

That's On Period!

FILM

▶ Sex and the Body - Time for Some Real Talk! Menstruation

KEY OBJECTIVES

- 1 Students will better understand the mental health aspects of menstruation, especially for LGBTQ+ people
- 2 Students who menstruate will learn about and discuss self-care methods and coping strategies during menstruation
- 3 Students who do not menstruate will be able to empathize better with those who do

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is experienced by at least half the world's population, yet it is considered a taboo subject in many places, with several myths and misconceptions surrounding them. For example,

- “Periods make women irrational”
- “Periods are a sign of womanhood and only women get periods”
- “People who menstruate are dirty, disgusting, and shameful”
- “Women on their periods are possessed by demons”
- “Tampons will make you lose your virginity”

Some might not understand how they work:

- “Why can't you hold it in, turn it off, or push it out all at once?”
- “Every woman gets their period at the same time each month”
- “Period blood is the same as the blood from a wound”
- “If period pain is normal, why don't you just suck it up and deal with it?”
- “Menstrual blood is blue—I see it in advertisements all the time”

This discussion group aims to dispel some of these myths and provide a safe and inclusive space for adolescents to talk about menstruation.

TOPICS

- Health education
- menstruation
- gender studies
- social studies

KEYWORDS

- Menstruation
- sexual education
- mental health
- LGBTQ
- transgender
- gender dysphoria

LEVEL

- Secondary School

RESOURCE TYPE

- Discussion

INTENDED AUDIENCE SIZE

- No more than 20 students

MODE OF DELIVERY

- Small group
- live online

TIME FOR ACTIVITY

- 60 min.

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GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Do all women get periods?
- Are all people who get periods women?
- How do you think menstruation works?
- What have your experiences with menstruation been like? How does it affect your mental wellbeing?
- Do you think trans people experience menstruation differently from cis people? How, or how not?

MATERIALS/PREPURATION

- A true/false quiz sheet for Menstruation Myth Busting on paper or online questionnaire maker of your choice

Questions and Answer Key here:

For in-person workshops

- Whiteboard and markers
- Question box (with a small opening in the lid)
- Paper for the question box (uniform color and size)

For virtual workshops

- Virtual whiteboard of your choice
- Anonymous question or suggestion box or polling website of your choice

TASKS/PROCEDURE

1) INTRODUCTION

- a** If the facilitator and participants do not already know each other: Introduce yourself with your name and pronouns and have everyone else do the same. (Example: "Hi everyone, my name is Jo, and my pronouns are they/them.") Then, introduce the topic and hand out the question paper. "Today, we're going to talk about menstruation and mental health. During the discussion, please feel free to ask questions or give anonymous answers by writing them down and dropping them in this submission box."

- b** If the facilitator and participants already know each other, just introduce the topic.

2) GROUND RULES

Because sensitive topics will be discussed, set ground rules to establish a safe and respectful environment for everyone. Involve the students in creating the rules, so that everyone can agree upon them. Examples include:

- a** Listen when others are speaking

- b** No personal questions

- c** Respect personal boundaries

- d** Use inclusive language

- e** You don't have to come out [of the closet] if you don't want to

- f** Keep shared personal information confidential

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3) PART 1: MENSTRUATION MYTH BUSTING [20 minutes]

- a) [5 minutes] Hand out the quiz or provide the link and give the students 5 minutes to finish it.
- b) [8 minutes] Have the students watch "Sex and the Body - Time for Some Real Talk! - Menstruation" at this link:
- c) [7 minutes] Go over the answers together.

4) PART 2: LET'S TALK ABOUT PERIODS, BABY

[30 minutes]

- a) Lead-in: "The film we just watched and quiz we just did focused mainly on the physiological aspects of menstruation—now, let's talk about mental health issues around menstruation."
- b) Explore the following questions with the class. Students may speak up or use the question box if they want to be anonymous. Take notes on the whiteboard during the discussion.
 - i) How does menstruation affect your mental health?
 - ii) If you are trans, non-binary, or queer, and experience gender dysphoria during periods, how do you cope with it? How can the people around you support you?

5) PART 3: WRAPPING UP [10 minutes]

- a) Summarize the lesson and discussion points with the class.

SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

If someone breaks the rules that the group had agreed upon (discrimination, bullying, hostility), the facilitator can enforce a three-strikes system: give a warning the first and second times; if there is a third time, you may remove that person from the conversation.

POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS

- 1) What kind of infrastructural, linguistic, or cultural changes would you like to see in society that would lessen your discomfort with menstruation?
- 2) Is it possible for you to campaign for gender neutral bathrooms at your school, or menstrual hygiene product vending machines in boys' bathrooms?

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GLOSSARY

WORD OR PHRASE	MEANING
LGBTQ	An acronym that stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer”
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
Transgender	A person whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth. This includes trans men, trans women, non-binary people, and anyone who isn't cis.
Sex assigned at birth	The sex that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy. One can be assigned male at birth (AMAB), assigned female at birth (AFAB), or intersex.
Intersex	Intersex people have atypical chromosome patterns, gonads, or genitals from traditionally male or female ones.
Transitioning	The processes in which a trans person undergoes to live more fully as their true gender.
Trans man	A man who was assigned female at birth (AFAB)
Trans woman	A woman who was assigned male at birth (AMAB)
Transmasculine	A trans person whose identity aligns closer to masculinity
Transfeminine	A trans person whose identity aligns closer to femininity
Sexual orientation	An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.
Gender identity	One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither
Gender dysphoria	Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is different from their identity.
Non-binary	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. It is also an umbrella term that encompasses identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, gender-fluid, demiboy, and demigirl.
Queer	A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Can be a slur in some areas but reclaimed by some LGBTQ communities.
Coming out of the closet	The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.
Outed or outing	Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or non-binary identity to others without their permission. Example: “Sometimes I'm afraid I'll accidentally out myself to my homophobic parents.”

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AUTHORS AND SOURCES

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