

yes! I'm 58

by Sandra Alvim

CHAPTER I SPIRITUAL HEALTH

“My mother said to me, ‘If you are a soldier, you will become a general. If you are a monk, you will become the Pope.’ Instead, I was a painter and became Picasso.”

-Pablo Picasso

We Create Our Own Reality

Is reality what happens to you? Or is it what you make happen? I believe we are the creators of our reality. Today our understanding of science and the world has expanded and we are experiencing a moment of infinite possibilities. We now know our thoughts and attitudes can influence our reality. Positive thoughts and emotions attract positive people and positive situations. We attract what is comparable and in harmony with our inner energy. For example, if you believe you will get a job you've applied for because in your heart you know you are the best person for that job, you will. Nothing will be more powerful than your belief. In a completely intuitive way, this has always been the basis of my faith. When I was just four years old, my mother and grandmother took me to the doctor to examine a cyst on the back of my knee. The doctor said it might need surgery. But when we arrived home, my grandmother and my mother, who were very spiritual, told me, “Listen my dear, pray every night before you go to bed, and ask God to make this little cyst go away from your knee.” I followed their advice and prayed with tremendous desire to be cured even though I didn't even understand surgery. I just knew it was something to avoid. After one week the cyst began to shrink, and in a few weeks, it was gone. As a child, I believed from the bottom of my heart without any doubts or any questions, that I created my own reality. “I can heal myself if I pray to God.” Throughout my life, I have had many experiences of

self-healing, even if I have sometimes questioned my faith and even God. But I established this belief in self-healing long ago and it has seldom failed me. How did I come to have such unshakable faith? Because as a child my mind wasn't polluted by doubt and disbelief. I BELIEVED FROM MY HEART AND MY SOUL.

Unfortunately for most people, in their pursuit of scientific proof, they have lost touch with the unexplainable yet observable magic in our natural world. But you can learn this capability at any time in your life. All it requires is FAITH! Ask and expect. Feel in your heart the emotion of getting what you ask for. Usually limitations and challenges don't frighten me because I believe I have the power to overcome any obstacle. If someone says to me "this is impossible," I feel super motivated to go beyond the limits and prove them wrong. I will fight for my youth just as I would fight any disease, as I would fight for my freedom and my rights. I want to be able to run without feeling any pain in the knees; I want to "inspire" my husband every time I take off my clothes; I want to be able to remember phone numbers and what I did yesterday. I want to weigh the same as in my 20's; have the energy and the libido I had in my 30's and have an even better sex life because I've learned to connect my soul and my body. I understand how to make love, not sex. I exercise and keep my muscles strong because I want to hike, run, have sex and ENJOY MY LIFE IN FULL.

What Every Woman Wants

"It's beauty that captures your attention; and personality captures your heart."

Every woman wants to be beautiful and sexy. It's in our female DNA. It's a natural female instinct to attract a mate and reproduce and the competition to do so starts with ovulation. When two women live together, they even start to have their period at the same time. Yet today the birth rate is dropping in America, Europe and Latin America. Women have the power to control whether and when they want to reproduce thanks to birth control, condoms and personal choice. But the instinct to make oneself appealing to the opposite sex is still there and will not change. Every day there are new beauty and cosmetic treatments on the market and we buy them! Why? If we aren't driven by need to attract a man for purposes of procreation, then what drives us to spend so much time and money

making ourselves look good? Because it feels good to be beautiful! It feels good to look at yourself in the mirror and admire what you see. When we look good, we feel good and everything seems right with the world. People like to be near someone who respects her body. And it feels wonderful to be admired and praised, let's be honest! Remember, your body is the sacred house of the soul. It's right to take care of what God gave you, to enjoy and make the most of it. LOVE your body! For some women beauty is not a priority. There may be cultural issues or psychological and emotional scars that prevent a woman from thinking her appearance are important. Some women are

afraid of their own beauty, or feel guilty or undeserving because of problems in their childhood or their past. Maybe you think you don't deserve to be happy.

Or think you weren't born beautiful and there's nothing you can do about it. If you are in this group, be kind to yourself and seek professional therapy. All of us deserve to be happy. But be loyal to your own beliefs. Don't try to please everyone. Be faithful to your heart. However, if you are looking for a change, if you do feel like re-inventing yourself, keep reading. If you're looking for your prince or worse yet, found him and he didn't notice, keep reading. You can create the life you want. You can re-invent the appearance you want. Don't fear change. Embrace it.

The Power of Spiritual Purpose

Knowing yourself is the first step. Understanding your soul's purpose and the agreements you made with your soul before you were born will help you to achieve ENLIGHTENMENT. We all have the power to change, to exceed our limitations. But first we have to know what they are so we can push beyond them. When we change we send a signal to our brain to re-boot the program. Our brain commands our body to begin the process of renewing our cells and repairing damage to our organs. If we stagnate, there is no personal evolution and therefore no collective evolution. The world will remain the same. So it's part of the universal process to be in a continuous process of change.

Get to Know Yourself

Go to the mirror and take a long look at yourself. What do you see? Look deeply into your own eyes and without judging yourself, write down on a piece of paper everything you like about yourself and the things you don't like. Be honest. Be realistic. And then make a commitment to become the person you want to be. I learned to guide my own life through astrology. And as a professional astrologer for more than ten years, I've been able to guide many clients to do the same. Astrology reflects the connection between the heavens and the Earth. It is the science of the stars. The reading of your natal chart is an interpretation of the influences of the planets based on the exact time and place of your birth. The natal chart interpretation will reveal your character, personality and relationships' possibilities among many other things. This unique combination will show your tendencies, the challenges you may face, your talents and opportunities and the possible paths that lie ahead so you can choose between them. The astrological transits or forecasting, are used to forecast trends and developments by interpreting the ongoing movement of the planets as they transit the horoscope. They are a guide to understanding your possibilities and limits or challenges at that moment. Your destiny can be predetermined, however by exercising your free will to make good choices based on the movement of the planets and their meaning, you can alter events, avoid "negative" situations and shut off the "alarm" from the universe. You are not a puppet of the planets. You, not the planets, are empowered and in control of your life. Today psychological astrology, which incorporates modern psychological concepts, is considered the ultimate way of reading a chart. It holds that fate can serve as a catalyst for learning and change, and that learning and change can, in turn, alter fate. You can learn to avoid your worst tendencies, the ones that will make your life difficult. This is how I understand astrology and how I lead my clients. Yes, the past is unalterable and the future is the result of the past. So let's change our future by creating the reality we choose. Learn, acknowledge, change and alter your bad unfolding possible destiny. This is to be in control. THIS IS POWER.

The Moon's Nodes

In astrology, the Moon's Nodes are not planets in the strict astronomical sense but rather sensitive points on the ecliptic, where the pathway of the Moon crosses the course of the Sun. The North and South Nodes are an axis, always in perfect opposition to each other, so the signs are affected in pairs (Aries/Libra; Pisces/Virgo; Aquarius/Leo etc).

The South Node is the symbol of our past. It represents where we are already gifted, comfortable, and attached. Moving out of this place can be the work of a lifetime, because everything in us just wants to stay for a whole lifetime where we are comfortable. But we are here to grow into uncharted territory of self-exploration. The North Node points us in the direction of what could be scary and difficult and yet utterly exhilarating for us to achieve. Knowing about our North Node, so that we can continually notice our resistance to fulfilling it, is one of the most invaluable pieces of self-knowledge that astrology can give us. If we have not fulfilled our North Node, we will probably look back over our lives with some disappointment. It's as if one who has fulfilled his/her North Node could probably die in peace.

It may sound far from our western materialistic state of mind, but in reading my own axis (North node in Pisces and south node in Virgo) I realized I was NOT working on my evolution. My north node, Pisces, suggests that I become in touch with my spiritually and my inner self, that I should go from self to Universal, from logic to intuition, from mind to heart from materialism to spirituality and that I should use my talent to help others as well to follow their evolutionary growth.

“If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation If there is order in the nation, there will be Peace in the World”. -Chinese Proverb

I Myself Am A Witness To This Process

The moment I learned to use the energies of my north node, I experienced a tremendous change for the better. I felt a great connectedness with my soul and its purpose. Every part of my life improved. I began following the teachings of my soul, which was to help others to experience their own personal evolution. In my first book, “The Power of Our Spiritual Purpose” which was published in 2000, I describe my own evolutionary journey and how tapping the energy of the 12 moon’s nodes can lead you on yours. Today I am in control of my life. I have mastered the energy of the planets. I CREATE my present and my future. Although free will and destiny are bound together, we have choices as long as we follow our soul’s agreements. Knowledge is power and awareness is power. But until you get to this point, astrology is a very good tool to use as a guide for your evolution. Quantum mechanics has shown that we can alter our external world by harnessing the power of the mind to create our own reality. We don’t have to be a slave of our past. Our karma is the result of our behavior, the consequence of our acts and thoughts.

Aging starts in your mind

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become” -Buddha.

We create our reality. Our “in here” is the precursor to our “out there”. If you think you are over weight or not so good looking, start to say to yourself. “I believe in all possibilities and I will become... (And make affirmations about who you want to be) Nobody ever taught us to dream with the impossible dream. So start thinking positive as you get results your mind will become more positive and confident. Close your eyes and send good thoughts to your brains. Visualize yourself healthy, beautiful... with the body you always wanted to have. Picture that dress you saw at the window of a store and you thought: “ I will never be able to fit in that dress” CHANGE THAT THOUGHT! And visualize your self in that dress. Second step, take some “action” Following the regiments I have further on in the book. Remember your out side reality starts in your inside reality. Did you observe that people in their 40s today look a lot younger than their mothers at

the same age? And your mother probably looks younger than your grandmother at that age. We believe in what we have seen. So if your mother looks young, you think this is a reality, you convince your brain; it's possible to look young in your fifties, sixties and eighties. Every generation will look younger and better. Sciences have working to help us slow down aging process so we can maintain health and youthfulness at every age. But the first step is to BELIEVE. The media plays a major role in what we see and believe. Our brain sends messages to our body, and our body processes hallucination the information and sends the message to our cells and the cells obey. If the message is your will get old, fat and sick, this message goes to your cells and they will age, fail and die. Cancer mortality is decreasing but cancer itself is on the rise. Why? Because the statistics we hear through the media has convinced us that cancer is inevitable. Our minds are filled with the negativity of cancer in statistics, drug ads, and the media. Drug ads reinforce our fear of disease even sensitizing us to some we've never heard, like restless leg. And offer us cures to conditions we may not even have. The message is get sick and buy our miraculous medication. Even though the side effects, spelled out in detail, sound worse than the disease. "This medication, can cause heart problems, bleeding, collapsed lung, trouble breathing, blurred vision, confusion, feeling faint, throwing up, depression, kidney failure, hallucination, anemia, irritation of the stomach or intestines, chronic trouble sleeping, but don't worry! They have another medication for all of these "discomforts". Hello! Stop watching TV advertising. You are bombarding your brain with negative thoughts instead of reinforcing it with positive thoughts like eating healthy. Of course modern medicine saves lives and the large percentage of the most effective and miraculous modern medicines in the last fifty years have been invented in the U.S. All I say is take medicine only when you really need it and exactly as it is prescribed. Depend on a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle to safeguard your health and don't allow propaganda to negatively influence you. Because you have two options: the negative which leads to fear and the positive, which gives you, control. Choose your side NOW!

Manage Your Emotions

“Be vigilant; guard your mind against negative thoughts” -Buddha

Negative emotions suck your power. A client who came to me for an astrology reading told me she'd followed a healthy diet all her life, exercised, took every precaution for her good health. And she was devastated to learn she had breast cancer. Reading her chart I understood why. This woman had rage in her heart; she was mean, judgmental and unkind to others. She gossiped about all her friends and was negative toward everything and everyone. She was lacking the most precious nutrient of all: LOVE in her heart! How each of us responds to our life and the emotions we have in our heart has enormous implications for how we feel, how we age and the healthy of our physical body. Of course many people who have cancer do have lots of love in their heart. Cancer can have many causes, which we don't necessarily understand. But keeping negative energy in your heart can certainly contribute to negative outcomes, like cancer, even if it is not in your genes or your destiny. Our thoughts, attitude and emotions influence our body's function. Negative behavior and attitudes, thoughts of hate and fear, are toxic for our body and leads to illness and premature aging.

For instance, a stiff and rigid personality is reflected in stiff cells, and the loss of the ability to renew and repair your cells. A flexible and lovable personality reflects in healthy cells and it's capability to renew, heal and repair. It's not a metaphor; your brain literally is in direct relationship to your body.

Feed your body with good nutrition and feed your soul with positive attitudes and love. A life of meaning, purpose, balance, connection, support to each other and love is essential for your well being.

Mistakes are necessary to personal growth. They are life's way of teaching you. Nobody is perfect and I have made and still make many mistakes. But I don't give up. I start over as many times as I have to. My mistakes have helped me learn and they are part of me. Don't let fear of failure keep you from living. Being conscious and aware of your mistakes is the first step to changing your attitudes and behavior. When you catch yourself in the negative side, re-program yourself and move to the positive side.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PATH TO PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION

“People say sometimes that Beauty is only superficial. That may be so. But at least it is not so superficial as Thought is. To me, Beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.” -Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray

Brazilian Beauty

We Brazilians are said to be the most beautiful women in the world. Of course there are beautiful women everywhere -- America, Europe, Africa, Asia -- of every color. So why do we Brazilian women have this flattering reputation? Sensuality, Brazilians are sensual people. For us beauty and sensuality are one and the same. We women are raised to embrace our femininity, not to fear it. For us it's a natural way of being a woman.

Twenty years ago when I arrived in America I was intrigued to discover how different it was. Just to make the point, without judgment, I'll share a sad episode from a Brazilian friend's life. Before her American fiancé had even introduced her to his parents, she overheard the mother talking about her behind a closed door. “I don't approve of this marriage. These Brazilian girls are all prostitutes!” She thought maybe that beautiful bodies in tiny bikinis were a sign of promiscuity, at the least. How ridiculous! My friend was not even especially sexy by Brazilian standards and such a conservative dresser she could be taken for a nun. That shows the difference of cultures. American women aren't raised to celebrate their sensuous side. They deny their sexuality because being too sexy is considered inappropriate. And because of this denial, they don't accept the beauty of being a sensual person. They don't experiment with the joy of being sexy. This is why so many American women allow themselves to become overweight and out of shape. Sensuality and a beautiful body go together. Why bother keeping your body healthy and beautiful if you can't, or won't, show it off?

This state of mind exists even today. When Jennifer Aniston posed for the cover of GQ magazine, “naked, save for a tie around her neck”, some critics

and even her family and friends, criticized her, calling it an act of “insecurity regarding Angelina Jolie.” People expressed their disappointment with her. In my opinion, if Jennifer Aniston wants to show off her perfect 40-year-old body, good for her! She feels sexy, she’s fantastically successful, and she wants to display her sensuality to the world. Congratulations, Jen, you look amazing! Being sexy and not afraid of your sensuality is a great positive emotional feeling. Denial is negative, acceptance is positive. But it’s very hard to go against your culture and erase from your brain the built-in taboos put there by family and society. It takes bravery to free yourself and live the life you choose.

Attitude makes the difference between cultures. When a whole society shares a particular attitude, we have a paradigm. But why this paradigm about Brazilian women? Because we love our bodies and feel no GUILT about our sensuality. We grow up cultivating a beautiful body because that’s what we believe, that’s what our grandmothers believed and passed to our mothers and they passed to us. This strong paradigm is responsible for our sensuality. It’s not an obsession with the body; it’s more than that! It’s the Brazilian paradigm manifested in external form. It’s attitude creating form.

We are the co-creators of our reality. If we are born in a society where sensuality enhances femininity, we will be sensual without questioning. Why can French women drink wine, eat pastries and high cholesterol foods and remain thin and healthy? It’s all about attitude French society elevates pleasure, for food and for love. The French paradigm dignifies pleasure. They co create their reality based in their beliefs. They can eat and drink and still be thin. Your body believes and follows your attitude.

America is the country most concerned with growth, expansion, exaggeration and the concept of BIGNESS. The cars are BIG, the economy is BIG and the food portions are BIG. That’s the American paradigm. And America has the highest rate of obesity in the world! It’s all about paradigm.

In the book “What The Bleep Do We Know” there is a Harvard study by Ellen Langer and Rebecca Levy, which compares memory loss in elderly people of different cultures. “Mainstream Americans, who live in a culture that fears old age and “knows” that as we age our powers decline, had substantial memory loss.

By contrast, elderly Chinese, whose culture holds older people in high esteem, not only showed very little memory loss, but the oldest performed almost as well as the youngest people in the study. Each culture produced old people in keeping with the prevailing attitude about aging". Attitude is the secret for creating the life you want and for being the person you want, even if goes against the odds of the culture or any paradigm. So let's stop criticizing other cultures, and try to live a life of harmony and balance, away from paradigms and wrong attitudes. What is absurd for you may be normal for others.

Sensuality is in the blood of Brazilian women, but we don't have to show off our boobs and butt to look sexy. We feel sexy wearing anything and nothing. We're perfectly comfortable walking the beach in a teeny bikini because we feel blessed to be a woman. How does a woman express her sensual self? In some ways subtle and some more overt, even in the way we breathe, from the inside out, natural and free. Our hormones surge and we enjoy the extra lift it gives us. Research shows we feel sexier when we're ovulating, more likely to wear revealing clothing or no clothing at all. Serotonin, a brain chemical, is increased by exercise and helps us feel sexier.

Male attention also helps a woman feel sexy. Brazilian men are very attentive, perhaps more so than anywhere in the world. A nice looking woman can hardly walk down the street without attracting many compliments. They may just give you a long look or say "gorgeous" or "delicious" or even something a little crude, but never threatening. It's just the Brazilian way. Incidence of rape and other sexual offense is statistically low in Brazil, even in the shantytowns of Rio where much of the populace suffers from severe poverty. And let me tell you, it feels great to be noticed and get a compliment from a stranger. Again, this is a cultural difference with America. To some women this may sound offensive and politically incorrect, but I'm Brazilian and I really appreciate a man noticing me and saying something cute.

I'm very lucky to be married to a Brazilian man. There has never been a day in 20 years he didn't say to me "baby, you look more beautiful and sexy everyday and I love you more and more."

Vinicius de Moraes, the poet and lyricist who wrote the beloved song, “The Girl from Ipanema”, was a great admirer of Brazilian women. His music showed true respect and reverence for our sensuality and his view was fundamental in elevating this idea of Brazilian women throughout the world. The song was inspired by Helô Pinheiro, a fifteen-year-old girl living on Montenegro Street in the fashionable Ipanema district of Rio de Janeiro. In the sixties, she would stroll every day past the popular "Veloso" bar-café on her way to the beach, attracting the attention of regulars Vinicius de Moraes and other musicians.

“Tall and tan and young and lovely, the girl from Ipanema, goes walking and when she passes each one she passes, goes AHH!” It is an enduring image of a culture in which beauty is poetry, sensuality is love.

What makes a woman sexy?

Like Helô Pinheiro, I was an Ipanema girl in the sixties, although not lucky enough to be seen by Vinicius de Moraes and have a song written about me. I was part of movement that dignified this new idea about beauty and sensuality and combined the power of these two feminine assets. And I want to share my secrets – the secret all Brazilian women possess – to help you wake up the amazing sensual woman in you! First, know that everything counts. But the most important ingredient is this: LOVE YOUR BODY! BE PROUD OF BEING A WOMAN. Forget stereotypes, forget how anthropology or pop culture defines beauty. And forget the idea that big breasts, a small waist and full lips make you sexy. True sexuality comes from the soul, natural and spontaneous. Why is the Brazilian supermodel Giselle Bundchen so famous? Yes, she’s beautiful although not the most beautiful face in the world of models. But she is completely herself, totally natural and unique. The power of her beauty comes from within.

Your Mars Sign

In astrology, all the planets count. They are placed in one of the 12 zodiac signs determined by the date of your birth. When you look up your horoscope in magazines, it is based on your sun sign.

Everybody knows about the sun sign but you also have a Mars sign, a Moon sign, a Mercury sign and all the other planets. When you were born, the planet Mars was passing by one of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Planet Mars influences the way you express your anger, the way you deal with the energy that fuels aggression, the way you assert yourself, what type of partner you attract (in a female astrological chart) and the way you express your sensuality, depending on where (the sign) was at the moment of your birth. Mars has a cycle of 2 1/2 years, the length of time it takes to transit all the twelve signs, whereas the sun has a twelve-month cycle.

You can easily determine your Mars sign. To find out your Mars's sign, ask an astrologer.

Knowing your Mars sign will help you to connect with your true self and will enhance your sensuality.

If the planet Mars is in Aries

Regardless of how you appear on the surface, there is a warrior woman deep inside you. You are brave enough to show your sensuality and it can be intimidating. Your bold attitude enhances your sensuality. You equate being sexy with being athletic. Your fit toned body matches your fearless personality. You attract the macho and dangerous type of man.

If the planet Mars is in Taurus

You are the most sensual of women on the planet. You enjoy the hedonistic pleasures of life. Your sensuality is like the touch of soft silk, the smell of fresh cut flowers. You were born with a deep femininity. A soothing bubble bath, sexy clothes and a graceful smile enhance your natural sensuality. You attract the romantic and jealous type of man.

If the planet Mars is in Gemini

You have a fun attitude about sensuality. For you it is a clever and great conversation. Being interesting enhances your sensuality and is more important to you than being exceptionally attractive. You attract men who say interesting things and are changeable.

If the planet Mars is in Cancer

It is difficult for you to separate love and sex. You are comfortable using your cleavage to attract a man but the moment you reach your goal of security, you button your shirt all the way up to your neck. You are the passive/aggressive type when pursuing your desires. You attract men who are protective, sensitive and financially secure.

If the planet Mars is in Leo

No other sign can compete with your exuberance; you want to be remembered for radiating sensuality in a royal way. You are the woman men notice first. Being courted by a handsome and powerful prince enhances your sensuality and makes it shine! You attract men who are self-assured leaders and who admire you.

If the planet Mars is in Virgo

You respect your body and like looking proper. Sex for you is healthy and necessary but striving for perfection can inhibit your sensuality. Pampering yourself enhances it; you can relax after a spa day because you know you're perfect in every detail from your hair to your nails. You attract well-mannered-men, well-dressed and clean.

If the planet Mars is in Libra

You are the smooth-talker. Your voice and manners are sensual, you even smell sensual. Your sensuality is enhanced by wearing a white transparent camisole, a floral fragrance and your serenity, but you can find an argument arousing. And nobody can be as charming in a confrontation as you. You never forget to wear lipstick. You attract charming, romantic and good-looking men.

If the planet Mars is in Scorpio

You are mysterious and intense. Your sensuality is almost frightening. You attract all kinds of men from construction workers to your best friend's husband. It's beyond your control! Your sensuality is enhanced by your subtle psychological power-struggle, which is very seductive. You may seek control but lose it through sex and the game of seduction. You attract the type of man who has dark secrets, who is powerful or dangerous.

If the planet Mars is in Sagittarius

You are so natural and spontaneous that sometimes friendliness could be mistaken for romantic or sexual interest. You have the sexiest laugh. Your sensuality is enhanced by riding a motorcycle and sharing a great laugh. You attract men with a sense of humor and it is important to you that he be your friend first and then your lover.

If the planet Mars is in Capricorn

You are the most discreet and mysterious woman in the room; the man lucky enough to take you to bed will never forget you. You think displaying your sensuality is unnecessary and inappropriate. A glass of wine may help you to relax your fear of being seductive. You attract men from wealthy established backgrounds who have status and power.

If the planet Mars is in Aquarius

Your sensuality is unpredictable and depends on the audience. You might feel like shocking your boyfriend's parents by wearing a micro-mini skirt. And you love the idea of experimenting with a different sensual style. You enhance your sensuality by playing up your independence and men love it! You enjoy playing different roles. One day you are the saint and the next the sinner. You attract men who are eccentric, rebellious and idealistic.

If the planet Mars is in Pisces

You have the sensuality of a princess; you are a sensitive dreamer and a romantic. Sharing feelings can be very seductive for you. Your sensuality is subtle and you have no idea of your impact on others. You have an innocent and unpretentious power to seduce. Your sensuality is enhanced by surrounding yourself with beautiful music. You attract the broken-hearted, the starving artist, the penniless poet and the sensitive type.

CHAPTER THREE

PHASES OF A WOMAN

Each stage of a woman's life is filled with emotional passages, personal growth and, of course, physical changes. Of the three main phases -- puberty, pregnancy and menopause -- the only one over which we have choice or control is pregnancy. A woman's life is marked by the age at which she starts to produce hormones and the age at which she stops. Puberty is the transition from girl to woman. According to western culture, menopause is the transition to old and undesirable. It's time to change this cliché!

Puberty

Our society basically ignores the transition to puberty and doesn't welcome a young woman into this new phase of life. In many tribal cultures, it is a celebrated rite of passage.

Among the Mbuti people in African Zaire, a girl who has begun to menstruate for the first time is said to be "blessed by the moon", and becomes the focus of rejoicing as everyone is told the good news. The first flow is marked by a joyful ritual, in which the girl enters the "women's house" together with female relatives and friends. The girls are taught to be proud of their bodies both sexually and in terms of their ability to bear children. They are taught the arts and crafts of motherhood; they learn the songs of adult women, and people from all around come to pay their respects; Native Americans, Africans, Indians, Shamans, Sioux and many other cultures celebrate the first menstruation of a young woman, but not our western society.

The first period is an exciting moment in the transition and one of the truly unique things about being a woman. But do we really welcome the power of menstruation? Or do we fight it and curse it?

Unfortunately we were not taught to deal with menstruation and use its power. Our western culture is based on conquering and controlling nature and its cycles. New birth control pills control menstruation and limit it to once or twice a

year or not at all. This is against nature! Subconsciously we inherit the view that the blood is somehow unclean or at least unmentionable.

When I had my first period, I was happy and proud but I was prohibited from talking about this subject in front of my father or my brother! I didn't understand. "Why?" We should change this old pattern and create a beautiful ceremony for the young woman in our family. Plan a party and invite all the female relatives and friends and celebrate! Welcome the young lady to womanhood. Tell her how divine is to become a woman and be fertile with the ability to create another human being. Make her understand that it is a sacred thing, for now she will be as fertile as Mother Earth and will be able to bear children. Give her flowers and gifts, buy her new, more feminine clothes and encourage her to have a new haircut. This is the time to teach her about PMS, birth control and share our experience and advice. Make her proud and in control of her femininity. Whatever a girl experiences in those early days will be imprinted on her personality and will have consequences for the rest of her life.

Menstruation empowers a woman so let's make the first meeting with the blood a good one.

PMS

Unfortunately, not every consequence of menstruation is desirable. PMS, pre-menstrual syndrome, is one of those. The horrible monster. Most of the month we easily put up with a lot of crap but a few days before our period can be a difficult time for many women. We react strongly when our boundaries are not respected. Rebellion, pain, depression and anger are well known expressions of menstrual power.

First, stop thinking you are crazy or a bad person for simply being a woman. Our male dominated society has taught us to see PMS as "women's craziness" and there's nothing more effective at making us CRAZIER when our husband or boyfriend says: "Oh! I understand! You've got your period!" Irritability, anxiety, mood swings, depression, headaches, bloating, weight gain, constipation, sugar craving, cramps, acne, breast tenderness, backache are just some of the many, many possible symptoms that are commonly experienced by the millions of

women with PMS. PMS is a reproductive endocrine disorder in which a woman's hormones interact with brain neuron-chemicals, prostaglandins and other body systems differently. Doctors may not know precisely what causes PMS but it is definitely not “in your head.”

But PMS is also a moment when the women become more intuitive, creative and in touch with her inner power. So we should use this moment to be more in touch with ourselves through meditation, positive affirmation or other techniques. In a later chapter, I will show techniques to help you enhance your intuition.

Fighting or denying the power won't it disappear. Your body and brain will just find another way to express it, as pain and disease. Instead, use this moment of power to understand and confront your power, not try to control it. If your psychological symptoms are too severe to handle on your own, your body is sending you a message and you should pay attention to it. Talk to your doctor or consider a therapist. For many women, controlling PMS symptoms is a monthly struggle.

For ordinary symptoms, keep a heating pad and pain relievers handy, give in to cravings for sweets and salty food, and avoid wearing tight pants with a zipper. Monitoring what you eat just before your period can keep PMS at bay and your favorite jeans from feeling too tight.

The Problem with Salt

If your stomach or breasts feel huge and heavy right before or during your period, reduce your intake of salty foods the week before and on the first day of your period. Salt causes water retention and increases bloating. There are the obvious sources of salt that you may crave before your period – pretzels, potato chips and French fries – as well as hidden sources, like frozen dinners and lunch meats which can contain a lot of sodium. Switch to sea salt. And to minimize bloating and drain away water retention, try a lymphatic drainage by a specialist.

Kick the Caffeine

Caffeine in any form can seriously alter your mood, especially if your hormones are already in high gear. So try replacing your favorite coffee or espresso drink with a decaf version. Take a week off from sodas, chocolate and caffeinated teas, too. Replace coffee for decaf green tea.

Drink 8 glasses of water a day

Water, 100 percent fruit juices and caffeine-free herbal tea are better beverage options right before and during your period. Many drugstores and health food stores even sell special "PMS tea."

Avoid Sugar

During the premenstrual period the body demands sugar as fuel and the result is an intense sugar craving. Satisfying those cravings with lots of fruit juice, chocolate, candy, cake or cookies causes blood sugar levels to skyrocket and then plunge. That is what triggers much of the physical fatigue, mental fog and emotional imbalance. Getting off sugar is the secret of curing many cases of PMS. Use any sugar substitute, such as agave or Stevia, which you can find in most health food stores. Look for sugar-free cookies and other delicious substitutes for sugary treats. Eat fresh fruits to satisfy the sugar craving.

Try this: Dissolve 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt in a cup of warm water and drink it down. This should stop your sugar craving immediately.

Some solutions that will reduce the symptoms of PMS

Acupuncture. Tell the acupuncturist your symptoms. Acupuncture is very effective at minimizing or even eliminating PMS symptoms.

Exercise. Regular exercise is central to relieving PMS. Women who begin or accelerate a running program have reported a decrease in premenstrual fluid-related symptoms such as abdominal bloating as well as a reduction in depression and anxiety. Do some form of aerobic activity that raises your heart rate above

120 beats per minute, for 20 to 30 minutes, three to four times a week. This also helps lose weight; excess body fat may exacerbate PMS.

Some of the relief due to exercise may stem from the mood-enhancing effect of physical activity, the so-called "runner's high," experienced by both men and women who exercise regularly. Also exercise alters something in the hypothalamus, probably the core body temperature, which signals the pituitary gland and ovaries to bring a woman's system more into balance.

Yoga for PMS

Stress makes PMS worse and yoga is an excellent way to relieve stress. Certain passive stretches can improve circulation in the groin area and provide relief from PMS. Yoga brings togetherness to your body, mind, spirit and breath and allows you to unwind completely and relax. Then your body's inner intelligence can take over and move you toward health.

Take supplements and herbs

Ginger tea is a great substitute for the emotional lift of chocolate

Calcium 600 milligrams of a day helps mood

Vitamin B6 controls excess estrogen

Vitamin E reduces food craving

Bioflavonoid for headaches

Pycnogenol is good for bloating.

Evening Prime Rose Oil for breast tenderness

ST John's Worth for depression or irritability

Dandelion for excessive bleeding

The Moon Cycles and Women

In ancient cultures, humans lived according to the rhythms of the moon. The moon has a significant influence on the entire electro-magnetic field of the earth, including plants, animals and humans. We like to think that because we have greater reasoning abilities than the animals, we aren't subject to the same natural laws and forces.

But we are part of earth's biosphere, and like the earth, our bodies are 90 percent water. The moon's gravitational pull on the tides also acts on the water of the body and thus on the emotions. Just as the moon influences the tides, so are metabolic rates, women's fertility cycles and other physical functioning.

Each of the four moon phases has its own, very specific, characteristics; all life is affected by it. The influences of the respective moon phases are responsible for weather changes (at new moon), high birth and crime rates (at full moon), bad healing processes (at waxing moon) and optimal results in gardening and farming (depending upon projects at waning or waxing moon), to mention only a few examples.

The moon has a special affinity for women and things female. It's partly nature; women are chemically and physically different. The moon has to do with many parts of female physiology, with the breast, ovaries, uterus, lactation, and menstrual cycles. Women's hormonal balance is quite different from men's and female hormones contribute to emotional fluctuation. A female's monthly cycle, on average, is the same length as the moon's, approximately 29 and 1/2 days. We are strongly affected by the moon's phases. Most notably, our moods and emotions tend to peak when the moon is full. This is backed up by the fact that doctors and nurses who work in emergency rooms have documented the fact that the busiest night of the month occurs when the moon is full.

Women have always had a special connection with the moon. Charting your menstrual cycle according to the moon is one of the oldest forms of menstrual calendars. In fact, it is believed that the first calendars were based upon women's menstrual charts and the moon cycles. With the shift from Pagan beliefs to Christian came the shift from the lunar calendar (consisting of 13 months, all 28 days, totaling 364 days) to the solar calendar, which we use now (12 months, 28, 29, 30 and 31 days depending on the month).

Some women have chosen to return to the lunar calendar in order to chart their periods while many others use a lunar calendar to compliment the more conventional type of menstrual chart. They also find it beneficial to use the moon as the guide to their periods because it provides them with a visual reference as to what stage of their cycle they are in.

Fertility and the Moon

To understand the lunar fertility cycle, you must first understand the moon's cycle. Quite simply, every month the moon transitions from a new moon to a waxing moon then to a full moon and finally to a waning moon before becoming a new moon once again. This lunar cycle, from new moon to new moon, takes 28 days to complete. Directly related to this is the fact that, on average, a woman's menstrual cycle is 28 days. However, it is normal for a woman's cycle to range from 25 to 34 days.

The lunar fertility cycle works on the premise that you can be fertile during your menstrual cycle when the moon is in the same phase it was when you were born. For example, if the moon was in the waning phase when you were born, then, once menstruation begins during puberty, you will be fertile whenever the moon is waning. It is thought that the reason for this fertile phase occurs at birth when the moon arouses certain biochemical and hormonal states in your body, and which then continue to influence your body for life. To find your fertile lunar phase, you must know just what stage the moon was in at the time of your birth. Check an old moon calendar or if you have your natal chart read, the astrologer could provide you with this information.

The sex of your child could be determined according to which astrological sign the moon is in at the time of conception. To get a more detailed look at your lunar fertility cycle, you may want to consult with an astrologer who will prepare and interpret a lunar chart for you. Because the lunar fertility cycle works on a 28-day cycle and your menstrual cycle (most likely) does not, this means that it is possible for you to be fertile twice during the same menstrual cycle. Many feel that lunar phase fertility could be responsible for spontaneous ovulation during the month and could explain why some women get pregnant while they have their period. However, it is also possible for your lunar fertility phase to coincide with ovulation, giving you just one fertile period during the month. By charting and keeping track of both your lunar and biological cycles, it will be easy to know just how fertile you will be during the month.

It is also worth charting your menstrual cycle symptoms like PMS in correlation to the moon's phases. Once you have established your menstrual

patterns, you will only need to know what phase the moon is in to know what stage of your monthly cycle you are in.