition can help girls bring forth inspired ideas, a sense of wonder, and a deep connection with the natural world. Using their intuition, adolescent girls can lead a richer and fuller existence and can help to create a better world.

**Project Description:** "Free-flow" writing and artwork in butterfly-shaped booklets (see photo on p. 15).

**Goal:** The Butterfly Activity helps students to value, access, and develop their intuition using the image of a butterfly. The butterfly is a potent symbol of transformation that reflects and reinforces the girls' own metamorphosis during puberty into something beautiful. The activity is also a relaxing, fun, creative interlude.

**Supplies Needed:** Colorful construction paper cut into butterfly-shaped pages at least 8" wide and 5" long (use butterfly template on p. 17), scissors, markers, stickers, timer, hole punchers, pipe cleaners or yarn (both available at craft stores).

**Optional Supplies:** A CD player and soothing music played at a low volume. Some examples: *The Six Unaccompanied Cello Suites*, by Johann Sebastian Bach, performed by Yo-Yo Ma ([www.sonybmgmasterworks.com](http://www.sonybmgmasterworks.com)); *Matriarch: Iroquois Women's Songs*, by Joanne Shenandoah ([www.silverwave.com](http://www.silverwave.com)).

**In Advance:** Create a sample butterfly booklet and do the free-flow writing exercise yourself; you can use your booklet as an example to show the girls during the session. Then, create a booklet for each girl.

To make a butterfly booklet, use the butterfly template to cut out three booklet pages, then punch two holes vertically in the center of the booklet pages and insert a pipe cleaner or yarn through the holes. I usually make a few extra pages for the girls to use if necessary.

If you have sufficient time for the girls to make their own booklets, cut out templates for each of them to use and gather the necessary supplies. This will add another 30-40 minutes or so to the activity.

### ABOUT INTUITION

**Say to Girls:** *Intuition is direct knowledge – that is, just knowing something without thinking or researching or having evidence of it. Can you name some ways that intuition is revealed?*

Answers may include: *hunches, suspicions, gut feelings, anxieties, curiosity, dreams, and meditation.*

**Explain to Girls:** Intuition comes in many forms. (Tell the girls of any ways to access intuition that have not been previously mentioned, including mental images, body wisdom, and free-flow writing.) Intuition is a source of information to be used in addition to other sources of information. For example, if a girl were deciding between joining a soccer team or taking an art class, she could make a list of the pros and cons of each activity, talk to someone already doing each activity, and do free-flow writing for additional information and direction.

The free-flow writing technique can be used at any time, on any topic. All the girls need to do is choose a situation or problem that they would like more information on so they'll know how to handle it, then write on that topic for 10 minutes without stopping to edit or to judge the content.



**Sample Butterfly Booklet**

**Say to Girls:** *Does anyone in the group have an example to share of a time when they just "knew" something but did not know why?*

**How can you tell if what you feel is really your intuition or just your mind playing a trick on you? Ask yourself these questions:**

- Does the insight fit with my basic values? For instance, if you feel strongly that you should choose to join the soccer team rather than taking the art class your friends want you to take, does the choice feel like a natural match with your personal values -- for instance, the value of being true to yourself?
- Is an action I'm considering something that might cause me or somebody else to be harmed, or does it seem like a positive action? For example, an impulse to step out in front of a car is never your intuition!
- Would I advise someone else to take an action I am considering? For example, If you are thinking about complaining to someone who is bothering you but you're not sure whether to do it, ask yourself what you would advise a friend in the same situation to do.

### **WRITING SEGMENT**

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Have girls choose a butterfly booklet if these are already assembled, or else have them make their own booklets.

**Explain to Girls:** Everybody has access to intuition and can develop their "intuitive muscle." The writing exercise will help them to develop this important, underused tool.

For this exercise they will each write for one minute per topic, for eight topics, using one or two pages per topic. There are a few extra pages if they need them. Free-flow writing means writing continuously on a topic without stopping to correct spelling or punctuation, to edit, or to judge the content. Ideally, they are writing continuously for the full minute. If they can't think of what to say, they should write the topic name over and over until their intuition kicks in.

**Say to Girls:** *Leave the outside page blank for your cover art, which you will be creating after the writing segment. Write full sentences, not lists. Let the writing and your intuition flow. Surprise yourself with what you write! The idea is for you to release distracting surface thoughts so that deeper layers can emerge. The writing is not necessarily supposed to make sense. Also, you will not have to share your writing unless you want to.*

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Alternative topics to those below may be chosen by you and/or the girls.

**Possible Intuition Topics:** (1) flowing water (such as a waterfall or river), (2) a safe place (such as in a treehouse or under a bed), (3) a key (such as one that opens a music box or a doorway to a special place), (4) an animal friend (such as a pet or a stuffed animal), (5) a female helper (such as a favorite aunt or a female coach), (6) an obstacle (such as a wall or a fence), (7) a power symbol (such a magic wand or a hammer), and (8) something that brings happiness (such as going to the beach or visiting a favorite relative).

✓ **Note to Facilitator -- Order of Events:**

- Play soothing music (optional)
- Create a list of topics together with the girls, or use the topics above.
- Name each topic in turn (whichever ones you and the girls decide on). Before the girls begin writing on each topic, have them brainstorm together to come up with examples of possible things that could be written for that topic.
- Set the timer for one minute per topic for the girls to write in the free-flow style.
- As the girls write, remind them to use full sentences, not lists, and to keep writing without stopping to edit anything.

### **ARTWORK AND SHARING**

After the writing part of the activity, girls will decorate the covers of their butterfly booklets with markers, stickers, etc. Girls will then share their cover art with the group, as well as their intuitive writing, if they like. Girls may opt out of sharing if they want to.

Ask girls what, if anything, they have learned through this activity.





# Lesson Plan: Part Two

## SAMPLE LESSON

### **3:15-3:45 Questions Answered**

The facilitator and the girls themselves provide answers to the anonymous questions that were written down during the previous session.

### **3:45-3:55 Moon Myths and Information: Explanation (see p. 19)**

- Women/Moon Cycle Connection
- How Light Affects Our Bodies
- Moon-Related Names for Menstruation
- Menstrual Synchronicity

### **3:55-4:10 Puberty Rites from Around the World: Exercise and Handout (see pp. 20-21)**

Girls will take turns reading descriptions of puberty rites out loud.

### **4:10-4:25 Critique of Menstrual Product Ads: Exercise and Handout (see pp. 22-23)**

Girls will learn some critical thinking skills and critique menstrual product advertisements.

### **4:25-4:30 Native American Creation Story: "Changing Woman" (optional)**

Facilitators who will be showing the *Kinaalda* film clip may choose to research the Changing Woman story (mentioned in the film) on their own and then share the story in class.

### **4:30-4:40 Kinaalda, Navajo Rite of Passage Film Clip (optional)**

*Kinaalda* is a documentary about a Native American girl's rite of passage at puberty. The ten-minute clip that I recommend begins with the girl being dressed in special clothes by her mentor and ends with the girl's ceremonial run. *Note:* If you don't show the film clip you can do one of the other optional activities in the curriculum. (The film *Kinaalda, Navajo Rite of Passage*, by Lena Carr, can be purchased at [www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com).)

### **4:40-5:15 Red Jellybean Celebration: Writing and Artwork (see p. 25)**

### **5:15-5:30 Clean-up, Feedback Forms (see p. 26), and Take-Home Materials (see below).**

Hand out feedback forms for students to fill out at the end of the workshop, along with take-home materials for students to take home to their parents and guardians.

### **Take-Home Letter and Resource List for Parents and Guardians:**

- Urge the girls to give their parents/guardians a copy of the "Take-Home Letter for Parents and Guardians" and "Resource List for Parents and Guardians" (in English on pp. 29-30; in Spanish on pp. 31-32). Or, create your own letter and resource list for the girls to take home. The letter and list provided in this guide offer talking points about growing up female, a recommended reading list, and suggestions for ways to celebrate a girl's first period.
- Explain to the girls that their parents or guardians, whether they are female or male, probably do not have many -- or any -- resource materials and may not know a lot about the positive aspects of menstruation. Because of this, a parent or guardian -- (especially a male parent/guardian) may not feel comfortable discussing the topic. By providing resource material to her parent/guardian, a girl can make it easier for the two of them to talk about this important topic.
- Ask the girls to talk to you if they feel they cannot give the material to their parent/guardian so you can find out why. A girl may need to know more about the purpose of the take-home material or may feel that taking the material home is not appropriate, for any number of reasons.

# Moon Myths and Information: Explanation

(10 Minutes)

✓ **Note:** If you are following Lesson Plan: Part Two (p. 18), then "Questions Answered" (also on p. 18) should be presented before starting this exercise.

Share the information below with the students.

## "Myth" Defined

A myth is a traditional story, almost like a fairy tale. Through the story it tells, a myth offers an explanation of a belief, an event, or something in the natural world.

## Women/Moon Cycle Connection

According to a number of traditional stories and myths about earlier times, women got their periods during the new moon and ovulated during the full moon. These myths tell us that in some cultures, women and the moon were considered to be connected to each other. Women were often considered sacred and powerful because of this connection. It would have been natural to make an association between menstrual and moon (lunar) cycles, because the menstrual cycle is, on average, about the same length as the lunar cycle of 29.5 days.

## How Light Affects Our Bodies

From a scientific standpoint, it is possible that moonlight can affect menstrual cycles, as mentioned in the traditional stories and myths. Experiments have shown that if a menstruating female with an irregular period sleeps with a soft light in her room (in place of moonlight), her menstrual cycle will become more regular. In the experiments, the soft light was on during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth days of the women's cycles (the days on which they would ideally be ovulating). After a few months, the cycles became more regular. This is called the Dewan effect.<sup>10</sup>

## Moon-Related Names for Menstruation

Menstrual/moon associations are reflected in languages all over the world. For instance, in France, a period is called "*le moment de la lune*" ("the moment of the moon"). In Poland, the words for moon, month, and menstruation are all the same word. In the Congo, the same word is used for moon and menstruation.<sup>11</sup>

## Menstrual Synchronicity

Some women who live together -- whether in households, summer camps, college dorms, or other places -- begin their periods at the same time. Psychologist Martha McClintock, founder and director of the Institute for Mind and Biology at the University of Chicago, did a great deal of the early research on how social interactions affect biology, especially regarding menstruation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Nocturnal Light Effects on Menstrual Cycle Length," by Katharine M. Rex, Daniel F. Kripke, Roger J. Cole, and Melville R. Klauber. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, December 1997.

<sup>11</sup> *The Moon: Myth and Image*, by Jules Cashford. Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> "Regulation of Ovulation by Human Pheromones," by K. Stern and M.K. McClintock. *Nature*, March 1998.

# Puberty Rites from Around the World: Exercise

(15 Minutes)

**Contemporary Issues:** Without open discussions about menstruation and knowledge of puberty rites in other cultures, many girls will believe that their own experience is the only kind that exists. Girls have a great deal to learn from each other and from other cultures, especially about female pride, the power of rituals, and community involvement at this special time.

**Projection Description:** Discussion and “read-around.”

**Goal:** The goal is to help girls consider how people in different cultures view menstruation and how they celebrate a girl’s first period.

**Supplies Needed:** Copy a “Puberty Rites from Around the World” handout (see p. 21) for each girl.

**Explain to Girls:** A rite (spell the word out loud for the girls so they know it’s not *write* or *right*) is a ceremony or event such as a bat mitzvah, quinceañera, baptism, or wedding that marks a special occasion. A girl’s puberty rite occurs around the time she gets her first period.

Special jewelry or clothes may be worn, special food may be eaten, and the girl may be required to perform certain tasks. Some puberty rites are small family affairs, and others involve members of the larger community.

Tell the girls that they are going to hear brief descriptions of puberty rites from around the world that celebrate a girl’s first period. In the cultures in which these rites take place, there are also discriminatory practices against females (discrimination against someone because of gender is called sexism).

The rites described are moments in time outside of what are otherwise sexist landscapes -- moments when girls are celebrated and there is joy about being female. Because these are rare times when girls are honored just for being female, they are especially important.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Since you will be relaying an interpretation of each rite and its meaning to the students, tell them that it’s tough for anybody to “get it right” when describing another culture’s rites, or anything else for that matter. Misunderstandings and errors can occur.<sup>13</sup> Whenever possible, the girls should try to go to the original source to get the most authentic information possible.

**Activity:** Pass out the handout to each girl. Girls take turns reading aloud the numbered sets (with the first girl reading all of the material in number one, and so on) until all the sets have been read. Tell students they can “pass,” or opt out of reading aloud, if they prefer.

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<sup>13</sup> Based on ideas presented in *Sisters In Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists*, by Sally Roesch Wagner. Native Voices, 2001.

# Puberty Rites from Around the World: Handout

**North America -- Native American Diné** (often known as Navajo, but they call themselves Diné)

1) Many Diné mark a girl's entrance into puberty with the Kinaalda (kin-all-**da**) Ceremony, a celebration that lasts from three to five days and nights. Everything that the Kinaalda girl does during this sacred time will contribute to her adult life and the well-being of her community.

2) For instance, the girl runs three times each day during the ceremony, until the last day, when she has her final and only run at dawn. Other children from the tribe may run with her, but no one is allowed to run in front of her or to pass her. Her runs are said to enhance the likelihood that she will be strong in her adult life.

3) During the ceremony, the Kinaalda girl's mentor (a woman whom she respects) dresses her in special clothes. Then the woman ritualistically "stretches and shapes" the girl into Changing Woman, the creator of the Diné people, a status the girl retains throughout the rest of the ceremony. As an embodiment of Changing Woman, the Kinaalda girl blesses the members of her tribe to enhance the likelihood of their good health and good fortune.

Later, a feast is held that men and women in the community have helped to prepare.

## **Japan**

4) In some traditional Japanese families, a symbol -- that is, something used to represent something else -- is used to let others know that a daughter has come of age. One Japanese custom of celebrating a girl's first period is to prepare *sekihan* (**sék-ē-han**), rice that is made pink by cooking it with red beans, and to serve it to special invited guests.

5) Another custom with the same symbolic meaning is to serve invited guests fresh or candied fruit with the stems and leaves still attached.<sup>15</sup>

## **Sri Lanka** (shree'-lang'-ka)

6) In some Sri Lankan families, the girl who has begun menstruating is isolated from the larger community for a few days while the family consults an astrologer (someone who predicts things based on the positions of the stars and planets, in the belief that these influence people's lives). The astrologer is hired to predict the girl's future.

7) Afterward, the girl is given a sacred bath by the women of the family, and she is then dressed in white. Invitations for a party are sent out, and the guests bring the girl money and gifts, especially gold jewelry.<sup>16</sup>

## **Congo, Africa**

8) For some members of the Bambuti (bam-**boo**'-tee) tribe, a girl who gets her first period is said to have been blessed by the moon. During that first period, called the first moon, the girl comes together with women of the tribe to learn arts and crafts and to sing the songs of adult women. It is a time of joy and celebration for the entire community.<sup>17</sup>

## **Ask Girls:**

- What would it feel like if all girls in the United States were celebrated when they first got their periods, just as the girls are in the cultures and places we've just heard about? Please explain.
- If you were going to design a period party for yourself, what would the celebration be like? Take into account your culture, your interests, and your tastes.

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<sup>15</sup> *Before She Gets Her Period: Talking with Your Daughter About Menstruation*, by Jessica B. Gillooly. Perspective Publishing, Inc., 1998.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.lankalibrary.com/phpBB/viewtopic.php?t=2555>

<sup>17</sup> *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body*, by Riane Eisler. HarperCollins, 1995.

# Critique of Menstrual Product Ads: Exercise

## (15 Minutes)

**Contemporary Issues:** Most menstrual product ads place a negative spin on menstruation, a normal biological function that half the world's population has experienced or will experience at some point in their lives. There are ads that boast about menstrual products that can be unwrapped silently so no one will know a girl is having her period, and ads that avoid using the words *menstruation* or *blood* altogether. These ads and others like them perpetuate the notion that menstruation is something shameful, and that girls must do everything they can to avoid being "found out."

In addition, most ads for scented menstrual products reinforce the notion that the natural earthy odor caused by menstruation is repugnant, even though many medical practitioners believe that fragrance in menstrual products can be irritating to the body and is unnecessary. There are also fear-based ads, such as one by Tampax claiming that "a leak can ruin your whole day." All of these things contribute to the negative ways in which girls and women experience menstruation and being female.

In a time when adolescent girls are encouraged by the popular culture to be skinnier than is healthy; when they are often sexually harassed at school, at after-school jobs, and on public transportation; and when they are frequently objectified as sexual objects by the entertainment media, they are also being pressured to conceal a female function that indicates health and fertility. Girls are pushed and pulled to fit a narrow framework of being female that is acceptable to society. In such an environment, it is difficult for a girl to feel self-confident, to have a healthy body image, and to enjoy new and natural feelings that arise during puberty.

**Project Description:** Discussion and interactive activity.

**Goal:** To educate girls about the reasons for the images and words in menstrual product ads, and to help girls learn some critical thinking skills so they can critique these ads. (These skills, once learned, can then be applied to ads selling other kinds of products.)

**Supplies Needed:** A "Critique of Menstrual Product Ads" handout (see p. 23) for each girl and a selection of menstrual product advertisements from popular teen magazines.

**Instructions:** To show how the activity will be done, hold up a menstrual product ad and go through the handout questions, asking the girls to brainstorm as a group what the answers might be. Then give the girls the "Critique of Menstrual Product Ads" handout and ask them to pair up or form small groups in order to critique other menstrual product ads, which you'll be providing. Afterward, each pair or small group of girls will share their findings with the larger group.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** If time is limited, just critique the ad as a large group activity without breaking out into pairs or small groups.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY – WRITE TO AD COMPANIES

**Supplies Needed:** Blank postcards, stamps, mailing addresses.

**Instructions:** Provide students with the mailing addresses of the companies whose ads are critiqued. Ask students to write to the companies, praising the ads they like and offering constructive criticism for those they do not.

# Critique of Menstrual Product Ads: Handout

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the largest image (picture) in the ad? What else is shown?
- 2) Can you tell from the image in the ad what product is being sold? What product is it?
- 3) Do the images in the ad relate to the product being advertised? For example, a picture of a kitchen sink in an advertisement for kitchen sinks makes sense.
- 4) If not, why do you think that the particular images in the ad were selected? For instance, do the images "sell" a mood, such as feeling happy? Can a tampon or pad make you happy just by using it? Or unhappy, if you don't?
- 5) Ads may also "sell" values, ideals, or unrealistic results. For instance, do the images in the ad suggest that you will be more popular or attractive if you buy the product? Or that you'll be unpopular and embarrassed if you don't? Please explain.
- 6) What text (wording) is in the ad?
- 7) Is the subject of menstruation mentioned so indirectly in the ad that it is hard to know what the ad is trying to sell? For instance, does the ad you are looking at mention blood, periods, or menstruation?
- 8) If you were buying the product in the ad, what would you want to know about it before you bought it? For instance, how much does it cost? What else would you want to know?
- 9) Is that information in the ad? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
- 10) Do you think that the ad is likely to make a girl or woman feel proud or ashamed about getting her period and being female? Please explain.
- 11) What do you think the ad tells you about how our culture views menstruation and how it views girls and women? Please explain.
- 12) What would an honest and straightforward menstrual product ad look like, and what words would be used in it?

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY -- SPOOF MENSTRUAL ADS

**Supplies Needed:** Drawing paper and markers.

**Explain to Girls:** A *spoof* is a humorous imitation of something. They will be spoofing a menstrual product ad by creating their own ad, and by doing this they can teach others what they've learned about the marketing of menstrual products. Exaggeration is one technique that students can use in creating their ad.

### Ask Girls:

- What would you name the product being advertised? An example could be "Super Duper Perfection Plus Tampons."
- What unrealistic results might the ad claim? For example, a caption in the ad might say, "I buy Super Duper Perfection Plus Tampons because they make me very happy, and popular too!"
- How might you illustrate the ad? One example could be a picture of a girl surrounded by boxes of Super Duper Perfection Plus Tampons and smiling brightly, suggesting that these tampons would make her very happy. She is encircled by friends, suggesting that these tampons would also make her popular. A second girl could also be shown, but this girl is surrounded by boxes of tampons from another company (Brand X) and is standing by herself, looking lonely and sad.

Have the students create a spoof of a menstrual product ad using any kind of artwork they like – photos, drawings, etc. – and writing whatever they feel should be said.

# The Power of Names: Brainstorming

(10 Minutes)

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Time permitting, do this short brainstorming activity. (Just make sure to leave enough time for the Red Jellybean Celebration. The girls love to party!)

**Say to Girls:** *What are some names you have heard for menstruation?* (The words in italics below are possible responses.)

*Flow      The curse      Aunt Flo is visiting      Having  
a red-letter day      Traveling the red road      It's  
white cylinder week      It's raining down south  
Communists are in the summer house      On the rag  
Having your period      The monkey is hemorrhaging  
Riding the cotton bicycle      I've got my flowers  
Riding the red pony      Moon time      Having your  
monthlies      The tide's in      The tide's out      It's a  
red tide      Under the weather      Weeping womb  
Package of troubles      Problem days      Old  
Faithful's here      Wrong time of the month      The  
nuisance      The visitations      I'm indisposed      Jam  
and bread      That time of the month      Monthly  
return      My redheaded friend is here*

*In Spanish, some words and phrases used include "comadre," which means "a female friend," or "andas en tus dias," which means "You are in your days."<sup>18</sup>*

Read aloud any of the names that have not been mentioned by the girls.

### Ask Girls:

- How can names either support or interfere with your having a positive menstrual experience?
- What positive names for your period can you invent?

<sup>18</sup> These names are from research by Kesa Kivel as well as from *The Curse -- Confronting the Last Unmentionable Taboo: Menstruation*, by Karen Houppert. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.



# Red Jellybean Celebration: Writing and Artwork\*

(35 Minutes)

**Contemporary Issue:** Secular celebrations for girls getting their first periods are mostly lacking in our culture. This absence of family and community celebrations, together with the negativity that exists surrounding the topic of menstruation in our culture, makes it difficult for girls to feel proud about being female.

**Project Description:** A secular rite-of-passage celebration using writing, artwork, and food.

**Goal:** For girls to share a moment in time in which getting one's period is considered remarkable and noteworthy, in order to promote female pride and power.

**Supplies Needed:** Red plastic tablecloth (available at party supply stores) to fit the table you might have on hand, markers that will show up on a red tablecloth, red jellybeans, cups, red fruit juices.

**Say to Girls:** *Using markers, you will write (or draw pictures of) what you love about growing up directly onto the tablecloth. You can also write about anything positive that you've learned about menstruation. Let's brainstorm some things right now.*

Girls may respond with *Staying up later, Having more responsibilities, Getting to go to the mall with friends, Getting more respect from parents, Having more computer privileges, Being listened to more at family gatherings, etc.*

They may also respond with *Connecting with the moon, Learning about times when girls and women were honored, Knowing that getting a period is a sign of health and fertility.*

**Explain to Girls:** When they're finished, one girl at a time will read aloud what she wrote (or describe what she drew), after which the other girls will toast her with red fruit juice, and each girl can eat a red jellybean. As in all activities, anyone can pass if they don't want to share out loud with the group what they've written or drawn.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Note the time as you begin the writing and drawing part of the exercise. After about twenty minutes, have the girls finish up and begin the sharing and celebrating.

\*The creator of the original Red Jellybean Celebration, from which this celebration is adapted, is unknown. Please contact the author if you know who the creator is so that she may be credited in future editions of the curriculum.

## Feedback Form for Students

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about the workshop? Why?

What didn't you like? Why?

What, if anything, would you change about the workshop to make it better?

What, if anything, stood out to you or surprised you about the workshop?

Were you satisfied with your own contribution(s) during the workshop? What, if anything, might you have done differently (for example, do you wish you had talked more, less, etc.)?

# Curriculum Evaluation for Facilitators

## *Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty*

Please print out this form and mail your completed evaluation to me at:

**Kesa Kivel**  
**149 S. Barrington Ave., #132**  
**Los Angeles, CA 90049**

To request an e-mail version of this evaluation form, please contact me at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).  
Once I have received your completed evaluation form, you will be sent a special thank-you gift.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place where curriculum was taught: (community center, school, university, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Grade level: middle school\_\_\_ high school\_\_\_ mixed age group\_\_\_

Was it an after-school program?\_\_\_ part of a class?\_\_\_ What program or class?

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about the *Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty* curriculum? Why?

What didn't you like? Why?

What changes, if any, would you make to the *Moon Magic* curriculum?

Did you do any of the activities? If yes, which one/s?

Were the instructions for each activity easy to follow? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

How would you describe your students' reactions to the activities? Please explain.

Did you add to or change any activity to make it more relevant to the group you taught? Please explain.

Would you recommend the curriculum to other educators? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes, please direct other educators to **www.kesakivel.com** to read online and/or download the curriculum. Thank you!

# Take-Home Letter for Parents and Guardians

Dear Parents/Guardians,

***It's easier than you may think...to talk about menstruation with your daughter and to find out about the resources that you may need to help her through puberty.***

Hello! I am the facilitator of the Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty that your daughter (stepdaughter/granddaughter/foster child, etc.) recently attended. In the workshop, the girls learned about the practical, emotional, and cultural aspects of menstruation and of growing up female.

You can play an important role in reinforcing the positive aspects of being female that your daughter learned about in the workshop. In the past, it has been difficult for most adolescent girls to get support from their families or from the culture at large during puberty; working together, we can make it better for girls this time around.

You can support your daughter by using positive words when talking about menstruation in her presence, such as saying, "Are you having your period?" or "Is it your moon time?" rather than "Do you have the curse?" or "Are you on the rag?" It can be helpful, as well, to plan a special time to pick out menstrual supplies with your daughter in advance of her first period and decide together where to store them.

In the "Resource List for Parents and Guardians" (next page), there are suggestions, whether you're a mom or a dad, on how to talk with your daughter about menstruation. There is also a list of good books to read on the subject and suggestions on how to celebrate your daughter's first period. In these and other ways, you can encourage your daughter to think about menstruation as a healthy bodily function and an important rite of passage, not as just a source of potential discomfort and embarrassment.

If your daughter rebuffs your efforts to interact with her directly on the topic, do respect her boundaries and wishes. You have opened the door for future conversations, and she will know that you will be there for her when she is ready. An indirect way to support her might be leaving a book on puberty in her bedroom so that she can explore the subject in private.

You can make a big difference in how your daughter experiences menstruation and growing up female. Your positive attitude, availability to talk and listen, supportive actions, and respect for the unique needs of your daughter will pioneer the way for her.

Sincerely,

# Resource List for Parents and Guardians

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TALKING

The emotional aspects of menstruation are seldom discussed in school health classes. For female parents and guardians, sharing your own menstrual story with your daughter (stepdaughter/granddaughter/foster child, etc.) is a wonderful way to open up the lines of conversation. Did someone tell you in advance what to expect? Do you remember waiting patiently or impatiently for your first period? Were you the first of your friends or the last to menstruate? In either case, how did that feel? Where were you and how old were you when you got your first period? How did you feel about growing up? Being a girl? Why? If having your first period was traumatic, this may be a time to seek healing for yourself, both for your own benefit and so that you can be more supportive of your daughter. As you get in touch with your own past feelings, you'll be more in tune with hers. Fathers can prepare for conversations with their daughters by reading up on the topic and "practicing" their talks with another adult. If you are a single dad and would not feel comfortable talking with your daughter about menstruation and puberty, ask a trusted female relative or female teacher to talk with her instead. (The preceding ideas are from *Before She Gets Her Period*, by Jessica B. Gillooly.)

## RECOMMENDED READING

Your daughter may look at the book you bought or checked out from the library for her and groan, "Oh, Mom/Dad, I know about this!" But chances are you will catch her reading it later with great interest. (A bow wrapped around a book makes it special!) Some of my favorites:

- *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, by Judy Blume. Famous coming-of-age novel.
- *Before She Gets Her Period: Talking with Your Daughter About Menstruation*, by Jessica B. Gillooly. Highly recommended for both female and male parents/guardians.
- *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships*, by Ruth Bell. Thorough coverage of health, sexuality, and relationships for mature teenage readers.
- *Growing Up: It's a Girl Thing*, by Mavis Jukes. For girls 8 and up. Lighthearted. Easy reading. This book is about different aspects of puberty, including tips on how to buy a bra.
- *My Body, My Self for Girls*, by Lynda and Area Madaras. Information/activity book with quizzes, exercises, checklists and more for girls 8-15 years old.
- *The Period Book: Everything You Don't Want to Ask (But Need to Know)*, by Karen Gravelle and Jennifer Gravelle. Useful information and fabulous cartoon drawings.

## CELEBRATE WITH YOUR DAUGHTER

Brainstorm with your daughter about ways to celebrate her first period. If she has already started to menstruate, you can still celebrate! Most school presentations on puberty focus on negative aspects, such as leakage, odor, and unwanted pregnancies. By celebrating, your daughter will be encouraged to take pride in her female body. Some suggestions:

- Prepare a special dinner or dessert for your daughter at home, or take her out to a restaurant.
- Handcraft a special congratulatory card. Give it to her yourself, or leave it on her bed if she is feeling shy about menstruating.
- Buy her a calendar so that she can chart her period. Let her choose which one she wants.
- Buy her a journal with a red cover, a red pouch to hold sanitary supplies, or a single red rose.
- Take your daughter to a cultural event as a way to celebrate.
- Buy her a piece of jewelry or give her something of yours that you would like to pass on to her.
- Ask female friends and relatives to write a letter to your daughter about their good wishes for her. Create a special time with her to read them out loud, or give them to her to read privately.

Taking actions such as those above will help you to instill in your daughter a positive image of being female, and it will also help you to create beautiful memories and strengthen your parent/daughter bond.

# Carta para llevar a casa para padres y tutores

Estimados Padres/Tutores,

***Hablar con su hija acerca de la menstruación y conocer los recursos que puede necesitar para ayudarla a recorrer la pubertad...es más fácil de lo que piensa.***

¡Hola! Soy el/la facilitador/a del Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty al que su hija (hijastra/nieta/niña en cuidado sustituto, etc.) asistió recientemente. En el taller, las niñas aprendieron acerca de los aspectos prácticos, emocionales y culturales de la menstruación y de crecer como una mujer.

Usted puede desempeñar un importante rol en reforzar los aspectos positivos de ser mujer sobre los cuales su hija aprendió en el taller. En el pasado, ha resultado difícil para la mayoría de las adolescentes recibir apoyo de sus familias o de la cultura en general durante la pubertad; trabajando juntos, podemos lograr que todo sea mejor para las niñas esta vez.

Puede apoyar a su hija usando palabras positivas cuando habla acerca de la menstruación en su presencia, como decir, "¿Tienes el período? o "¿Andas en tus días?" en vez de "¿Estás enferma?" o "¿Vino Andrés?". También puede resultar útil, planificar un momento especial para comprar elementos para utilizar durante la menstruación con su hija antes de su primer periodo y decidir juntas donde guardarlos.

En la "Lista de Recursos para Padres y Tutores" (próxima página), hay sugerencias, ya sea usted papá o mamá, acerca de como hablar con su hija sobre la menstruación. También hay una lista de buenos libros para leer acerca del tema y sugerencias acerca de como celebrar el primer período de su hija. De estas y otras maneras, puede alentar a su hija a pensar acerca de la menstruación como una función corporal saludable y como un importante rito de paso, no solo como una fuente potencial de incomodidad y vergüenza.

Si su hija rechaza sus esfuerzos por interactuar con ella en este tema, respete sus barreras y deseos. Ha abierto la puerta para futuras conversaciones, y ella sabrá que usted estará con ella para cuando esté lista. Una manera indirecta de apoyarla puede ser dejar un libro acerca de la pubertad en su cuarto para que pueda informarse acerca del tema en privado.

Usted puede marcar una gran diferencia en como su hija experimente la menstruación y se desarrolle como mujer. Su actitud positiva, disponibilidad para hablar y escuchar, acciones de apoyo y respeto por las necesidades de su hija le abrirán el camino.

Atentamente,

## Lista de Recursos para Padres/Tutores

**HABLE:** El aspecto emocional de la menstruación es un tema poco común en los cursos escolares de salud. Para madres o tutores, compartir con sus hijas (hijastras, nietas, niñas en cuidado sustituto, etc.) sus historias de menstruación es una manera estupenda para abrir las líneas de comunicación. ¿Cuando usted era adolescente, alguien le comento con anticipación lo que podía esperar? ¿Usted se acuerda esperar con paciencia o impaciencia su primer periodo? ¿Fue usted la primera o la ultima de sus amigas en menstruar? En cualquier caso, ¿cómo se sintió? ¿Donde estaba y cuantos años tenía cuando sucedió? ¿Como se sintió durante su niñez? ¿Como le afecto el hecho de ser niña? ¿Porque se sintió así? Si su experiencia con su primer periodo fue traumática, podría ser una buena oportunidad para superar su experiencia, y darle apoyo a su hija. Acercándose a sus propias emociones le ayudara a acercarse a las de ella. Los padres pueden prepararse para conversar con sus hijas, leyendo sobre el tema y “practicando” la conversación con otro adulto. Si usted es un papá soltero y se siente muy incómodo hablando con su hija, pídale a una pariente o a una maestra en quien confía. (Estas ideas son tomadas del libro *Before She Gets Her Period*, de Jessica B. Gillooly; lea abajo).

**LEA:** Es posible que su hija vea algún libro que usted le halla comprado o sacado de la biblioteca, y se queje diciendo: “¡mamá/papá---yo ya se de eso!” Pero es más probable que después la encuentre leyendo el libro con mucho interés. (¡Un listón amarrado alrededor del libro le da un toque especial!) Algunos favoritos son:

- *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships*, by Ruth Bell. Información extensa sobre la salud, la sexualidad, y relaciones, para jóvenes maduros.
- *Claves Para Hablar de la Menstruación con tu Hija*, de Jessica B. Gillooly. Disponible en ediciones en Español e Inglés. Muy recomendado para padres/tutores femeninos y masculinos.
- *¿Estás ahí, Dios? Soy yo, Margaret*, por Judy Blume. Famosa novela sobre el desarrollo. Disponible en ediciones en Español e Inglés.
- *Growing Up: It's a Girl Thing*, de Mavis Jukes. Para niñas de 8 años o más. Estilo divertido.
- *My Body, My Self for Girls*, de Linda y Area Madaras. Diario con actividades. (8 a15 años).
- *Periodo: Guía de una Joven*, por JoAnn Loulan, Bonnie Worthen. Español e Inglés.
- *The Period Book: Everything You Don't Want to Ask (But Need to Know)*, Karen Gravelle y Jennifer Gravelle. Información útil y lindos dibujos.

**CELEBRE:** Piense junto con su hija acerca de las maneras en que puede celebrar su período. Aunque su hija ya haya empezado a menstruar, nunca es muy tarde para celebrarlo. La mayoría de las escuelas se enfocan en los aspectos negativos, por ejemplo, el olor, la posibilidad de mancharse, o embarazos no deseados. Al celebrar lo positivo, su hija sentirá más orgullo en su cuerpo femenino. Su periodo es un punto de poder.

- Prepare una cena o un postre especial para su hija en casa o llévela a un restaurante.
- Hágale una tarjeta especial de felicitaciones. Désela o simplemente déjela en su cama si ella siente pena por su periodo.
- Cómprele un calendario para que pueda seguir su período. Déjela elegir el que ella quiera.
- Cómprele un diario con cubierto rojo, una bolsita roja para que guarde sus toallas sanitarias, o una rosa roja.
- Llévela a un evento cultural para una celebración memorable.
- Cómprele alguna joya o déle algo suyo que le gustaría pasarle a ella.
- Pídale a sus amigas/parientes que le escriban una carta a su hija con buenos deseos para ella. Crea un tiempo privado para que los lea en voz alta, o déselos para que los lea privadamente.

A través de pláticas, lectura, y celebración, usted puede crear una unión fuerte, crear lindos recuerdos, e infundir en su hija una imagen positiva de ser mujer.



## About the Author

Kesa Kivel is a Los Angeles-based artist as well as an educator and activist engaged in social justice issues, especially those concerning girls and women. Since 2003 she has volunteered to teach feminist issues to middle school girls, offering a broad-based curriculum in an interactive format.

Prior to teaching a feminist arts curriculum, Kesa taught poetry to foster teens in a residential facility, as well as to youth incarcerated in juvenile halls and at a probation camp.

Creating art is as important to Kesa as creating curricula. Using fabric, paint, and handmade paper, she makes mandala-inspired forms that provide her with insight and direction for her spiritual journey. Some of her artwork can be found at [www.scwca.org](http://www.scwca.org) (click on *Artists' Registry*). Kesa is a member of the Southern California Women's Caucus for Art.



Photo: Sandra Mueller

## Contact Information

Website: [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com)

Kesa Kivel  
149 South Barrington Ave., #132  
Los Angeles, CA 90049

## Film and Curricula: Kesa Kivel

### FILM PRODUCED BY KESA KIVEL

***Girl House Art Project Film (16 minutes; directed by Brooke Randolph).*** This film documents the last month of the ten-month Girl House Art Project, inspired by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's 1972 "Womanhouse" art installation. For the Girl House project, Kesa Kivel worked with a small group of middle school girls as part of the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside's community service programming. The curriculum covered the gender wage gap, women's history, self-defense, media literacy, and other related topics.

To find the theme for their art installation, the girls wrote and talked about what issues were important to them, with sexual harassment emerging as the most distressing common problem. The girls transformed a small on-site house into the bedroom of a girl who is being sexually harassed, artistically rendering this girl's worries as well as the potential consequences to her of the harassment. A public exhibition of the project was held in June 2006.

The *Girl House Art Project* film was screened at the 2007 National Women's Studies Association Conference in Chicago and at the 2008 Davis Feminist Film Festival. You may view this film online and/or download it at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com). Free copies of the *Girl House Art Project* film on DVD are available (while supplies last). Contact Kesa at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).

### CURRICULA DEVELOPED AND WRITTEN BY KESA KIVEL

***Girl House and Beyond: A Facilitator's Guide for Empowering Young Women.*** The purpose of the *Girl House and Beyond* curriculum is to help facilitators create a safe environment in which students can view the *Girl House Art Project* film and explore the topic of sexual harassment through ten engaging activities, many of which include artwork. Even if a facilitator does not have access to the film, she (or he) can still do nine of the activities. The intention is for students who have been sexually harassed to begin the healing process, and for all students to learn some critical thinking skills and gain an understanding of the social/cultural factors that affect girls' and women's lives. Read online and/or download this free curriculum at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com). Free print copies of the *Girl House and Beyond* curriculum are available (while supplies last). Contact Kesa at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).

***Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty: A Facilitator's Guide for Helping Girls Come of Age*** (online only). The curriculum addresses the emotional, practical, and cultural aspects of menstruation and growing up female. The curriculum includes the following: lesson plans; a butterfly art activity to help girls develop their intuition; discussion questions and a handout to help girls deal with leaks; a read-around activity on puberty rites from around the world; an exercise in which girls learn some critical thinking skills and critique menstrual product advertisements; a red jellybean celebration; and a take-home letter and resource list for parents and guardians, offering talking points about growing up female, a recommended reading list, and suggestions for ways to celebrate a girl's first period. Read online and/or download this free curriculum at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).

***Taking Our Place in the Art World: Feminist Arts Curriculum*** (online only). The curriculum was developed in conjunction with the exhibition "Multiple Vantage Points: Southern California Women Artists, 1980-2006," which was on view at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery in Barnsdall Park from February 25 through April 15, 2007. The curriculum includes the following: an exercise to help students consider why there are relatively few well-known women artists; an exercise to help students explore the topic of gender stereotypes; a handout describing discrimination and obstacles faced by women in the art world; a research and art timeline activity that celebrates women's accomplishments; and a resource list. Read online and/or download this free curriculum at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).

*To check for new or updated Kesa Kivel curricula, please go to [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).*

# Resource List for Facilitators

Please consult the Resource List for Parents and Guardians for an additional selection of books.

## BOOKS AND JOURNALS

*Blood, Bread, and Roses: How Menstruation Created the World*, by Judy Grahn.

*The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, by Joan Jacobs Brumberg.

*Capitalizing on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation*, by Elizabeth Arveda Kissling.

*The Curse -- Confronting the Last Unmentionable Taboo: Menstruation*, by Karen Houppert.

*Girls in Power: Gender, Body, and Menstruation in Adolescence*, by Laura Fingerson.

*Mother-Daughter Wisdom: Creating a Legacy of Physical and Emotional Health*, by Christiane Northrup, M.D.

*The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, by Eckhart Tolle (chapter 8, pp. 166-172).

*The Red Tent* (a novel), by Anita Diamant.

*Women & Health* (a journal). Haworth Medical Press, vol. 46 (1): 2007.

## VIDEOS/DVDS

*Menstruation: Breaking the Silence*. Films for the Humanities & Sciences: [www.films.com](http://www.films.com).

*Period: The End of Menstruation*. Cinema Guild: <http://www.cinemaguild.com>.

## WEBSITES

Since websites can change, please visit the ones listed below to verify that the information on them is still appropriate for students before sharing the website addresses. *This is important because websites can be co-opted by the adult entertainment industry.*

- The Museum of Menstruation is an online museum with information about the history of menstruation and many excellent links to related topics: [www.mum.org](http://www.mum.org).
- Our Bodies Ourselves is a nonprofit, public interest women's health education, advocacy, and consulting organization: <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org>.
- The Red Web Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting a positive societal view of girls' and women's bodies and menstrual cycles, from first menstruation through menopause: [www.redwebfoundation.org](http://www.redwebfoundation.org).
- The Society for Menstrual Cycle Research is a nonprofit, interdisciplinary research organization: <http://menstruationresearch.org>.
- Teen Wire, operated by the Planned Parenthood Federation, is a sexual health website for teens, providing advice in English and in Spanish on topics such as sexuality, birth control, parenting, and changes that occur during puberty: [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com).

Additional resources are listed online at [www.kesakivel.com](http://www.kesakivel.com).