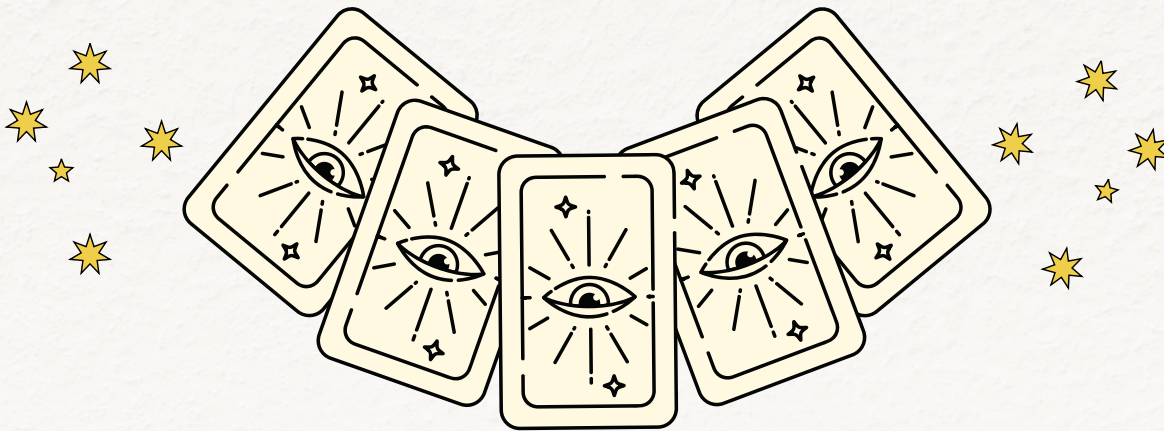


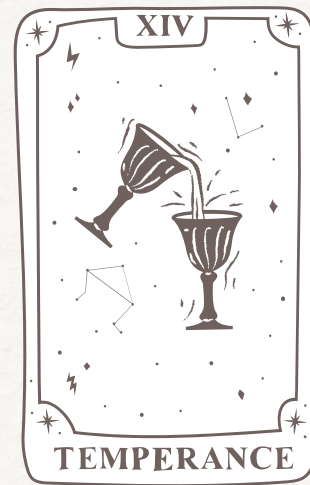
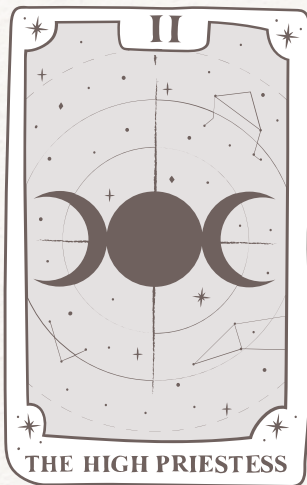


De-mystifying your period after trauma

a short guide

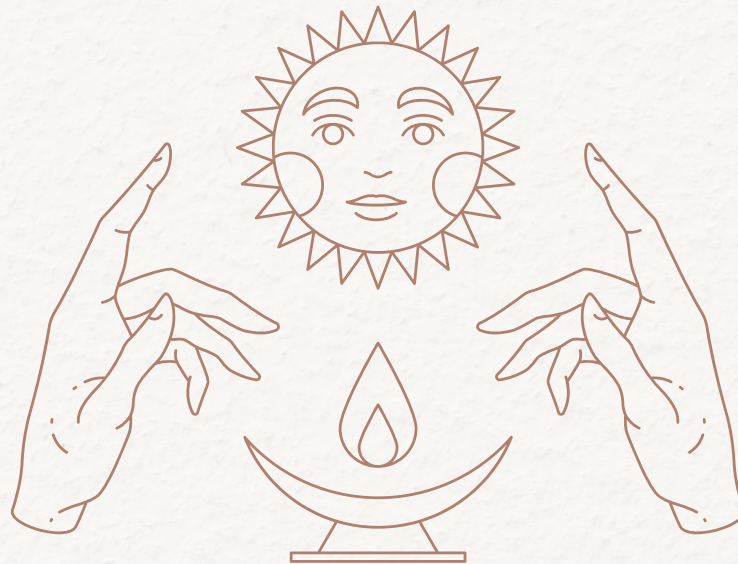


Why is dealing with my period so difficult? I've done it before!



Trauma, especially sexual assault experiences, can make it difficult to take care of your basic needs and hygiene. This is because trauma can affect our **executive functioning**, or our brain's mental abilities to plan, organize, manage time, pay attention, process information, control behavior, and do other higher level skills. Trauma can create executive dysfunction, which can make simple, every day tasks like brushing our teeth or changing our menstrual pads feel impossible to do. It's simply your brain's way of trying to heal, protect, and make meaning of your experiences.

Your survivorship journey



Many survivors of sexual assault also find their menstrual cycle to be a challenging and triggering time for many reasons. It is also common for survivors to have their periods skip or come earlier after a violent experience, which can further compound stress. In addition, PMS symptoms and the emotions that come with it can magnify already painful feelings.

It is okay to feel frustrated and upset about your period. It's completely valid to feel like it is too difficult to take care of yourself.

Helpful Tools



Menstrual cups or disks: to lessen the needed times to change or clean yourself



Black-colored pads: that show less blood when changing



Period underwear (disposable or washable): in case changing tampons or pads are too re-traumatizing. Changing period underwear requires less body coordination and you can hop in the shower right away if needed!



Room spray or air diffusers: if the smell is too triggering



Wipes: for days that showering is too difficult. Make sure you get OBGYN-approved, non-scented wipes for genitalia and baby wipes for your body



Tips and Tricks



Have a soothing changing routine

Set yourself a cup of tea, prep your comfiest pajamas, spray a soothing room spray in the bathroom, play some music after you hop in the shower, and put on your favorite show after you're done! Aim to cushion your changing routine with activities that you like and remember to take it as slowly as you need to!

Track your period

There is power in preparation! Many survivors find their period more manageable when it doesn't come as a surprise. Many period tracker apps can also track your PMS symptoms and emotions and even hold a diary to keep notes. This could also be helpful for folks with irregular periods to show their health team. Of course, an old-fashioned calendar or bullet journal can do the same!

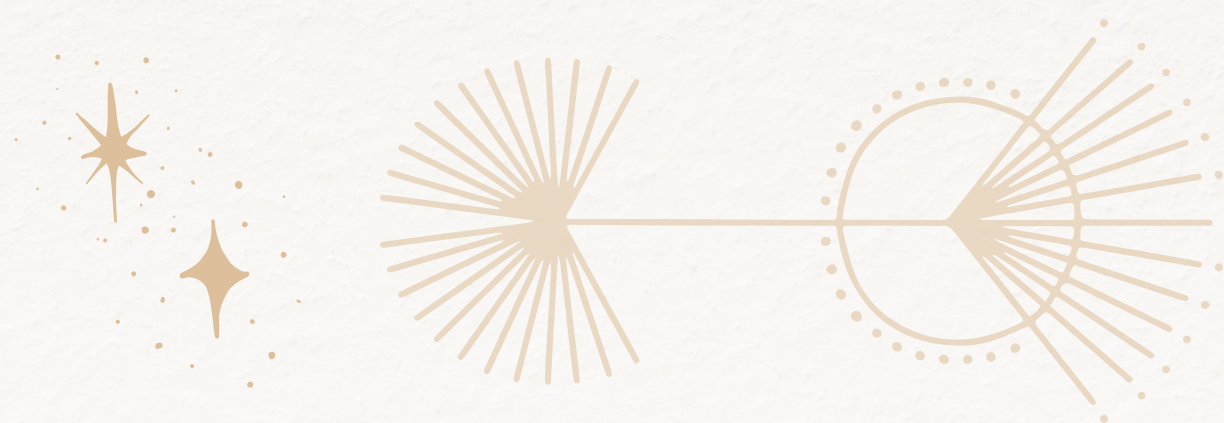


Ask your loved ones for favors

Even if your loved ones are struggling to understand how you feel, you deserve to ask for help. Ask your loved ones to grab you snacks, stay with you in bed, help clean up your sheets, buy pads when they're out, share a playlist, or just listen to your frustrations. Lean on love's offers.

Talk to your healthcare team

If feasible, keep up with your visits and talk to your OBGYN, physician, and therapist. Many OBGYN doctors could recommend hormonal medications to regulate periods and lessen PMS symptoms if your period is continuously irregular. Your body is a system of wonderful intricacies, but remember it is your decision on what will be helpful to you.



Reach out to a CARE Advocate

We are here for you! If you need someone to strategize with without judgment, we are the folks for you! We won't push you to share any traumatizing details and we've helped other survivors navigate even the most intimate details of their life. We'll take it at whatever pace you want.

Have a question about your overall health?

Student Health Outreach and Promotion (SHOP) is available for you! They can help with sexual health, wellness coaching, questions about drugs and alcohol, body image, and much more! They also offer free menstrual products. Find out more at shop.ucsc.edu.

**We wish you love and care
in your cycles! Remember
that mind, body, and spirit
are all important to your
health and happiness.**