

Wombenhood: exploring the field of menstruality

Finding sacredness in the body: **how Nature's cyclic processes help us to restore our connection to ourselves**

Part One: Talk

Date: 3rd February

Time: 6pm - 7pm

1 hour main talk with 30 minute open discussion at the end.

Platform: Zoom (Virtual)

Presenters: Rhianne and Adriana

*"The wild nature carries the bundles for the healing; [...]
She carries the medicine for all things.
She carries stories and dreams and words and songs and signs and symbols.
She is both vehicle and destination." – Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

In this workshop, we aim to discuss how the natural cycles are closely connected to both menstrual cycles and different stages we all go through in life, regardless of gender. For those participants who wish to get "into the vibe" of the workshop, we're pointing out a few things below. The topics mentioned will be discussed during the session.

*Note: the Part Two of this exploration consists in a hand-on-workshop on the **13th of February**.
More information will be sent via email in the days prior to the workshop.*

About Presenters:

Rhianne Burgess is a Leicester process-based disciplinary artist interested in creating Fluxus and transformative artworks based around audience participation and everyday activity.

Adriana D. R. T. Olívèra is graduated in Languages and Literature and works as content editor. Brazilian based in the UK since 2017, she also works with colleges and poetry. Her artwork was published in books and shown in art exhibitions both in the UK and Brazil.

2 minutes read

The Triple Goddess

1. How can we find wisdom (and consequently sacredness) in the menstrual cycle or in different life stages and restore our connection to Nature? Or how could we restore a healthy connection with our bodies, emotions, and life phases by observing the cycles of Nature (e.g. seasons, Moon phases)?

2. How does the menstrual cycle mirror the creative process that occurs not only in Nature, but also in the human journey?

3. One of the symbols used to represent how the human journey is connected to Nature's cycles, is the Triple Goddess, one which illustrates how the different stages we all go through in life are closely associated to the Moon cycles as well as to the menstrual cycle. For the participants to get familiar with the referred archetype, here's a brief introduction to it.

The Triple Goddess is a triunity consisting of three different aspects united in one being. These three aspects are usually described as the Maiden (this aspect can also represent the young self), the Mother (adult or mature self), and the Crone (elder self). Each of these aspects symbolize both a Moon phase and a stage in our life cycle.

Participants can find the Triple Goddess symbol below (represented by the union of three phases of the Moon: Waxing Moon, Full Moon, and Waning Moon).

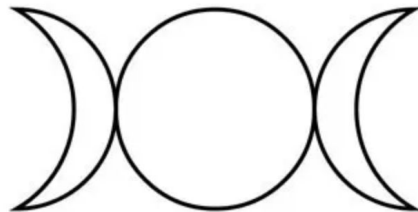


Image Caption: *The symbols of the Triple Goddess (left) and the Horned God (right). Available from: <https://exemplore.com/wicca-witchcraft/Wicca-for-Beginners-Who-Is-the-Horned-God-and-the-Triple-Goddess>*

4. The diagram below is useful for us to start understanding what kind of connection we can make between different Natural cycles (seasons, Moon phases), the menstrual cycle, and the human journey (or life stage).

Season	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Moon phase	Waxing moon	Full moon	Waning moon	New moon
Menstrual cycle	Pre-ovulation or Follicular phase	Ovulation or Ovulatory phase	Pre-menstruum or Luteal phase	Menstruation or menstrual phase
Life stage	Young self	Adult or mature self	Elder self	Conclusion or death

10 minutes read

Understanding your cycle by using the seasons

Using the seasons in relation to your menstrual cycle gives you a relatable way to understand what happens to your body and your mind throughout the month. From Winter all the way through to Autumn, your body goes through hormonal changes which can impact your energy levels, your physical appearance and your mindset. All of which can be utilised and harnessed to make you feel more in control and empowered throughout your menstrual cycle. You will be able to witness changes and identify the transitions, making it easier for you to plan ahead and witness your vulnerabilities and strengths. Additionally, this way of relating to your cycle could make it easier to communicate with others about where you are and how you are feeling. This is a key method of practicing self care and self awareness.

Small breakdown of the seasons:

Winter is where you bleed, the stage in which you experience menstruation. Here you will feel low in energy and have an inward focus.

Spring is where your energy unfurls, you are in a pre-ovulation stage and you can approach anything with excitement and eagerness.

Summer brings steady focus and is where you will feel most stable within yourself. This is where you will ovulate and feel most sexually charged.

Autumn is the downwards slope, you will begin to feel drained and emotionally unstable. This is your premenstrual phase. A time where your gut instinct rules and you can harness your anger and become more assertive.

The Cycle length

Your season length will vary in response to your cycle length. Some people have a 28 day cycle (the average) whereas others will maybe have a longer or shorter cycle. The same approach goes for the season length. Your seasons will differ in length to others around you. Your Winter may be more than 7 days (boo!) whereas your Spring could only be 3 days. You will be able to identify this once you get to understand the nature of each season and how your cycle fits into them. The duration of the seasons could also indicate other menstrual health issues, for example: a longer Autumn could indicate PMS (Premenstrual Symptoms).

Identifying your seasons

To identify the seasons, you will need to understand what happens within each one and how your body will inform you of where you are in your cycle. This takes the act of mindfulness and deep insight, which can be created by checking in with yourself daily and asking questions such as 'What affected me today?', 'What am I struggling with today?', 'What does my body currently need?', 'What are the strong emotions?'.

You can write answers to these questions down each day or mentally take note.

Also, we recommend you use a method of tracking your cycle. This can be an App or manual logging of data. This can help you identify how long your cycle is!

Transition Days

A key pointer as to where you are in your cycle is your transition days. These are days where your body moves into the next season. You may feel a slight blip of instability on these days. Just be mindful and kind to yourself during these days and be aware that you are now entering into the next stage of your cycle!

Winter: Hibernation!

Winter is where your womb breaks down and you begin to bleed, a time for your body to physically deplete some materials, mentally let go and plan for the next cycle. You will feel lethargic, vulnerable, and isolated from others. Use this time to think inwardly and listen to yourself. This is the time for you!!

All your hormones are low in this season, which is reflected in your energy levels. Make sure not to overwhelm your days with jobs (especially physical ones) as this will affect the rest of your cycle and you could feel depleted of energy throughout the next month. Find some time to yourself and rest when you need to. Sleep in longer or get an early night through this season, eat the batch cooked meals created from earlier seasons and snuggle down with books or a film.

Before you bleed, you may feel the symptoms of **PMS** as you come out of your Autumn. This is leading you to emotional instability, breast tenderness, lethargy and anxiety. You may find this is all released alongside your first blood of the Winter.

This is also the season where you can feel cramps and pain. Please practice self care and act accordingly to reduce the pain. Go easy on yourself!¹

You will find you have a greater inward focus. Utilize this by listening to yourself, write down any thoughts, highlight any concerns from this cycle and let them go: process them. Have some

¹ There are some gentle exercises to reduce PMS in the days leading to the bleeding:
<https://www.naturalcycles.com/cyclematters/exercises-for-period-cramps>

space from others, this season is just for you. You can plan intentions for the next cycle, review what worked and what didn't from this cycle. Also, set boundaries, be clear with those around you as to what you currently need and provide it for yourself.

As mentioned earlier, rest is crucial. Listen to what your body needs and do accordingly. Do not plan social gatherings or meetings in this season, leave as much space as possible and give yourself all your comforts. If you cannot rest in this season, be prepared for it to impact the other seasons in your cycle. You may be more tired throughout your Spring and Summer, so plan accordingly!

Spring: Party Time!

As you finish bleeding, you will find yourself experiencing a new bout of energy. Cherish this moment but also do not go crazy. You need some of this energies for Summer and Autumn! Here is where you will want to experience everything, you will have a 'spring' in your step, your body will crave activity and social situations and you will dive head first into new experiences and activities. Hold off for a few days to give your body some time to catch up and then go for it!

With all this energy comes a lack of focus. Let yourself try things and drop them, this is how a child learns. Be the child for this season: play and laugh, chat and do!

Oestrogen is the leading hormone in this cycle and it will make your facial features more symmetrical and your skin will be clearer. You will have a rising libido and you will naturally become more flirtatious and chatty.

Be curious, fill up your diary with social events, chat to people and explore but also give yourself some time to eat and rest. You will naturally eat smaller meals but be mindful as to what you eat.

This is the season to do anaerobic exercise such as HIIT workouts. Your body will want to sweat and feel exhausted, you can push yourself physically in this season and more than likely bounce back!

Towards the end of your Spring, pick something to focus on for your Summer, you will find yourself being able to focus more easily on activities and stabilise your thoughts and ideas.

Summer: The Peak You!

You will ovulate during this season and all your hormones are at peak levels, meaning you feel stable, confident, sexy and energised. Use all this to run with good ideas, projects and

meaningful activities. You will feel level headed and you will be able to articulate your thoughts and feelings confidently and clearly to others.

Put yourself out there and be productive. If you have been careful with your energy levels so far in this cycle, you will have enough stable energy to deliver on projects and ideas.

Ovulation is where you will have a heightened libido, you will be at your most fertile and most confident sexually; utilise this and have fun.

You will also feel the most pleasure when doing other activities such as eating, listening to music and other recreations!!

Try not to say yes to everything, be assertive and focus yourself. You had your chance to play in your Spring, now is your time to deliver and create.

Get some batch cooking done in this season and prepare for the second half of your cycle. This is crucial so you can give yourself a break in your Autumn and Winter.

Autumn: The Descent

Self care is most vital here. You will find your energy levels will plummet as most of your body will prepare for Winter and your menstruation. In relation to this, you will start to turn inward, be aware of this and respect it. If you find a big dip in energy straight after your ovulation, you may end up having an Indian Summer, enjoy the little boost of energy!

Progesterone rules in this season and you will find yourself becoming defensive, assertive and emotionally unstable. This is a great time for you to listen to your gut instinct and go with how you truly feel. Your deep down emotions rise to the surface, listen to them, that anger is there for a reason!!

Prioritise your own needs and give yourself the space away from others. You will be assertive to others and speak candidly. Your intuition is crucial in this season.

This is the best time to organise your life. Your inwards focus leaves you happy to clean and tidy mentally and physically!

Avoid alcohol in this season as it will negatively impact your Winter. Additionally, eat when you are hungry, your low sugar levels will affect your mood.

Do not overload yourself and plan your days with enough spaces in between. You will act slower in this season, try not to be impatient with yourself. Work out where your peak energy is during the day and work to that schedule.

Key point: listen to your inner bitch and do not be afraid. It is shouting at you for a reason and probably has been all cycle; your other hormones have just been masking it!! Make your big decisions now but act with self kindness and self care.

References

- *Period Power by Maisie Hill*
- *Season cycle idea by Alexandra Pope and Sjanie Hugo Wurlitzer through the Red School and the book Wild Power.*