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Why menstruation matters?

As I pen this essay, I vividly recall the first time I got my period. I was eleven years old and on vacation at my grandparents' house with my family, my aunt called out to my mother and informed her that my pajamas was soiled and she believes that I am getting my first period. Excitement filled the house, much to my unknown of what was happening to my body, as my mother ecstatically informed my other family of the news. I was woken from my slumber and guided through the process of putting a sanitary napkin on with all the females in the house. My thought was 'this must be important to be getting so much attention' and so I went with the flow. It appeared to be a custom within my family to receive a financial gift on a girl's first period and that made the pain bearable, cramps. This was followed by the 'talk' from my mother and other female relatives on what this meant and the changes that will follow.

While I am fortunate to have received such love and support from my family, I am aware there are others who are not privy to such. The topic of menstruation continues to have a taboo within many societies across the world and the lack of knowledge on the topic generates damaging misconceptions. This poses the question of 'how do we let others, who are culturally ingrained to view menstruation, as 'evil or a sin or the negative connotation attached to it, that menstruation does play a meaningful role in the development of a girl'. I will begin by letting you know, why menstruation matters, in my opinion.

First, as a society, we have a responsibility in being the foundation within which our ladies are molded and given the positive push to step forth into the working world and achieve their goals. We have the important task of sensitizing our ladies from the home to be aware of the importance of getting their period. This education will start from the home and transcend into the school system. That method of transference is crucial given that our beliefs, cultural views, and morals are passed on to the ladies and will be with them forever; especially in cultures where a woman is forced to have sterilization which can have profound physical and psychological effect. So if we are viewing menstruation in the negative and teach the same, then it will result in brainwashed mind. The constant knowledge sharing of menstruation within the school and homes is an avenue to end the taboo against menstruation and is a viable solution for ensuring that every girl and woman has access to the information and resources she needs.

Despite having the word 'men' in menstruation, many men are unaware of what it is. As we continue on the quest to sensitize on the importance of menstruation, the input and cooperation of men and boys are needed so they can be a part of the dialogue. They can contribute, greatly, to breaking the silence on periods. The involvement of sperm bearers strengthens the urgent

need for attention and importance to be given to menstruation in many societies where a woman is ostracized for having her period and is imbued with a sense of worthlessness thus low self-esteem. This support generates a greater call to initiate action on the subject by the male populace.

In almost every country, there are girls and women in communities who are not afforded the opportunity to have hygiene products during their menstruation. The lack of products stymie's many women who are capable of being successful future leaders because they are forced to quit school thus diminishing their basic right to education. Some women are forced to use cloth due to lack of finance to purchase sanitary napkins which can pose future health threats to a woman given that the cloth can result in infections.

Lastly and most importantly, the importance of our health cannot be emphasized enough. Menstruation is a sign that the female body is growing and it is preparing a woman for a unique moment that ensures the continuation of life, childbirth. The medical explanation of the release of the egg on a monthly basis and when fused with a sperm results in a woman being pregnant is explained by numerous medical professionals. Periods indicate that we are fertile and capable of engaging in that blissful process. A missed period is a red flag used by many women to check their health status. This can be life-saving at times, given that many deadly diseases are surfaced such as cancer or ovarian diseases. This natural tracking system enhances the quality of life of a woman.

So, why menstruation matters?...

Menstruation matters because our home and school is an institution for promotion of education and should educate girls on the importance of menstruation and to erase the negative taboo on the subject.

Menstruation matters because men support is critical in developing a society where equity can be achieved.

Menstruation matters because girls and women need to be afforded the basic amenity of sanitary pads so they can achieve their goals.

Menstruation matters because a woman's health is key to the continuation of the human life-cycle.

To my fellow womankind, you are strong, you are beautiful and getting your period should a moment of pride and not disdain. Our body is meant to be our sanctuary for if we can give life through it, then we must have a great importance in the eyes of the beholder. Ladies, continue to feel proud of your period, period.