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# WHY MENSTRUATION MATTERS?

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In the depths of planet Earth, God thought it best to create life. He brought forth light, trees, flowers, birds, the magnificent sun and even the galaxies. The Master of the Universe assiduously crafted the wonders of the Earth. Yet, there was a great void, a hollowness, a desolation that only a human could fill. Therefore, this master mind created a man. But what was

the man without a woman? Who would he express his appreciation to? Whose face would he caress? Whose shoulder would he lie upon? So woman was created. Out of the rib of the man she emerged and is now honored as the "Empress of Life."

However, life is never a bed of roses and each person must experience his/her dispensation of challenges. When girls are in the process of developing into women, there are myriad changes that are experienced. Somatically, there is the appearance of breasts, the expansion of the hips and even the emergence of pubic hair. However, one of the most principal aspects is Menstruation. According to the Webster Dictionary, "Menstruation is the process in a woman of discharging blood and other material from the lining of the uterus at intervals of about one lunar month from puberty until the menopause, except during pregnancy."

In the first half of the cycle, levels of estrogen (the "female hormone") start to rise. Estrogen plays an important role in keeping you healthy, especially by helping you to build strong bones and to help keep them strong as you get older. Estrogen also makes the lining of the uterus (womb) grow and thicken. This lining of the womb is a place that will nourish the embryo if a pregnancy occurs. At the same time the lining of the womb is growing, an egg, or ovum, in one of the ovaries starts to mature. At about day 14 of an average 28-day cycle, the egg leaves the ovary. This is called ovulation.

After the egg has left the ovary, it travels through the Fallopian tube to the uterus. Hormone levels rise and help prepare the uterine lining for pregnancy. A woman is most likely to get pregnant during the 3 days before or on the day of ovulation.

A woman becomes pregnant if the egg is fertilized by a man's sperm cell and attaches to the uterine wall. If the egg is not fertilized, it will break apart. Then, hormone levels drop, and the thickened lining of the uterus is shed during the menstrual period.

I vividly recall when I got my first period, it was during the August vacation. I was playing cricket with the boys in my street. I usually had to play with the boys as a child because there were no other girls living in my street. As the darkness enveloped the brilliant afternoon sky, I scampered to bat. I was determined to get the last batting before the game was over. All was well, I was batting well, but just until the final ball. As the last ball was about to be bowled, I felt something trickling down my thighs. At first I was worried but then I dismissed the idea of a period because I would usually perspire in my thighs. However, after the cricket was over and I went home, I realized that the “thing” I was anticipating had finally arrived. See, I was a late bloomer so I was elated to catch up with my peers. I was becoming a woman. However, as time progressed, the cramps intensified and the aches increased. It was during these tempestuous moments that I frequently pondered. Are menstruations really important? Do they actually matter?

In today's society, the word “Menstruation” is considered a taboo. In many societies especially those of the Eastern world, the advent of menstruation accompanies shame, isolation, discrimination and physical and psychological abuse. In addition, women are prevented from cooking, participating in social activities and even attending church. It is agonizing to realize that in countries like Kenya, sanitary pads are expensive. They are so expensive they cost the price of a family's meal. Therefore, in these circumstances, women utilize old rags, magazines, leaves

and paradoxically feathers. Thus, these women are susceptible to infections and sicknesses. The maladministration of menstruation causes women discomforts. Studies have shown that more than 20 percent of Nairobi girls miss school because of their periods.

However, despite the taboo, prejudice and criticism, Menstruation Matters. Menstruations not only matter to women but to the whole society. Principally, menstruation matters because it is important to education. When educational institutions effectively edify girls of the process of menstruation, they can skillfully manage it without feeling inferior or experiencing low self-esteem.

In addition, the word Menstruation has the root word “Men”. This indicates that men play an integral role in this process. Therefore, men should not be adamant in defying the negative stigma that surround menstruation but should embrace it.

Furthermore, menstruation matters to progress. The improvement of menstrual hygiene can have a profound effect on girls and women. It can aid to unlatch progress related to health, education and gender equality.

Furthermore, how can we have babies if our bodies are not prepared for pregnancy each month? It is the dark, red flow that indicates diseases that may jeopardize our health. Menstruation also adds longevity to life.

It is time that menstruation be taken seriously. It is principally the responsibility of the internal community to realize the significance of Menstruation. We must endeavor to break the silence and stigma and herald our voices.

Menstruation is not a secret that needs to be cautiously concealed. In actuality, it is the silence that inflicts the wounds of discrimination and abuse. Let us raise our voices as we ensure that every woman and girl receive the requisite information and resources they need because Menstruations Matter.