

Riding the Red Tide

Menstrual Magic and the Treasure of Our Women's Blood

Long buried beneath prejudice and fear, the sacred and magical implications of the menstrual cycle have been unearthed in the past few decades. Little, however, has been written on the practical applications of this natural treasure. Within the days of our body's natural cleansing and renewal lies a wealth of magical potential. The pursuit of menstrual magic results in the healing of our minds, bodies, and souls — a healing that can touch everything around us.

Testing the Waters

The first step in this endeavor is to obtain a healthier mindset. Many, even most, women view their periods as an inconvenient monthly episode. Some even think of it as a curse. Part of this stems from centuries of being told that they are unclean and undesirable during this time of the month. It also comes from the fact that for some women menstruation can be an incredibly painful, even incapacitating event.

A more positive view of menstruation addresses both of these issues. I propose that we stop referring to our periods as “the curse” or with euphemisms like “Aunt Flo.” We need to call it what it is — menstruation. This helps to create acceptance and a realistic view of our cycles. Dread of your period can increase its symptoms exponentially. Removing the anxiety surrounding our cycles helps eliminate reactions which are caused by our own minds. Becoming more relaxed about our periods often results in a noticeable decrease in cramps and general malaise.

Viewing menstruation as friend rather than foe sets up a much better climate in which to work menstrual magick. We see our magical tools in a positive light; our menstrual energy is no different. This embrace of our blood creates an upward spiral: the more we work menstrual magick, the more positively we see menstruation; the more positively we view our bodies, the more effective the magick will become. Once we gain a healthier perspective, our next goal is to learn to use our newfound gift.

Ebb and Flow

As with any resource, to get the best results we need to work *with* rather than against our body's inherent qualities. Our natural cycles often mirror the cycles of Nature, most notably that of the Moon; we can use them in magick geared toward making life more ordered. Most women have a twenty-six to thirty-two-day-cycle, which varies little from month to month. (This doesn't apply to everyone, though, and if your cycle seems erratic or unstable, please check with your health care practitioner.) This regularity, once discovered and charted, makes menstrual magick a natural kind of magic for other cycles: for example, abundance magick to ensure you keep getting a regular paycheck; protection spells for getting to and from work each day, and so forth.

I developed a tool a few years ago that has proven quite useful for such magick. Obtain a small stone (no more than two inches across and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, the smaller the better) that has a hole in it. (The type of stone is not important, though you may prefer stones with feminine attributes.) Buy or create a red fabric pouch just large enough to hold the stone. Make sure it has a closure of some sort and strings that will tie around your waist, so the pouch drapes down approximately over your uterus or wherever your cramps are strongest.

At the beginning of each period, take some of your blood and rub it around the edges of the hole in the stone. Place the stone in the pouch and wear it around your waist for the rest of your period. (Avoid getting it wet, as that will wash away the blood.) During the rest of the month, leave the stone in the pouch and place it on a windowsill (preferably where moonlight will shine down on it.) The stone will absorb the "memory" of each of your periods, as well as the cycles of the Moon, and will become an excellent tool — not only for helping keep your own cycle regular, but for "smoothing out" other areas of your life. Wear the pouch any time you work magick for patterns or any of the other needs covered below. It will soon become one of your most valued magical tools.



The Cleansing Flood

The menstrual flow acts as a monthly cleanser. In addition to the unused placenta, a number of internal toxins are flushed out of our systems when we bleed. Take the opportunity each month to do a purification ritual. Those involving water are particularly appropriate — magical baths, asperges of water, and other liquid purifiers — are excellent tools during this time of the month. You may add a bit of your blood to these to heighten the effects and the bond between the magick and your body (make sure you bathe or shower with fresh water afterward if you do so).

At the beginning of each period, visualize the blood flowing from you drawing all toxins and impurities from your body. Picture all the pains, annoyances, frustrations, and other negative influences from the past month dissolving from your body and mind into the blood that flows from you. At the end of menstruating, you will feel much more refreshed having let go of all that baggage!

Riding Out the Storm

One of the biggest complaints about menstruation involves cramps.

Cramps hurt, of course, and in some women can even prevent normal functioning for a day or more. Like anything else, however, they have their purposes. The contraction of the uterus to expel the blood creates energy, just like any other bodily function, and is a powerful tool for magick.

The best sorts of magick to use in relation to this energy are active or aggressive ones. This is the time to use your inherent gift to affect your world, especially in the removal of obstacles. Menstrual energy works wonders for dealing with problematic people and situations — use it for bindings and banishings. It's also quite useful in destroying internal blockages and bad habits, so utilize it to symbolically remove anything from writer's block to procrastination. Use your cramps as a motivator to go out and get things done. Not only does activity help a lot of us release

the tension that makes cramps worse, but it also helps to get our minds off the discomfort.

Using cramps for magick is simple. During the time when they are strongest, perform your magick as usual, but focus the energy from your uterus into whatever you are doing. See it as a powerful red heat emanating from your body. If charging an item, hold it against your abdomen and let the energy flow into it. You can also anoint candles and other items with your blood for strong sympathetic magick. Feel the energy radiate throughout your entire body — this is a super time for excitatory forms of trance such as dancing and chanting.

If you have severe cramps, try taking an over-the-counter analgesic or using a heating pad before ritual to get to the point where you can function. Again, if you have not consulted a health care professional about this issue, I advise that you do so — you may very well be able to find the relief you need!

Understanding and utilizing the cycles within ourselves helps us to gain a healthier self-perspective and improve our lives. In the process of using menstrual magick, we learn not only how to rid ourselves of old, useless patterns and habits, but how to create new ones that benefit us and the world around us. And the ability to create change is a priceless treasure, indeed. @

— LUPA VIRIDA *is a twenty-something bio-female genderfluid poly-pansexual geek hag. She hides out in Pittsburgh in a den full of art supplies, books, and stuffed animals. She is a practicing Chaos magician; though her primary paradigm has always centered around animism, she has adventured in such realms as Goetic evocation, Voodoo, and witchcraft.*

LAUREN CURTIS *is a freelance and fine artist residing in New Jersey. Her work focuses on Nature and the feminine aspects of spiritual systems, such as Wicca and Paganism, and the power of the Goddess in mythology. Lauren has created her own line of Wiccan crafts and greeting cards (www.talonhandcraftedcurious.com) and can be contacted via email at forestwalker333@hotmail.com.*

Brigid's Song

Life flows, life flows
from the breasts of the mother.
Love flows, love flows
from the light in her eyes.
The lambs are in season,
the promise of spring comes;
the barn is as warm as
mother's arms.

Life flows, life flows
from the hills of the Mother.
Love flows, love flows
from the light in Her skies.
The change of the season,
the promise of spring comes;
hope is as warm as
Mother's arms.

— Cindy (Birch) Hill

Your Hands

I sit beneath your sky
and know the vastness of your spirit.
I feel the land beneath my bare feet,
and understand the great treasure of your heart.
In between a chair rests my body.
And this life I have been given
is comfortable
as I rest in your hands.

— Sheri Watson