



EMBODIMENT

Sacred Womb Mandala

Listening to the Rhythms of Your Body

Introduction to Sacred Womb Mandala/ Menstrual Wheel

The information I share here is written about widely and extensively, though it is still relatively new to most people, and has not yet penetrated the mainstream.

The Sacred Womb Mandala, or the Menstrual Wheel, maps the cycles of the sun, the moon, the seasons, menstrual cycles, and life cycles, as one integrated system. It observes the changes in energy that occur throughout nature's cycles and offers a way of life that is in harmony with this order.

I first came across this concept through Jewels Wingfield, an established workshop facilitator here in the UK. Others I love and respect in this area are Ruby May, who runs a 13 week online course, and The Red School (There are many great online articles and books written by the founders.)

The way I present this knowledge is how it was passed to me, and observes a womxn's menstrual cycle as a mirror to the changes in the seasons. As such this particular framework is perhaps more directly relevant to those living in parts of the world that have four distinct seasons. I do, however, still believe the basic principles are relevant to womxn all over the world, and the framework of seasons may be adapted to those living closer to the equator.

The Sacred Womb Mandala treasures each part of the cycle as an essential component of the whole. Within our modern way of life we are stuck in some kind of 'perpetual summer', and disregard the autumn and winter phases of our cycle.

By beginning to track our cycles, as well as listen more deeply to the rhythms of the earth, sun and moon, we tune back into the natural way of life.

To fully embody this may require a complete shift in lifestyle. This might seem challenging at first. It can be helpful to remember that change can happen incrementally, and **even small and subtle changes in behaviour will make a big difference.**

When we embody this wisdom, which is already innately within us, we are able to step into our full power, and celebrate our cycle as something that supports us, rather than an inconvenience.

Context

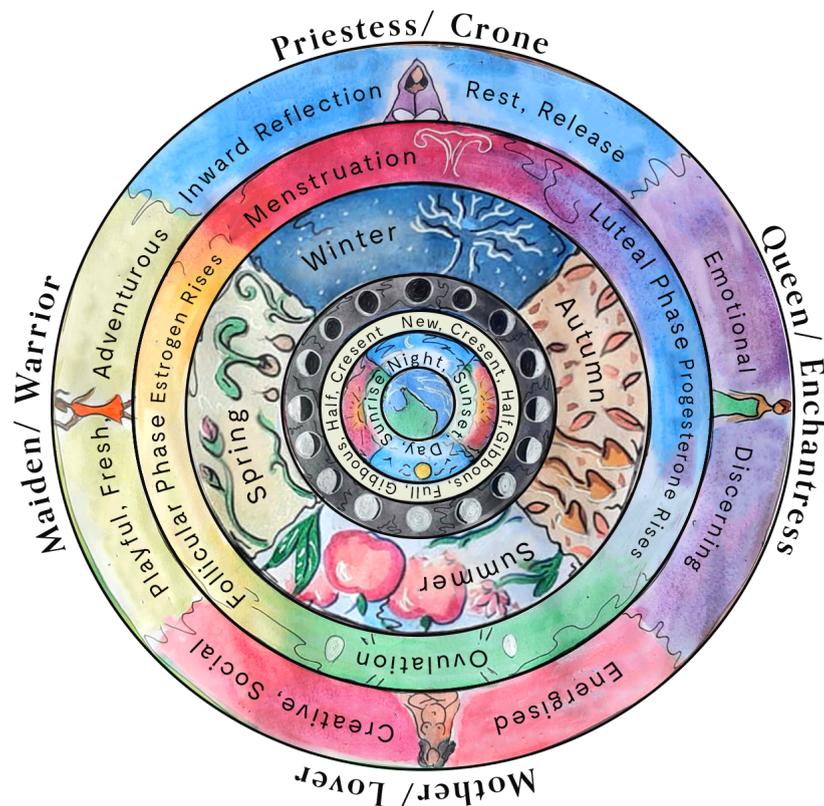
This knowledge is as old as Womxnkind, and the birthright of every human being.

The ways in which we have become disconnected from this wisdom, is reflected in the sickness we see in the world; a disconnection from and exploitation of nature and humans. This manifests (particularly in the West) as a wild imbalance of values, perceiving productivity and economic growth as the ultimate marker of success, whilst seeing rest and stillness as a sign of weakness. Mental intellect and rational is valued above embodied knowing and emotional intelligence. The world is geared up to benefit big corporations, rather than the welfare of people or nature. This is a real problem.

Womxn will never gain equality, until the natural cycles and rhythms that exist within them are recognised and honoured. We are still trying to compete for a spot within a 'man's world', and mostly those that succeed must bend themselves to fit within a linear model of growth and an endless outpouring of energy.

Living this way is unsustainable (as we can clearly see already) and in order to regain balance it is essential for us to relearn balance within ourselves. Cyclical living is the hallmark of the feminine, and as we embody more and more this way of living, we are contributing to the mental shift that needs to happen in the way we, as humans, relate to ourselves and the world.

The Sacred Womb Mandala/ The Menstrual Wheel



Brief Overview

Note: This is a framework through which to understand your body, however nothing written here should override your own experience. That is to say that your body is the highest authority, and through tracking your cycles, you will come to know your own unique rhythm, which will likely not map directly onto the framework presented.

This is designed to inspire you to pay more attention and find what works for you, giving you permission to follow the instructions your body gives you.

Note 2: It is worth mentioning at this point that there are many womxn who do not have periods or have very irregular periods, which may be due to menopause, polycystic ovarian syndrome, do not have a womb, or a number of other reasons. Those on hormonal birth control will also not experience a fluctuation in hormones as outlined in this framework.

This is completely OK! It's ok not to have a cycle, or to not fit neatly within this map. There are still many ways to engage in this work, and to live cyclically if you want to. I will present some of these ways later.

Menstruation

Inner Winter

Night, New Moon, Winter, Crone

Key Words: Rest, Stillness, Reflection, Meditation, Visionary, Releasing, Recharge, Inward

The first day of your period is considered the first day of your cycle. During this time the lining of your uterus sheds, releasing menstrual blood, through your cervix and out of your vagina.

This is a time of rest. It is likely your body will be tired as much of your energy is going towards this sacred moment of releasing. You may be feeling tranced out, and it might be a lot harder to focus on tasks or conversation. The shedding of your uterus is akin to shedding of a shell or a skin that has built up. Your energy is very open at this time, and you will likely be much more sensitive to your external environment.

To get the most out of this time it is best to simply surrender to your moon time, and make space to be alone, in low stimulation environments, where you feel safe to fully rest and relax.

Supportive Practices

- **Meditation**
- **Hot bath**
- **Massage**
- **Painting/writing**
- **Moon blood honouring rituals (see further down)**

One of my fave things to do when bleeding is to sit still in a squishy armchair with a cup of tea, and ambient soundscapes. I like to do this while wearing a reusable pad, as I have come to enjoy the sensation of 'free bleeding' blood leaving my body, and listen in to what I am releasing in my life.

What do you need at this time? Tune in and ask yourself.

Empower yourself and those around by recognising and asking for what you need. Suggestions:

- More cuddles
- Alone time
- Hot water bottle
- Extra support with house tasks

Follicular Phase

Inner Spring

Sunrise, First Quarter Moon, Spring, Maiden/Warrior

Keywords: *new beginnings, curious, adventure, energy rising, playful, wonder, joy*

After your period estrogen begins to rise in the body, all the way until ovulation. This hormone plays a key role in the menstrual cycle, and is responsible for a sense of increased energy, motivation and sex drive.

This is a time of new beginnings. You may still be feeling quite sensitive as you emerge out of menstruation, and not overwhelming yourself with stimulus too soon is advised. Think of a new shoot that has just emerged out of the earth, delicate and needs protection until the plant is established. This is the phase of the Maiden, and you may feel more playful and adventurous during this time.

Good Activities for Inner Spring

- **Starting new projects**
- **Eating lots of fresh raw food, seeds, shoots and sprouts**
- **Initiating new habits**
- **Picking up a new hobby**
- **Following your curiosity**

We have more motivation at this time in the cycle, so it's a good time to start new things as they will have the most chance of becoming a recurring practice.

Ovulation

Inner Summer

Day, Full Moon, Summer, Lover/Mother

Keywords: *abundance, self expression, outer energy, sexuality, celebration*

Around the midpoint of your cycle your body releases a luteinising hormone which triggers an egg to be released from your ovaries, that flows down the fallopian tube and sits in your uterus waiting to be fertilised. It lasts here for about 24 hours, and if unfertilised will be released.

This is a time where estrogen levels are at their highest, you may be feeling full of energy, and more sexual. I often notice that I feel more attractive at this time, and men tend to comment that I smell good! This time is associated with the lover and mother archetypes, a sense of abundance, fruition and self expression.

This phase is all about celebrating the fullness of who you are, allowing your inner show off to breathe.

Good Activities for Inner Summer

- **Socialising**
- **Dancing and singing**
- **Celebrating yourself**
- **Following your pleasure**

Luteal Phase

Inner Autumn

Sunset, Last Quarter Moon, Autumn, Queen/Enchantress

Key Words: Discerning, organised, emotional, no bullshit, inner critic, boundaries

Over ovulation estrogen falls and progesterone rises which thickens the lining of the uterus, and prevents sperm from getting in. It is a key hormone in maintaining a pregnancy. If an egg has not been fertilised then progesterone and estrogen will fall and the uterus lining will be released.

The luteal phase has two stages to it. At the beginning you will still have a lot of energy, so intense exercise may feel good at this point. You may also notice an increased feeling of discernment and wanting things to be organised. I usually get a strange sense to clean and tidy my entire home during this phase.

Towards the end of this phase you may have lower energy levels and feel more sensitive. This is the most stigmatised part of the cycle, and yet if we tune into the gift of this time we can connect to the super power of discernment.

It is likely that things you've been putting up with for the rest of your cycle, will become magnified and possibly even unbearable. This is an invitation into truth. Getting real with yourselves about things, relationships and situations that aren't serving you.

It's the time when we're the most critical, both of ourselves and our external world. The task during this time is to be discerning about what part of the inner critic has valuable information, and what part is self sabotaging.

Supportive Practices

- **Getting life admin in order**
- **Being attentive to what is not serving**
- **Setting healthy boundaries**

What do you need at this time? Tune in and ask yourself

- More time and space to yourself
- Walk in nature
- Emotional support from someone close

There is A LOT to say about the menstrual wheel, and this is really here to serve as an overview. I highly recommend reading up on the subject. There's a lot of great stuff out there.

Your Experience Comes First

Another Reminder: I mentioned this before but it's worth saying twice. This is a framework to help us understand cyclical living, but YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE comes before any framework or ideology. Every person is different and the joy of this practice is to discover your own personal blueprint. By tracking your cycle monthly you will start to see patterns emerging. Knowing the fluctuation of your energy, moods, behaviours and thoughts is immensely powerful, and can lead to a deeper understanding of self, and how to live more holistically.

How to Cycle if You Don't Have Periods

There are of course many people who don't have periods, but may choose to follow cyclical living because of the benefits it offers.

If you choose to share this knowledge in your circles it's worth putting time into thinking about this, as you will almost certainly have womxn in your group who don't bleed or have natural periods, and it's important to acknowledge this as it can be a sensitive topic and potentially triggering. And of course within our work we seek to be as inclusive as possible, and it's my belief that we are all cyclical beings in some way or another.

Follow the Moon

By observing the phases of the moon, you can choose to sync up your life alongside it. Taking time to rest and reflect during the new moon, set intentions and start new hobbies during the first quarter, spend more time socialising and expressing yourself during the full moon, organise your life and think about what you want to release during the last quarter.

Follow the Seasons

Whether you choose to follow the Wheel of the Year, or simply observe the changing of the seasons, it can be a beautiful practice to create rituals around the yearly transitions, and even organise your life accordingly.

Listen to Your Own Rhythm

By paying close attention, and keeping a journal where you track the changing of your mood and energy levels, you might notice a pattern emerging. I have some male friends who have observed that they too go in cycles of feeling more or less energised/ sexual/ motivated.

This work is about LISTENING to the body, and SURRENDERING to what it is asking. Everyone is capable of this with a little practice.

Sync with a Friend or Partner

If you have a close friend or partner with a menstrual cycle you can ask to follow along. This is also an amazing way to engage male friends and partners. When I share this with wisdom with men, they're often blown away by the magic and beauty of the menstrual wheel, and may feel left out! Inviting your male friends or partners to follow your cycle is a great way to deepen intimacy, understanding and compassion.

If You're on Hormonal Birth Control

Hormonal contraception works in [3 ways](#), all of which involve putting synthetic hormones into your system, which means you won't experience a natural cycle of fluctuating hormones which in turn affect your moods, sex drive and so on.

There are many reasons why you may choose hormonal birth control, and I wholeheartedly support the freedom of choice. I also believe that people should be informed about the choices they are making and the implications of them. Many people don't fully understand that being on hormonal birth control, means to disrupt the natural cycle of hormones in your body.

There are a very limited number of non-hormonal birth control options, however they too have their downsides. (Copper IUD's can be insanely painful for some people, and condoms are often not favoured options either) Take your time to feel into what is really right for you.

You may have heard of the 'natural method', following your cycle and taking your temperature to gauge whether or not you are fertile. This is effective if followed correctly (which takes time and patience), however there is a much heightened risk of pregnancy, and you still need to use condoms or another form of contraceptive barrier if you have sex during your fertile window. This option requires good research and is not to be chosen lightly.

Blood Rituals

Connecting to my menstrual blood in this way has been a profound journey of healing, magic and creative expression. I recommend you try out a few of the following ideas.

As with all ritual, carving out some time, creating a beautiful space, and setting an intention before you begin, will help give the ritual more power and meaning.

Feel into what your womb is asking for, and allow your creativity to guide you.

Anointing

Using a clean finger, collect some blood directly from your yoni (or a menstrual cup if you prefer) and make a mark on your head or elsewhere on your body. This can be a line, a dot, or an image of your choice.

You can also go the whole hog with a face mask if you're feeling it!

Free Bleeding

If you're lucky enough to live in the countryside, try sitting on the ground (ideally some soft grass) with your yoni directly on the earth, and allow your blood to flow straight back to source. You can wear a long skirt with lots of material to shield your body if you wish.

During this time sit in quiet meditation and listen to what your womb is telling you. Listen to what is ready to be released.

If you don't live somewhere where this is possible, an equally beautiful ritual is to wear eco friendly pads, or period pants and sit in a comfy chair. Listen to meditative music, or be in silence. Be still. Listen for the messages. Connect to the sensations of blood leaving you, and your body releasing. Give thanks.

A note on free bleeding: This was one of the most transformative things I did to heal my relationship to my blood. Since my teenage years I had always used tampons. I felt ashamed of my blood. I had the notion that it was smelly and dirty. At the age of 28 I'd never experienced the sensation of blood being released from my body (intentionally!) It felt so good! Everytime I could feel blood come through, wherever I was, I just closed my eyes for a few moments to connect to my womb, and what I was releasing that month. Seriously, give it a go and make up your own mind.

Painting

You'll need a mooncup for this. If like me you find mooncups fiddly and leaky it's probably because you don't have the right cup for your shape. I recommend the 'Put a Cup in it Quiz' which helps find the right mooncup for you. I now use the Lily cup which is a much better fit for the shape of my yoni.

I personally like to free bleed the first day or so, and then collect my blood on the following two days for painting and offerings. You'll discover what is best for you.

I often like to create an altar with some crystals, cedar or sage (source locally), and other objects of significance for painting.

You can use your fingers or brushes.

Be curious and see what comes out. I often like to paint things that feel resonant with how I'm feeling, or sometimes I'll paint what it is a want to manifest as an act of magic. Sometimes I paint words, sometimes it's abstract.

Earth Offering

Again you'll need a menstrual cup for this one.

- Take your blood (you can take straight from you yoni, or put in a beautiful vessel of some kind)
- Take a walk in nature, and allow yourself to be guided to the right spot to offer your blood. It might be a tree or somewhere sheltered that calls to you. Some people have a particular tree in their garden that they like to offer their blood to each bleed.
- Once you've found your location take some moments in silence to feel into your prayer. It could be personal, however I invite you to make this prayer for the collective healing of the planet and of the sisterhood.
- You can verbalise it outloud, whisper it, say it in your mind, sing a song, tone, whatever feels good, and offer your blood to the earth.

***Indoor offerings:** If you choose to offer your blood to a house plant, please make sure you dilute your blood with water first. About 50/50, and don't give it too much (depending on the pot size!)*

Manifestation Spells

One of my all time favourites. There are many different ways to go about this! Here are my faves.

1. Creating paintings that represent what you want to call in, or writing it out in your blood.
2. Making a fire and sitting in meditation for a while, feeling in to what you want to manifest. Speaking out loud to the fire what you wish to manifest, and making offerings with any or all of the following: Flowers, your menstrual blood, sweet herbs (like cedar or sage), wood, seeds, food, chocolate etc.
3. Toning and making up simple songs to manifest what I want to call in and believe
4. Incorporating a cacao ceremony into the above

Releasing

This one often is a good precursor to the manifestation spell. I usually like to empty myself before thinking about what I'm calling in.

- Create a warm, cosy space, or a fire outside (I love making ceremony with fire)
- Tune in to what you're releasing this moon.
- Write them all down on a piece of paper (in your blood if you wish)
- Speak out loud "I release...."
- Give the paper to the fire

If you're inside you can burn it using a lighter or candle and drop the paper into a glass bowl or metal pan (no plastic!)

I like dawn or dusk as good energetic moments of transition.

Blood Alternatives

If you don't bleed but still want to try out these rituals I suggest working with 'blood of the earth' such as:

- Cacao (Sourced from sustainable, community focused farms. I recommend cacaoamor.com)
- Berries/fruits (raspberries, strawberries, pomegranates)
- Beetroot
- Wine/ grapejuice
- Red Clay

The more local and seasonal the better.

Embodying the Menstrual Wheel Through Movement

It can be a beautiful practice to embody the wheel through dance and movement. A simple way to do this is to:

- Share the Sacred Womb Mandala/ Menstrual Wheel, using the illustration above
- Open a conversation on how people feel, and any questions
- Create a dance journey with music to represent each phase of the cycle
- Final reflections on the experience

Here is a mix I made to take people on a 25 minutes journey through the cycle. Feel free to share in your own circles.

[Sacred Womb Dance](#)