



## *Top Three Things You Can Do to Prepare for Your Daughter's First Period*

### **1** *Heal your own body shame & discomfort with your cycle*

#### **What you need to know to do this:**

- Your own issues about your body affect your daughter's feelings about her own menstruation, even at a subconscious level. Be aware of this.
- Heal through your imperfect experience if you had one. Write your ideal first period experience in a journal as if it were your story. Read it to yourself on a regular basis. You're giving yourself the experience you need in order to heal.
- Notice how you feel about menstruation right at this very moment. If you have negative feelings, work through them so you don't pass them on to your daughter.
- Be aware of the mind-body connection. Did you know that cramps can be caused by anger and shame about our bodies? Did you know that people with a lot of body positivity who celebrate their periods often experience shorter, more pleasant cycles?
- Create healing, beautiful rituals for yourself during your period, like a special candlelit bath, journaling, taking a day off, going to your favorite restaurant, making a special red berry smoothie, lighting a red candle, etc.
- Join a Red Tent circle to be around other supportive women and to start feeling good about yourself as a woman. Find one near you here:  
[http://www.redtentmovie.com/red\\_tents\\_near\\_you.html](http://www.redtentmovie.com/red_tents_near_you.html)





## 2 *Start preparing when your daughter is young.*

How to begin preparing:

- Use the proper vocabulary for body parts. This helps make all body parts “good” body parts. Nothing shameful to use silly names for.
- Make sure you use vulva and vagina properly. Why? It's empowering to know the difference. Most of us want our daughters to be empowered. Words are important. Teaching our daughters about different body parts is empowering because the more we know about how our own bodies work, the more we're able to understand about ourselves.
- Notice the words you use to describe your own body. The mind-body connection is strong!
- Make sure your daughter knows that you are there for her to talk to when she has questions. If she doesn't feel like she can come to you, she'll go to peers, and peers have tons of misinformation. Be the one she feels safe talking to.
- Give her books to read about self-esteem and body wisdom
- Be as open as you feel comfortable being. Many moms aren't shy about using the bathroom in front of their kids and their kids have seen blood in the toilet or have seen their moms changing their pads or tampons. This teaches girls that it's “normal” to bleed as women.
- **HOWEVER**, if you don't feel comfortable doing that, it's important to respect yourself and keep the door closed. If that feels right to you, it's important to not do something that feels wrong. Modeling boundaries also teaches girls that we need to respect our own needs when it comes to our bodies, which is an important lesson to learn before hitting puberty.
- And going back to the open bathroom door household: if this is your household, don't





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rely on this as the sole teaching method. Talk to your daughter about women's' bodies and cycles. Remember that it's important to talk about not just the physical changes that our bodies go through but also the emotional and psychological changes we go through as well. Let her know what to expect, but also don't make it sound horrible. Some females don't experience cramps, and your daughter's cycles may be very different from yours.

- Always say good things about your body in front of your daughter. Not only is this good for you, it's great for her to hear. We knit pick far too often and our kids pick up on that.
- Notice the great things your daughter does. Comment. Challenge yourself to find at least 3 a day and dish out the praise at different times throughout your day together.
- Learn more about natural products for menstruation. Research cloth pads and organic tampons or Diva cups. Many people notice less cramping and easier periods with natural products, so experiment for yourself and then you'll be able to educate your daughter on these options.
- Teach her about how our cycles relate to the moon. Help her feel connected and supported by the planet.
- Start a conversation and adjust it as is necessary based on your own daughter. Some want more info and are more curious. Some would like written material. Some want a dialogue.
- Find a support circle for your daughter with girls who are her age. (See resources section!)
- Also remember that girls are starting their periods earlier and earlier now. Even if you started at a certain age, prepare ahead of time so that you'll be ready.
- Don't forget the emotional roller coaster your daughter will undoubtedly go through as her hormones regulate and her body figures it all out. Remember that it often takes about two years of going through puberty before menstruation begins.



## 3 *When it's time...*

What you can do:

- Be there for her
- Be excited for her
- You may want to shout to the world that your little girl is all grown up, or call other family members, but unless your daughter wants that, it's important to remember that she may not want that.
- Have a gift prepared...something meaningful for her big day
  - dream journal
  - cycle tracking chart to help her further connect with her body
  - a red garnet necklace or another piece of jewelry
  - A stash of cloth menstrual pads with fun prints, or a gift card to Etsy so that she can choose her own
  - Something else that will help her feel supported and empowered
- Do something special for her
  - Take her out to dinner, just the two of you
  - Take her for a spa day, if that's your thing
  - Plan a ceremony for her
- Tips for planning a special ceremony
  - Make sure she helps plan it
  - Don't embarrass her. Do what will feel comfortable to her (don't make it be about you)
  - The right ceremony for your daughter can help her feel good and make her feel special at a time when many of us did not.





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- Celebrate monthly by creating a ritual.
  - Give her a day of rest
  - Make popcorn, eat chocolate, and have a movie night in
- Show her that you're still there for her.
- Also let her know who else is good to talk to if she needs support, like a doctor or a trusted family friend.
- Understand that the body takes a while to balance out. Our cycles don't start out regular at first. Girls may have a few days of spotting and then nothing again for several months. Or they may have heavy bleeding for several days and then another period just a few weeks later. Most of this is normal as the body adjusts. If you feel concerned, call your gynecologist and ask them. Make sure you get information from a trustworthy person, not a moms group on Facebook.
- Self-Care for YOU! Never forget this part. Mothering a preteen or teen girl is very challenging at times. Take good care of yourself and model self-care so that your daughter learns to take care of herself, too.

## **RESOURCE LIST**

### **BOOKS:**

“It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health” by Robie H. Harris

“Becoming Peers: Mentoring Girls Into Womanhood” by DeAnna L'am

“Moon Mother, Moon Daughter” by Janet Lucy

“105 Ways to Celebrate Menstruation” by Kami McBride

“Beautiful Girl: Celebrating the Wonders of Your Body” by Christiane Northrup

“Mother-Daughter Wisdom” by Christiane Northrup

“Moon Time: Harness the ever-changing energy of your menstrual cycle” by Lucy H Pearce

“Reaching for the Moon” by Lucy H Pearce

“The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Book for Younger Girls” by Valorie Schaefer

### **DVDs**

“Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories from the Red Tent”

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## Local Resources:

**Leah Love** (that's me!)

Red Tent Healing & The Pink Tent for Pre-Teens  
<http://redtenthealing.com/>

Awaken Empower Heal (Support for Moms)  
<http://www.awakenempowerheal.com>

I support and coaching mothers who wish to support their daughters through puberty.

I help...

- Mothers heal from body shame and discomfort
- Parents and daughters plan menarche celebrations
- Parents discuss menstruation, sex, and sexuality with their daughters
- Facilitate Mother-Daughter Pink Tent Gatherings
- Facilitate “Gather the Wisdom” a 6 month empowerment course for pre-teen girls
- Facilitate Preteen Girls' Circles for self-esteem building, body positivity, and building a strong peer group



**The Red Tent Group for Women**(not recommended for preteens or teens)

Meets the third Tuesday of every month at First UU of Austin (parking in back)  
4700 Grover Avenue 7-9pm <https://www.facebook.com/groups/redtentaustin/>

The Red Tent Group is NOT a group run by me. It is a local Red Tent group where you can connect with other women each month. You can find out more information by joining their Facebook group.