

Hello, my name is Anna Buzzoni. I am a menstrual health expert, consultant and teacher of the Project “Wissen durch Teilhabe 2022” of the feminist, queer and migrant organisation trixiewiz e.V. . I am a certified Sensiplan teacher, the German method that any person with the menstrual cycle can use to understand menstrual hormones and menstrual health. You can find more about me on the website studiomedulla.com

Cyclicity does not only characterise the female body in fertile age, but is also an intrinsic feature of all humans and of all living beings on Earth and the planet itself: from the cell to the formation of rocks and geological time. The human mind works this way too. Cyclicity is an intrinsic feature of the universe.

What is extraordinary is that cyclicity is not abstract stuff: each cycle is shaped by a single blueprint, and as such, each cycle is essentially identical to all the others. Surprise? Take a deep breath. Congratulations! You've just replicated, in seconds, what happens in a month-long menstrual cycle. Or think about the 24-hour cycle: night, morning, afternoon and evenings. These four moments have the same “job description” and characteristics of the four phases of the menstrual cycle.

This somewhat outrageous statement comes from years of research and is based on my comparative and interdisciplinary analysis of more than 20 cycles, based on hard science and evidence. The result is what I call the 'Cyclical Blueprint' or “Matrix”.

This unique model has extraordinary repercussions, even for everyday life: among others, it allows us to transfer knowledge from cycles that we know very well (even scientifically) to cycles that we know little about, or that are unfairly shrouded in mystery, taboo and superstition, such as the menstrual cycle.

One of the first things to emerge from my analysis - and from the scientific evidence of recent years - is that the menstrual cycle is not just about pregnancy. Its purpose is to bring all our creatures, be they ideas, projects, values or children, into the world.

The menstrual cycle is, in addition, a vital sign, and a healthy menstrual cycle protects - to name but a few - the heart, bones and breasts. It is also vital for mental health and can give a more functional and deeper understanding of reality.

The Blueprint also teaches us that every phase number 4 of every cycle (such as, for example, the pre-menstrual phase) is designed to sensitise us, because it is the phase in which reconnaissance, testing and final harvesting take place.

The testing phase (think, for instance, of prototype testing) serves first and foremost to bring problems to the surface, so that they do not pass to the next cycle. Since the menstrual cycle serves to bring our creatures to birth, a difficult pre-menstrual phase speaks to us of an inner and/or outer context that is 'hostile' to birth. Pre-existing health problems exacerbate, anxieties and imbalances of the psyche also.

Although the premenstrual phase is a great power and ally, taboo and a complete lack of education leads menstruating people to not understand these signals, which become, alas, a source of confusion and frustration. When in the evening (which is phase number 4 of the 24-hour cycle) we are tired, nervous and discomforted, we would never point our finger at our circadian rhythm and the hormones that come into circulation in the evening.

The malaise comes from a poorly managed accumulation of 'toxins' or from too many commitments not counterbalanced by self-care.

So why is it that everyone points the finger at menstrual hormones and doctors are ready to suppress the menstrual cycle altogether through contraceptive hormones?

Using the pill &co. for non-contraceptive purposes is - with a few extreme exceptions, such as painful endometriosis - the same as seeing a light on the dashboard of your car and cutting the electrical wires. The light goes out, but the underlying problem remains. The cycle does not cause problems, it reveals them!

Phase 4 or, in other words, the premenstrual phase has many other prerogatives, such as raising our body temperature and making us hungrier. Why? The hormone that dominates it is called progesterone, the pro-gestation hormone. Basically, it goes something like this: progesterone calls the thyroid gland and tells it, 'Hey! Light the fireplace and set the table, because maybe soon we will have guests', in other words, the embryo.

Progesterone prepares the nest, and any self-respecting nest is warm, cosy and provides nourishment for the young.

Not only does phase 4 have its peculiarities, but every phase of the cycle does.

To give a few brief examples, menstruation (which phase 1) purifies us (like sleep, which is phase 1 of the 24-hour cycle), phase 2, also called the follicular phase, makes us more optimistic, phase 3, which is ovulation, makes us earn more tips and allows us to be more persuasive: green light, therefore, to requests for salary increases, public speaking, and making all kinds of (reasonable) demands.

Also, thanks to the Blueprint, we discover that menstrual pain is not normal, unless it is just contractions we are talking about. Feeling the contractions is normal.

The uterus is a muscle, and as such it contracts and relaxes. As does the heart. If the heart hurt with every contraction, we would be worried, wouldn't we? Although the uterus does not have the same hierarchical importance as the heart (it is not for survival but 'only' for creation) I don't see why it should be any different.

Menstrual pain is the only pain that medicine treats as if it were normal, when in fact it is not: it is a symptom of something wrong. Fortunately, many doctors have realised this and are doing more in-depth investigations.

Sleep, posture, movement, to name but a few, they all play a key role in menstrual health and vice versa in menstrual disorders such as cramps, irregularity, polycystic ovary syndrome or premenstrual syndrome. So does food!

In the last 100 years we have witnessed what scientists call the 'great acceleration'. All indicators of environmental toxins have soared. Our diets are now low in fibre and high in pesticides, fertilisers and sugar. Fad diets, which often do harm, are all the rage. Dairy and meat are abused, and come from suffering, drug-addled, and terrorised animals.

Terror, lack of movement, and in general, distorting the natural rhythms of animals makes our food, and the soil in which it is born, poor in nutrients and rich in endocrine disruptors, i.e., synthetic substances that alter the normal functioning of our hormones, regardless of sex, gender, latitude, culture, and age.

Think of sugar: for hundreds of thousands of years we have only consumed it in summer and early autumn, through ripe fruits. Fruits that are rich in fibre, and that allow for the proper metabolism of sugar.

Today, sugar is everywhere. Fitness gurus would even like us to drink centrifuges and smoothies, passing them off as natural remedies and good replacement alternatives, but in fact, they are to be treated like a slice of stuffed cake: every now and then, rarely is fine, but not every week, let alone every day.

Female' diets are always 'low-fat' but no one teaches us that hormones need fat and cholesterol.

The Mediterranean diet, the original one (with lots of pulses, a little fish, meat and cheese, of high quality) is the best in the world. Scientists are unanimous.

Apart from intolerances or individual specificities, it is therefore also the most suitable against all menstrual cycle disorders, from the physical to the psychological ones.

There are so many myths to dispel about the menstrual cycle, and those who have it often do not even suspect how much wealth menstrual awareness and education can bring.

For example, we may realise that menstruation is not a valid method of contraception. The reason for this is not because we ovulate during menstruation, but rather it is because of our amazing cervical mucus: it can make sperm survive for five days in our bodies, waiting for ovulation.

Moreover, the date of ovulation can never be predicted in advance (no, not even by ovulation sticks, which according to official sources, such as the WHO, are 40 to 100 per cent wrong, depending on who you are). Menstruation, however, can be foreseen in advance, provided that one ovulates, even if the person has a very irregular cycle: a thermometer and a few simple methodological tricks are enough to be able to predict the arrival of menstruation 9 to 13 days in advance. To have known this beforehand!

Not only that, but menstrual education also teaches us that our immune defenses change: at menstruation and ovulation they are lower. Consequently, the grandmothers were right! They did not have hairdryers and radiators, and consequently, washing your hair at menstruation was not recommended. I propose a minute's silence for the ancestors who have been beaten far and wide in recent years.

The lack of awareness and education of menstruation - and more generally of the body - leads us to see monsters where there are none, but even worse, it does not make us realise the treasure we have inside us, which, among other things, is the perfect recipe against the ecological crisis: our natural cycles.