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Period Power

Can your menstrual cycle help lead you to inner wisdom and enlightenment? Apparently it can, as editor **Katy Evans** and deputy editor **Golnaz Alibagi** find out on a workshop in Glastonbury

Hands up who hates having their period? It's a pain, a hassle, something you'd rather do without, right? Well, it's time to think again, says Gabriella Guglielminotti Trivel, an Italian lady who leads enlightening workshops on how to harness the power and wisdom of your menstrual cycle in order to live a more balanced life.

"If you take time to understand your cycle it can take you places – it's like being on a magic carpet ride, or stroking Aladdin's lamp to unleash the genie within: your cycle is your inner wisdom!" she enthuses.

On a recent Flying Solo 1 workshop in Glastonbury – so called because Gabriella refers to herself as 'the flying witch' due to her passion for flying planes, and because she wants to "propel every woman to success" – myself, my deputy editor and a small group of other ladies get to the heart of why we can become even more self-empowered by seeing our cycles as friends, rather than enemies.

"Your menstrual cycle is like having an inner coach. It can help give you tools to tackle anything you want," says Gabriella, explaining that our wombs link us to our sixth senses, or what she refers to as 'womb wisdom'. She also later gets us 'breathing' from this area, imagining it as the seat of our power and intuition.

The cyclical nature of the menstrual cycle is what links women to nature and the way life operates, says Gabriella, unlike the linear fashion in which most of modern society is structured. "Viewing life in a linear way puts more pressure on us to get it 'right' because we think once a chance has gone it will never come back," she adds, "but life is

not like that; events may not come back in quite the same way – the details might change – but the same themes and experiences will crop up again and again. It helps to view life as a spiral instead of a straight line, and we, as women, are more able to do this as our periods are a monthly reminder.”

Seasons of the cycle

The workshop soon moves on to comparing the phases of the menstrual cycle to the seasons of the year, and how to plan our lives around them

“Your ‘spring’ phase is linked to new beginnings and projects, optimism and increasing energy”

Know your seasons

Your periods link to the cycles of nature, so getting to know them could lead you to a greater understanding of yourself, both physically, emotionally and psychically

SPRING: Rising masculine ‘yang’ energy, new projects, fresh starts, ease, playfulness, potential, focus, giving, creating, linked to ideas.

SUMMER: Full masculine ‘yang’ energy, vibrancy, being sociable, party time, activity, enjoying the fruits of your labour.

AUTUMN: Decreasing feminine ‘yin’ energy, inward focusing, heart-centred, collecting, wider perspective, trust, receptivity, less tolerant, clearing out, letting go, order, truthfulness, the inner critic, doubt, discernment.

WINTER: Full feminine ‘yin’ energy, more emotional sex, silence, power, stillness, strength to say no, coming home to yourself, more vivid dreams and psychic intuitions.

accordingly to maximise energetic times and benefit more fully from quieter, introspective moments.

If a cycle is an average 28 days, then each seven days is linked to a season. Winter begins on day one of your period; this, says Gabriella, is a time of inward energy where you benefit from resting and listening to your gut instincts. “If you must go to a party, realise your energy may be lower than usual, so make sure you catch up on sleep,” she advises. Psychic intuitions are heightened at this time, and sex is also said to be more intimate because it’s not bound up with procreation and can therefore be more emotional.

After approximately seven days, when your period is over and you are building up to ovulation, you are in your ‘spring’, connected to new beginnings, starting projects, optimism and harnessing your naturally rising energy.

Ovulation occurs during the ‘summer’ phase, which is associated with yang, ‘out there’ energy, epitomised by the midday Sun or summer solstice; it’s when you feel like partying, trying new things, and are often more sexual, due to hormones encouraging you to mate!

Finally, your energy begins to wane as you move into autumn, which is an inward-looking time, as energy begins to lessen. PMT is associated with this season, and it’s helpful to understand why: your hormones make you less tolerant of others’ silly behaviour and you are more likely to speak out, or say the truth at the time; also, you are more inclined to cut out the dead wood, and release the past – possessions, people or ideas. “It’s a great time to get your life in order as you’ll go through your ‘to do’ list with military precision,” says Gabriella.

It’s also a time when dreams can be more vivid, as feminine intuition grows stronger in the run up to winter. “Pay attention to what you are thinking and feeling when you are premenstrual. If you are conscious of your moods, it doesn’t have to be a negative time. The inner critic can be stronger now and doubts may arise, but you can embrace this critic and say, ‘Thank you for sharing, I appreciate your concern, but I am doing this anyway’, if you have your heart set on a course of action. Doubt can help take you to a place of discernment if you view it objectively,” says Gabriella.

Subconscious messages

Gabriella also leads us through two visualisations, the first of which involves going through the chakras of the body from the bottom up. When at the sacral chakra, she asks us to envisage our wombs, and I see mine as clenched and restricted, squashed into an oblong shape rather than being soft and supple. Then, at the solar plexus, I envisage a sword being plunged through my navel (Samurai warriors do this when they want to kill themselves!). This makes my

Get flying!!!



To find out about the next Flying Solo 1 course led by Gabriella Guglielminotti

Trivel call 07796 306774 or visit flyinginspiration.co.uk.

The Soul&Spirit team stayed at Healing Waters Retreat, in the Gardenia twin room, overlooking the beautiful Somerset levels and Tor. The centre is run by Juliet Yelverton, who is a cranio-sacral therapist and specialist in pre- and peri-natal trauma resolution. For a list of the workshops on offer throughout the year, and for room rates, visit healing-waters.co.uk or call 01458 835859

mind race afterwards – why would I envisage that?! I try not to judge it. At the heart centre, images of my ex come to mind, which make me sad, but by the third eye, I am nodding off, as I often do during meditation or visualisation exercises.

At one point, when Gabriella is talking about how the contraceptive pill suppresses not only your natural hormonal cycle but can also affect your inner feelings and emotions, I suddenly wonder whether this is what caused my mid-20s 'mini breakdown', when I felt totally cut off from my intuition and had a terrible time deciding what choices to make. Having taken the pill for the best part of 12 years, from the age of 18, I think to myself, 'Could I have been repressing my inner intuition all this time?' The cause of my uncomfortable mid-20s crisis was most probably a chronic case of over thinking and analysing, but... was the pill a contributing factor? Of course, I can't prove this to be true, and I'm not encouraging anyone to give up the pill unless they have found a suitable alternative birth control method, but it does get me wondering. I certainly feel much more in touch with my intuition these days and have been off the pill for about a year and a half.

Coming around again

By the end of the day, Gabriella has us all dancing around the room like wild women, expressing our emotions and enjoying the sensations in our bodies. As I love to dance anyway, I enjoy this part, perhaps more than the visualisations we did earlier because those are to do with the mind – even if it is the subconscious – where as movement helps me get down into my body and out of my head.

We are also encouraged to go up to one another and do a kind of 'high five' hand slap while looking into each others' eyes and saying out loud, 'You are a powerful woman! You are a woman of knowledge!'. I certainly feel empowered and enlivened by the end of the workshop, now fully equipped with new tools and awareness to evaluate and chart my emotions and hormones.

The next morning, still at the retreat centre where the workshop took place, I awake early to see the vibrant orange rays of the rising Sun penetrating the clouds and shining through the large window onto the bedroom wall.

I decide to get up and climb Wearyall Hill, a sacred place just outside the retreat centre.

When up there, I feel a sense of peace, and as I'm about to leave, I see one of the most beautifully coloured snail shells I've ever seen, striped with yellow, brown and maroon. I decide it will be my memento of the weekend – and have it by my computer screen even now – as an example of the natural world's cyclical, spiraled make-up, and that any opportunities I think I may have missed years ago will ultimately come around again in some form or other, just as my periods will be a constant reminder of my link to nature.

Inner wisdom

"PSYCHIC INTUITIONS AND DREAMS ARE SAID TO BE MORE POWERFUL WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD"

GOING DEEPER WITHIN

DEPUTY EDITOR GOLNAZ ALIBAGI RELATES HER EXPERIENCE OF THE FLYING SOLO 1 WORKSHOP:

"Armed with my notebook and an open mind, I attend the workshop thinking it will be an interesting way to learn more about my cycle. However, nothing could have prepared me for the profound effect it has on my way of thinking, or memories it forces me to face.

The most fascinating parts are the visualisation exercises. Encouraged to imagine ourselves passing through each of the seasons, we are told to describe how we see ourselves during each period. Feeling slightly anxious about whether I'll see anything at all, I close my eyes and let my mind wander. Before I know it, I see myself in a park I went to when I was younger with my best friend Elena who passed

away several years ago. After the exercise, when we are relaying our experiences, to my surprise the moment I start talking about it I burst into tears. It occurs to me it is the first time since Elena's death that I've actually remembered a happy time we spent together. As anyone who has lost someone close to them will know, it is often the arguments and times we were unfair that we remember most, and the memory of being so free, young and completely unaware of what the world had in store takes me completely by surprise. Since then, I've found myself remembering other times when we were just as happy and, I guess you could say, I'm finally beginning to accept she's gone.

Another amazing experience I have is during the second visualisation when we go on a journey through our bodies. To begin with, I see myself trapped in a wood surrounded by dark trees. Suddenly, I feel like I am in a helicopter looking down at the world, but feeling as

though I am not part of it and don't have control. As I continue deeper into my mind, I feel myself land back on the ground and then see myself skidding along a train track very fast.

Then, everything stops and I am in a peaceful field surrounded by daffodils. As I tell the story to the group, I understand what I've just seen; the images denote the journey I've been on for the past few years – one that's been hard at times but something that has brought me to a happier place emotionally than I've ever been.

I also really enjoy the dancing we do during the session, where we close our eyes and just let our bodies move to the beat. I throw my arms in the air and don't care how silly or childish I look; I feel more liberated and free than I have in years!

I thoroughly enjoy the workshop and wholeheartedly recommend it to any woman hoping to gain a better understanding of herself and her cycle."