

# TREATING THE CAUSES, NOT THE SYMPTOMS: SUSTAINABLE, ZERO-RISK SOLUTIONS FOR MENSTRUAL SUFFERING

## THE WHITE PAPER

BY CHRISTINE MARIE QUIGLESS,  
FOUNDER, STEADY + FREE

FUNDED WITH A GRANT FROM THE  
HENDRICKS INSTITUTE

EDITED BY: ALYSHA CAMPBELL,  
FOUNDER AND CEO, CULTURESHIFT HR

EDITED BY: LACRESHA CUNNINGHAM,  
LCSW





## **Treating the Causes, not the Symptoms: Sustainable, Zero-Risk Solutions for Menstrual Suffering**

by Christine Marie Quigless, Founder, Steady + Free

Funded with a grant from The Hendricks Institute

Edited by: Alysha Campbell, Founder and CEO, CultureShift HR

Edited by: LaCresha Cunningham, LCSW

### **Abstract:**

Menstrual Suffering is an accepted and normalized problem that a majority of people with uteruses face during the menstruating years. Though common, the effects of people living with Menstrual Suffering on a long-term basis are highly consequential. People who deal with menstrual pain generally receive medical help in the form of symptom management, which fails to treat the cause and leaves the reproductive organs to degenerate, which can result in long-term consequences like ever-increasing pain and cycle irregularity, decreased fertility, hysterectomy, and the prescription of psychiatric medication, as well as the compounded health complications that result from reproductive system disorders. This white paper sets out to define the causes of Menstrual Suffering and the means to treat the causes through the risk-free and physical-intervention-free process supported by the Fierce Gentleness™ framework. The white paper also includes a discussion of how the framework effects the shift from menstrual disorder to menstrual order and gives a sample of the results through case studies.

### **Problem Statement:**

How can the body shift from menstrual disorders to menstrual order thus ending Menstrual Suffering instead of relieving the symptoms, without medication, supplements, special diet, and/or special exercise?

### **Background:**

What is Menstrual Suffering?

Menstrual Suffering includes any womb-related suffering: pain, debilitating pain, menstrual cramps, menstrual migraines, nausea, vomiting, back aches, hot sweats, cold sweats, Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), short-cycle periods<sup>1</sup> (20 days or less), long-term menstrual shedding and bleeding (seven days or more, can last for spans of months at a time—based on Steady + Free cases), long-cycle periods<sup>2</sup> (36 days or more), Endometriosis, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), and more. The preceding list is made up of the symptoms specific to case studies who have or are currently shifting to end Menstrual Suffering as a result of the Fierce Gentleness™ framework.

What are the causes of Menstrual Suffering?

- To discuss the causes of Menstrual Suffering, it is essential to describe the eponymously named four parts of the Holistic Being: the Spiritual/Intuitive Body, the Emotional Body, the Mental Body, and the Physical Body. Although they may not effectively use all four bodies, many entities that are dedicated to healing, personal growth, leadership growth, and health, accept the “Holistic Being” model ([see Appendix Item A.](#)). As three of the four bodies that make up the whole being are intangible, it is important to acknowledge their effect on the physical body. Here is a helpful example: The Center for Disease Control, in 2008, reported that 75% of medical expenditures are a result of stress<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly enough, to date there have been no instances of people

walking around with bricks or whips labeled “stress” and committing self-immolation nor have there been any instances of stress raining upon individuals or groups.

- Here are a few examples of stresses that affect the three different “body” types:
  - Staying late after work and delaying one’s personal plans because a colleague asked for help at the last minute: mental. Why is that affecting the Mental Body? There is a clear cause and effect process that rationally tracks.
  - Suppressing the voicing of a personal need out of fear of criticism or embarrassment: intuitive. Why is this affecting the Intuitive Body? The idea is informed from within and shows up as a hunch, a nudge, an inner knowing. In-Tuition—learning from within.
  - Being inappropriately addressed at work or blamed for a situation that was not one’s fault: emotional. Why is this affecting the Emotional Body? The situation is informed from outside of oneself and evokes actual feelings like: powerlessness, victimhood, frustration.

Can the person reading this identify with moments like the above—moments of frustration or anger that include the experience of a wave of heat passing over the body? That is the experience of energy changing from the intangible to the tangible (heat) in the body. Frustration activated a set of biological processes that effected as heat moving like a wave over the body; so much can happen in a moment.

How about a time when a brilliant idea comes to mind and fear of embarrassment suppresses the idea? Shortly after, arms cross over the chest and the gaze of the eyes casts downward—this is an effort to cope under the pressure of the intuitive stress—invisible energy, a thought, results in literal actions and reactions.

Now that there is an understanding of the three “bodies” through which stress enters and eventually prints to the physical body, it is important to consider the source of the stresses—what this paper maintains to be the root causes of the stresses/conflicts that manifest in the body as Menstrual Pain.

- Cause One: “Form follows function”, in other words: square peg, round hole.
  - Homo sapiens sapiens existed as late as 90,000 years ago and for most of that time, the people born without a uterus (for the sake of cogency, to be referred to as “men” with full respect for gender fluidity) developed a life outside of the cave, and the people born with a uterus (to be referred to as “women” with full respect for gender fluidity) developed a life and bodily processes that adapted to spending the majority of their time inside of the cave<sup>4</sup>. It is not until roughly 200 years ago, with the dawning of Cottage Industries and Industrialization that women began to engage with the world outside of the “cave” (home)<sup>5</sup>. This world was curated by men who live with a hormonal cycle that completes in 24-hours, and as the adage goes: form follows function, so every aspect of life outside of the cave was then and continues to unconsciously bias toward meeting the needs of, and rewarding the values inherent to, men.
  - Consider the case of the turtle, which, although it can survive on land, is typically considered slow and heavy as it makes its way on land, and yet in water, the turtle thrives and zips, engaging with the aquatic environment in an entirely different way. We do not condemn the turtle for not being as suited for land as a four-legged mammal, nor do we expect the turtle to perform and achieve its goals on land as it does in the water. As the widely known fable teaches: the tortoise can win, but it’s going to accomplish its wants/wills/desires in its way, not by trying to be the hare.

- Cause Two: Societal prohibition of the full expression of women (female function).
    - Society unconsciously grooms women to understand their function as failing because it does not fit the general “form” of the man-informed world. For example, women might be advised through jokes or micro-aggressions to dismiss their inner knowings, hunches, gut checks, to avoid embarrassment or to file these knowings under code: whimsical. These notions compel women to shame themselves for their seemingly inconsistent body and seemingly inconsistent biorhythm, therefore women cope in silence and suppression. As the prolific author, advertising executive, and columnist, Lois Wyse once said, “Men are taught to apologize for their weaknesses, women for their strengths.” The more inhibited the self-expression of women becomes, the more profoundly that coping impacts on the physical/biological part of the Holistic Body<sup>678</sup>.
      - Michelle LaMasa-Dawson, Phd., explains how stress stores in the body: “They [humans] will spin in their minds this conflict over and over again. The automatic brain is responsible for keeping us alive so what it will do—it will download into a specific body part, so the person can continue to function. When it first happens, it’s very clear [on a brain scan] with a dot and concentric rings around it. The bigger the conflict, the bigger the concentric rings.<sup>9</sup>”
      - Dr. LaMasa-Dawson goes on to explain the impact of *consistent* conflict/stress in the body. When conflict in the body takes place, the reproductive organs of people are the first receivers to store the download of the stress: “It could be [manifest as] a testicular cancer or an ovarian cancer and that would download first to that ovarian or testicular relay in the brain and simultaneously on to the organ itself<sup>10</sup>. LaMasa-Dawson’s reference to the cancers of reproductive organs is a grim reminder of how subtly people feed dis-ease to themselves.
      - And so every time that women override themselves in favor of someone else’s idea, override an inner knowing, suppress a desire to accommodate someone else’s needs, the female Holistic Body clocks that as suffering and stores it.
- “Moreover, evidence suggests that there is a strong brain-uterus connection, where stress signals are transmitted via the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the autonomic nervous system to regulate uterine function. This connection may explain why some women experience stress-related pelvic pain, premenstrual symptoms, and even preterm labor.

An organism’s reproductive fitness is sensitive to the environment, integrating cues of resource availability, ecological factors, and hazards within its habitat. Events that challenge the environment of an organism activate the central stress response system, which is primarily mediated by the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. The regulatory functions of the HPA axis govern the cardiovascular and metabolic system, immune functions, behavior, and reproduction. Activation of the HPA axis by various stressors primarily inhibits reproductive function and is able to alter fetal development, imparting a biological record of stress experienced in utero. Clinical studies and experimental data indicate that stress signaling can mediate these effects through direct actions in the brain, gonads, and embryonic tissues<sup>11</sup>”.

Take the generally accepted Healthy Shame Cycle ([see Appendix Item B.](#)). Here, Dr. Annabelle Chow contrasts the Healthy and Unhealthy Shame Cycles and demonstrates that the Healthy Shame Cycle includes the initiative to “Try Harder”, while the Unhealthy cycle does not<sup>12</sup>. Ironically, it is most women’s choice to “Try Harder” in the forms of self-sacrifice, over-compensation, inhibition, and other ways that enables the consistent feeding of dis-ease. This attempt to be better at life—to strive for an ever-evading standard

of perfection, to prove that women have a right to take up space in this world, eclipses attention to the distinct physiological needs of women and contributes to the increase in Menstrual Suffering as a result of the degeneration of the reproductive organs ([see Appendix Item C.](#)).

Physically-based interventions like: hormone therapy, the gut health approach, birth control, herbal supplements, special diets, and special exercise, all are capable of offering short-term relief. According to the Fierce Gentleness™ framework users surveyed to date, a stop of some symptoms of Menstrual Suffering has lasted as long as 90 days with these interventions. The inherent flaw of these approaches is that, because they are treating only the physical body, they disregard the presence of the three other bodies that make up the Whole Being. Who women “be”, as women living under the stresses consistently dosed from the aforementioned causes, overrides the “success” of one or a combination of these interventions because the stresses directly feed the body and deposit to the uterus, at a 3:1 ratio.

Form follows function. As the form of the world outside of the cave develops to meet the needs of the function of men, society in turn rewards those functions<sup>13</sup> ([see Appendix Item D.](#)).

The female function struggles to thrive in the male-informed construct of “normal” when women attempt to succeed in the male-informed way. The effects of attempting to fit female “square pegs” into male-shaped “round holes” result in greater and greater stress generation and the signals of this dis-ease “print” on the physical body, encouraged by the Healthy Shame Cycle. Women effort harder and harder to be better—consistently self-feeding shame for any failures because they mistake the male way for the only way to be “normal”.

With these obvious signals of maladaptation, how do women tolerate, for themselves, living with a level of consistent Menstrual Suffering that they would not wish for their family members, friends, all those they care about to, experience?

Upper Limiting and Learned Helplessness.

Upper Limiting: This concept, introduced by Gay Hendricks, in his book *The Big Leap*, describes the self-imposed limits for success and joy that adults maintain as a result of childhood experiences. When a person comes close to their Upper Limit by, for example, beginning to achieve success or beginning to feel immense joy—when they come close to pushing past their Upper Limit, they unconsciously sabotage themselves to stay in their comfort zone. Specific to this white paper is Hendrick’s discussion of people’s enforcement of “Hidden Barriers”, which keep the Upper Limit at its level. Of the four Hidden Barriers presented, “Hidden Barrier No. 1: Feeling Fundamentally Flawed”<sup>14</sup> perfectly describes how easily women unwittingly Upper Limit themselves with Menstrual Suffering.

And to buttress how powerfully Upper Limiting affects people, *The Big Leap* lists diseases of Unfulfillment<sup>15</sup> such as Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, which, when treated as a symptom of Upper Limiting, stops showing symptoms on the patient who no longer engages in Upper Limiting Behaviors.

The Upper Limiting in the form of Menstrual Suffering is so extreme and pervasive because women are groomed to maintain a very low threshold for joy and a high threshold for pain as a result of being raised by people living with the overwhelming amount of stresses listed above. Examples like “that’s not ladylike”, “boys will be boys” easily

demonstrate unconscious signaling that young toddlers with a uterus might receive before they have even learned to speak. This teaching: to withhold one's personal expression, is not a conscious one that parents willingly force on their children, it is the way women survive in a world where the form they inhabit does not meet their function.

Learned Helplessness, like Upper Limiting, is another way that the tolerance of Menstrual Suffering continues.

"Learned helplessness is a state that occurs after a person has experienced a stressful situation repeatedly. They come to believe that they are unable to control or change the situation, so they do not try — even when opportunities for change become available<sup>16</sup>".

Learned Helplessness has a very strong presence amongst Menstrual Sufferers as demonstrated by Market Research, with 53 participants, collected over the course of two years:

The Steady + Free team used questionnaires to learn how to best communicate the message of "ending menstrual pain" to people who were/are actually suffering.

The Market Research process included the following questions:

- a. How have you searched for the solution for this on Google or YouTube?  
What keywords or phrases did you use?
- b. Which books have you read on this topic?
- c. Have you bought any courses on this topic? If so, which ones, how much were they and what were they missing?
- d. Who are your favorite people to follow that talk about this topic?
- e. What other investments have you made to try to solve this problem?
  - i. I.e. books, workshops, therapists, conferences, home remedies
  - ii. How much do you think you've invested into trying to solve this problem up until now?

The answer to these questions are the result of Learned Helplessness. They were (in order of response volume):

- "No" (20),
- "...never researched/looked it up/googled it" (17),
- "never tried to fix this/it/the pain/the issue" (10).

Answers like this compel the question, "What stopped you from researching, from looking for a solution?".

Paraphrased Answers:

- My doctor said there is nothing to do besides birth control and if that doesn't work, we have to consider a hysterectomy,
- Everyone in my family went through this or is going through this,
- There's nothing to research, it's just what happens to us,
- and lastly: It's normal.

These answers attest to the deep effects of lifetimes spent living with the causes of Menstrual Suffering. These answers came from people with diverse cultural backgrounds, national identities, and educational backgrounds. Not a single person questioned was

happy to live with this pain, but the Upper Limiting kept them tolerant of Menstrual Suffering and ever-worsening diagnoses, and the Learned Helplessness kept them out of inquiry to find a way to stop the suffering.

The distinction between the solution offered here, Fierce Gentleness™, and the options currently available for Menstrual Sufferers is that this solution addresses the causes, as outlined above.

Solution:

The Fierce Gentleness™ framework shifts women from holistically nurturing a way of “being” that results in menstrual disorder to holistically nurturing a way of “being” that results in menstrual order ([see Appendix Item E.](#)).

The Fierce Gentleness™ framework reframes the “disadvantages” that women are physiologically predisposed to have. This framework informs, through all four parts of the Whole Being, ways for women to understand how their function is actually an advantage. It passively inspires ways for them to allow themselves to be in their “normal”, their form. Now, the distinct female function thrives because it no longer experiences the friction inherent to adaptation.

Revisiting the brain-relay stimulation explanation from LaMasa-Dawson, which explained how the brain relay receives awareness of the stress and then sends that stress to an organ for storage, the last part of the quote, started above, states, “And as a person begins to find solutions and repair [of the organ], you will see that these concentric rings and the dot itself will change in how it looks [on a brain scan]”<sup>17</sup>. The Fierce Gentleness™ framework is that repair. When the body stops needing to store the stresses, the storage “spaces” diminish. Only that which is nurtured, grows.

The surgical procedure, Uterine Fibroid Embolization (UFE), starves fibroids of access to the nutritious blood that sustained them, which results in the fibroids resorbing or falling off. The Fierce Gentleness™ framework starves the Emotional, Intuitive, and Mental Bodies of the stressors they were used to receiving, as the environment no longer consistently generates stress/conflict, and without those inputs, the physical body no longer prints the stress.

No longer ambling along, the turtles are zipping, swimming, playing in the water.

The Fierce Gentleness™ framework encourages an environment that leverages the physiological predispositions of women. The framework’s pragmatically-driven development considers the physiological strengths of women as well as the four Menstrual Phases. These considerations accommodate necessary functions, especially rest, for the Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Intuitive Bodies, through a basic system of checks and balances.

And now, hormones.



The womb that women have been systematically programmed to understand should be treated like a metaphorical Buick—a brand of trucks known to handle heavy loads and to work really well while using a lot of power—calls for treatment more nuanced to that of a metaphorical Porsche—a luxury car thoroughly designed for speed and ride. A Porsche might effort in “fits and starts” to lug a trailer, and over a long period of time, as a result of consistently functioning in the way that it was not meant to work, it may have stripped all of its parts. Under the hands of the right mechanic, the parts are restored and as each system repairs, the component systems more smoothly begin to work as a whole.

The Fierce Gentleness™ framework is that Porsche Mechanic:

Where women were once condemned for trying to be “Buicks”: *Why aren't you more like a man: consistent and whole after each 24-hour hormonal cycle?* Women have a 28-day hormonal cycle—forcing themselves to pretend that they do not have this biological fact causes chaos for the personal ecosystem, especially the hormones.

In contrast, educating women to acknowledge their contained “Porsche” (womb) nurtures order, for example:

“Yes, your biological processes are different from a man’s processes, which means that your normal includes different essential elements like: *taking three days, every 25 days, of physical rest during the Menstruation Phase. This allows the body to receive the restoration it needs—a restorative equivalent to the hours of sleep that complete the final phase of the masculine 24-hour hormonal cycle. This essential restorative contributes to greater efficacy, greater physical consistency, and greater easeful impact in the work and home spheres.*

The right hormones are firing at the right time in the right amount because all of the processes that may have previously been skipped or overridden (with the help of caffeine, lack of sleep, inappropriate diet, shame—all of the things women may have done to dis-form themselves to fit the masculine normal) are now naturally occurring.

Conclusion:

Turning off the lights and noticing that the other five senses immediately heighten is a lot easier than taking substances to heighten the senses because one is trying to convince oneself that it is dark at midday.

A woman living in her function-informed “normal” experiences hormonal balance: the right hormones fire at the right time in the right amount because they are responding to reality. The reconciliation also compels the right food cravings, for each unique body, during each distinct phase, the right exercises, the right tasks to batch within each phase. What is this “right”? How does one know this “right”? **“Right” is the freedom-giving truth of one’s authentic: self, expression, needs, cravings, joys, fears, will, which surfaces through engagement with the Fierce Gentleness™ framework.**

The fable from Aesop of the “Tortoise and the Hare” is told by a man and underscores the lesson: “slow and steady wins the race”. Perhaps the tortoise’s approach to winning the race was not slow and steady if considered from the perspective of the tortoise’s normal.

There are many ways to win and the more women thrive as a result of living in their normal, trusting the consistent flow of easeful impact, the more that ways to success and achievement stop being relegated to those paths informed by the masculine.

The Fierce Gentleness™ framework shifts women out of menstrual disorders to menstrual order by orienting women to their normal in a process free of risk. There is one requirement: trade shame for ease. The framework treats the causes of disorder thus eliminating the symptoms, eliminating Menstrual Suffering.

Case Studies ([See Appendix Item F.](#))

Thank you for reading!

Author: Christine Marie Quigless, and the Team at Steady + Free

Editor: Alysha Campbell, Founder and CEO, CultureShift HR

Editor: LaCresha Cunningham, LCSW

Special Thank You to Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks for setting this White Paper as a powerful initiative for Steady + Free's mission and for enabling its creation through a grant from their foundation, The Hendricks Institute.

# Appendix of Images

## Item A. The Holistic Being

A.

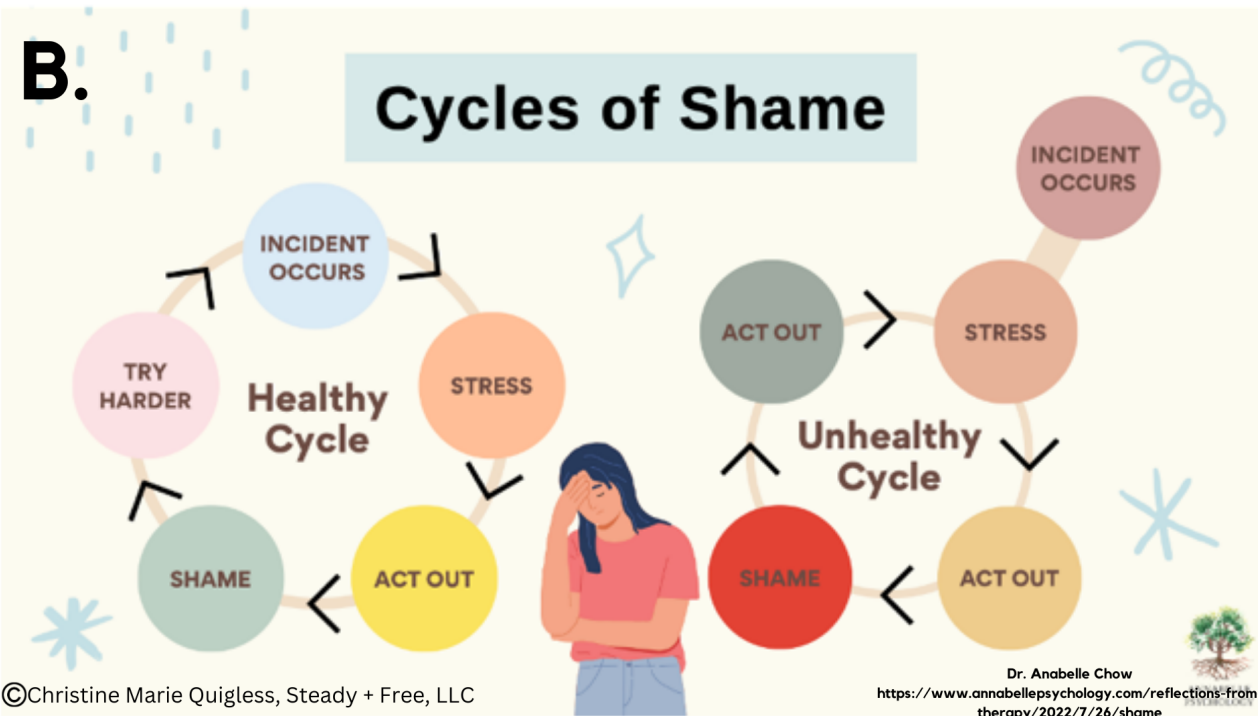


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\*Adapted from EvolutionCoachingAcademy.org

## Item B. The Shame Cycle (in general)

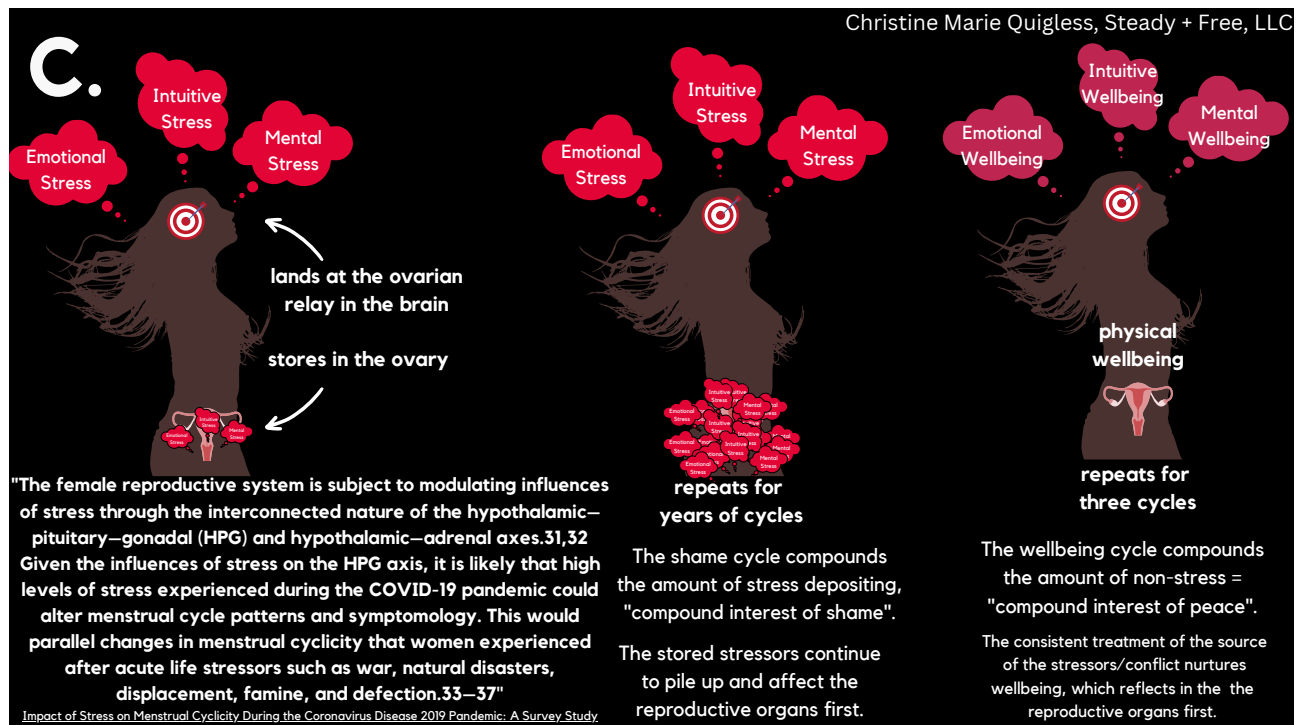
B.



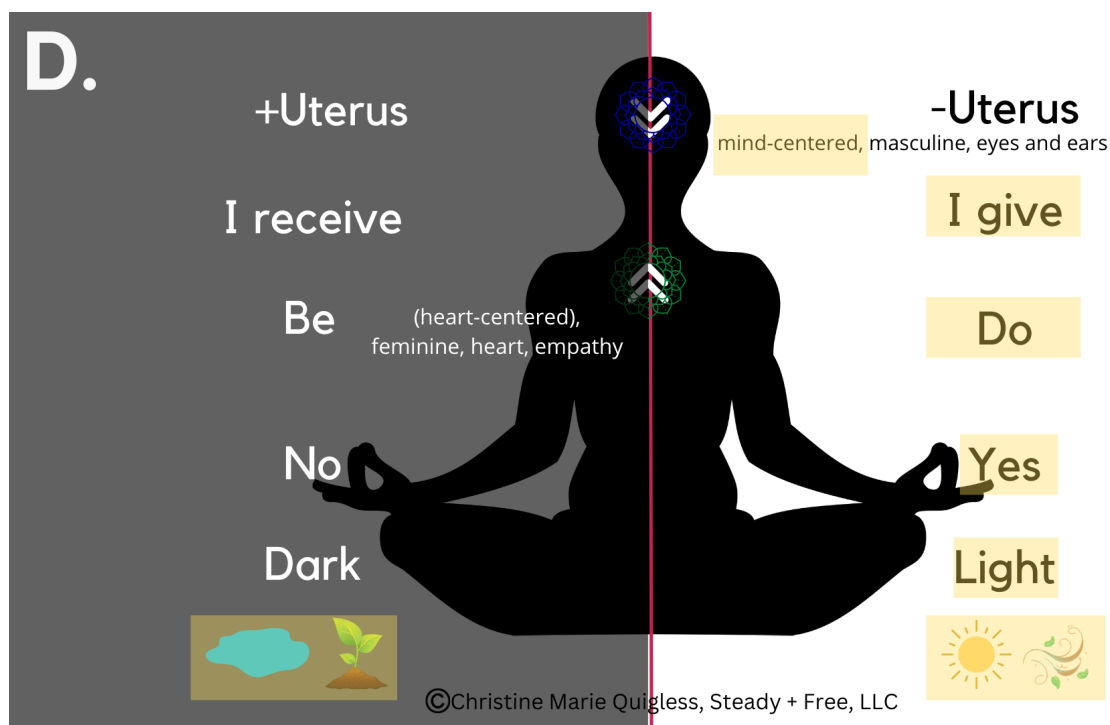
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Dr. Anabelle Chow  
<https://www.annabellepsychology.com/reflections-from-therapy/2022/7/26/shame>

### Item C. The Effects of Conflict/Stress, in the Form of Shame, on the Reproductive Organs.



### Item D. A Comparison of Feminine vs. Masculine Innate Strengths with the Strengths that Western Societies Reward/Value Highlighted.





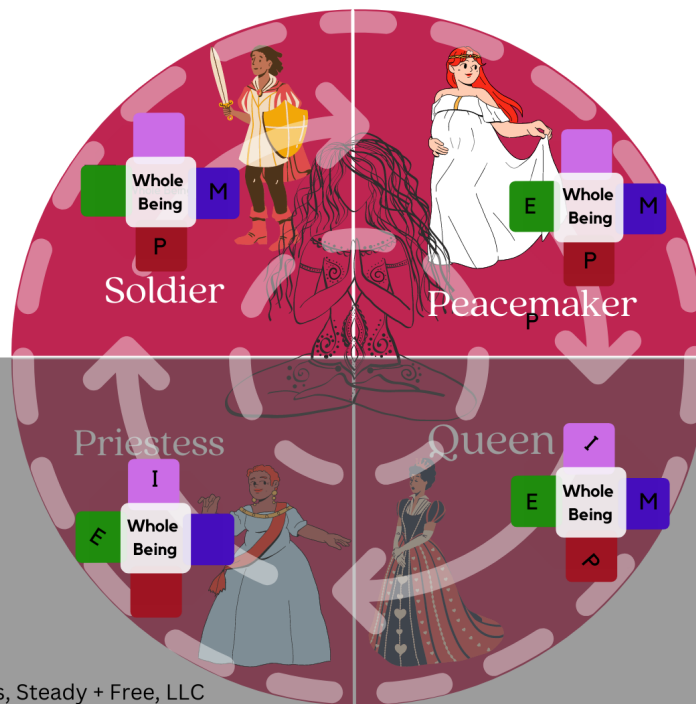
## Item E. The Fierce Gentleness™ Framework

# E.

Days ~8-14

- Success
- Ease
- Impact
- Space
- Appetite
- Extraversion
- Introversion
- Exercise
- Work Tasks
- Work Life Balance
- Vacations
- Time Alone
- Family Time

Days ~1-7



Days ~15-21

**Fierce  
Gentleness™  
framework**

Days ~22-28

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## Item F. Case Studies

# F. Case Studies

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	Case Study i.	Case Study ii.	Case Study iii. (on day 68 as of white paper release date)
<b>Menstrual Cramps</b>	yes and debilitating before Fierce Gentleness™, none after Fierce Gentleness™	no, see below	yes and extremely painful before Fierce Gentleness™ especially with having a period 2x/month, now much less pain and period takes place 1x/month
<b>Symptoms of Endometriosis (all three case studies have this diagnosis)</b>	yes, nausea and vomiting before Fierce Gentleness™ and zero symptoms after	yes debilitating endometriosis flares before Fierce Gentleness™, none after Fierce Gentleness™	yes, pain, nausea, early diagnosis which enhanced the intensity of other symptoms
<b>Volatile PMS</b>	yes, considered using SSRIs and feared for safety of self and others before Fierce Gentleness™, after = zero PMS	not recorded	yes, and after Fierce Gentleness™ PMS is almost completely at zero
From ___ days lost to menstrual suffering each month to ___ days lost to menstrual suffering each month.	10 to 0	5 to 0	26 to 2

Author's Note:

(1) The innate strengths of women and men were deduced from the way of life specific to the Homo sapiens sapiens from whom Modern Man evolved. There is evidence to suggest that women most closely associate with the elements of earth and water. Throughout history, many goddesses have been associated with these two elements. In Roman mythology, one of the three major goddesses was Terra, the goddess of the Earth. The Greek goddess, daughter of the sea and goddess of love was Aphrodite. Similarly, many ancient fertility goddesses were associated with the earth and water, such as Demeter and Isis from the Greek and Egyptian pantheons respectively. Additionally, women have traditionally been seen as the nurturers and caregivers in many societies, roles which are strongly associated with the nurturing and growth-promoting elements of earth and water. As the article in Footnote Eight addresses, the woman's distinct role, which revolved around being and making more than doing and hunting, enabled Homo sapiens sapiens to survive beyond the Neanderthals who did not share this distribution of labor. Over the course of 90,000 years, the innate strengths evolved based on what was needed in the distinct roles that men and women lived and, even though society favors men's strengths over women by default (form follows function and they formed first), both sets of strengths serve in highly valuable ways in both the work and home spheres.

- <sup>1</sup> [Jones, Brandi. "Reasons Your Period Is Shorter Than Normal." VeryWell Health, 23 Mar. 2022, https://www.verywellhealth.com/why-is-my-menstrual-cycle-getting-shorter-5219496.](https://www.verywellhealth.com/why-is-my-menstrual-cycle-getting-shorter-5219496)
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- <sup>8</sup> [Ozimek, Noelle, et al. "Impact of Stress on Menstrual Cyclicity During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: A Survey Study." Journal of Women's Health, vol. 31, no. 1, 12 Jan. 2022, pp. 84–90. January 12, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2021.0158.](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2021.0158)
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- <sup>13</sup> Quigless, Christine Marie. Author's Note.
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- <sup>16</sup> [Wade, Danielle, and Jayne Leonard. "What Is Learned Helplessness?" Medical News Today, 2 Sept. 2022, https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/325355.](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/325355)
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