



Introduction

THE WOMAN'S QUEST FOR POWER AND WISDOM

Centered in a uniquely female process – the menstrual cycle – and using practices and principles affirming to women, **The Woman's Quest** is an intelligent and creative 13-menstrual months spiritual guide, grounded in female ways. A self-development programme for women, **The Woman's Quest** takes you on a journey of discovery and recovery, of power and wisdom gathering. Embodying cyclical consciousness and the power of the feminine, you can come to know a deeper sense of love, empowerment and healing. It's a journey in which the individual and the world are intimately interwoven.

WHY PAY ATTENTION TO THE CYCLE?

As women we have an enormous elemental intelligence that informs our emotional and spiritual development. The menstrual cycle is like the yoga or Tao of women – a template for psychological and spiritual evolution, an innate intelligence that works, guides and matures you. A repeating rhythm you can't control, the cycle is your training ground for coming to know and love this elemental intelligence. It is the menstrual cycle itself that creates the tension necessary for you to fully embody this elemental presence.

The cycle is an organic process of timing that is uncontrolled by the inorganic societal timing imposed from outside. An inner referencing guide, it can initiate you into deep altered states, cultivating your authority and wisdom. The years of menstruating give you the compound interest from each monthly process, your body inducting you into something larger and larger. Then, when you arrive at the door of menopause, you will have some inkling of the nature of this transition and be able to reap the full harvest of its challenges and riches.

The talents of your cycle are to some extent a given. However, to be able to access the fullness of what is available you need to pay deep attention to the process and be willing to follow it.

THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE:

- Cultivates emotional and spiritual intelligence
- Builds inner authority
- Facilitates a deeper intimacy with self and union with another
- Develops interdependent consciousness
- Deepens appreciation of meaning and purpose in life
- Strengthens intuitive and psychic ability
- Awakens the activist in us
- Teaches us about the dynamics of the creative process
- Educates us in the art of understanding energy and timing
- Initiates (along with the transitions of menarche, pregnancy and birth and menopause).
- Is a crucial preparation of embodiment for the process of pregnancy and birth
- Is a natural healing system

MENSTRUATION IS:

- An altered state of consciousness
- A natural visionary state
- The grace of renewal and inspiration
- A moment of connection with ones deepest or highest self, with the World.

MANIFESTING YOUR DREAMS

By developing tools to create and sustain a meaningful and rich life through knowledge of the cycle, you'll discover your own Menstrual Dreaming. The wisdom of menstruation, menstrual dreaming is the deep intelligence of female embodied

existence. Through the stories, or dreaming, your body reveals your spirituality and power, your calling and connection to the world. It is your ally in manifesting your goals and life calling.

YOUR PERSONAL QUEST

This 13-session course takes you on a quest to discover:

- How to access the wise power of female embodied life
- The means for manifesting your calling and maturing a deep inner authority
- How to open doors to ecstatic states and a woman's natural vision questing time
- The different creative phases of the menstrual cycle and how to get the most out of them
- Your natural times of heightened inspiration and wisdom gathering
- Your times for activity and your times for dreaming
- How to strengthen self-care and, for those who suffer from menstrual problems, healing
- How to become your own life coach through knowledge of the cycle
- 13 indispensable allies for the woman's path
- The truth about the menstrual story
- The power of the Feminine
- A stronger sense of belonging in and care of the World.

WHAT YOU WILL EXPLORE

Spread over 13 menstrual monthly sessions to give you time to mature into the process and for the magic of time to work on you, each session can be its own self-contained learning/discovery/initiatory experience. It is an opening to a specific topic that will deepen over time.

Month 1: Getting to know the cycle

Month 2: Mapping the cycle

Month 3: Inner work and the premenstruum

Month 4: Losing it, using it – power and the premenstruum

Month 5: Power and the critic

Month 6: The bitch – your inner power broker

Month 7: Power and vulnerability

Month 8: Liminality and creativity

Month 9: Intuition, guidance and meaning making

Month 10: Intimacy and relationship

Month 11: Initiation, ecstasy and shamanism

Month 12: Time, timeliness and timing

Month 13: Embodying your wisdom

IS THE COURSE REALLY FOR ME?

If you're in your menstruating years and are interested in **leadership, creativity, spirituality, wellbeing, counselling** and **psychotherapy, coaching, change, activism/world work, shamanism**, and the **work of Soul**, this course is the right choice. Regardless of how busy you are you can do this course. While there is some time commitment involved, the main commitment is a readiness to question previous beliefs and ways of doing things. Although it's not a quick fix, you might be surprised at how quickly the 'gold' appears once you start making changes. You'll be using a different kind of consciousness – modes of being and acting that refuse to be motivated, forced or bullied into action. It's about a deep allowing through which emerges an enormous elemental intelligence that can guide, motivate and anoint your life with an enormous grace.

WHAT IF MY CYCLE IS IRREGULAR?

I encourage you to follow the rhythm that is your cycle, however strange and erratic it may seem. This may mean the course takes longer to complete. If the gaps between periods are very long, you might want to read ahead to other sessions and find ways to combine them.



You might also want to try doing the **Deer Exercise** (a Taoist practice that involves a self massage and breathing process that takes about 5 – 10 minutes each day to do). This exercise is a marvellous practice for healing menstrual problems and regulating the cycle. For more information go to www.recreatingmenstruation.com or buy a copy of my co-authored book *The Pill: are you sure it's for you?* (Allen and Unwin, 2008) in which we describe the exercise.

WHAT IF I'M ON THE PILL?

This presents a dilemma because, apart from the mini pill, all others interrupt the cycle and, even if you give yourself monthly 'bleeds' this is not like a normal menstrual bleed and the cycle is not a normal cycle. The mini pill, rather than interrupting the cycle, affects the lining of the womb so that it becomes a hostile environment for implantation, as well as keeping the mucous infertile. Some women do experience mood changes on the Pill that are similar to the classic premenstrual ones leading up to the monthly 'bleed'. This I cannot explain except to say that it is as if the spirit of the real cycle cannot be silenced and tries to speak anyway. The Pill also has a flattening effect on your feelings and cuts you off from your depths. To reap the full rewards of this course you would need to be off the Pill.



If you use the Pill for contraceptive purposes, do check out *The Contraception Kit* by Francesca

Naish and Jane Bennett,

www.nfmcontraception.com

If you take the Pill for health reasons, consider working with a holistic health practitioner, as there are many natural ways for easing and healing menstrual problems. Check out my books *The Wild Genie: the Healing Power of Menstruation*, *Walking with the Genie: the Modern Woman's Menstrual Health Kit*, or *The Pill: are you sure it's for you?* (co-authored with Jane Bennett) in which we also address how to heal menstrual problems.

WILL I HAVE TO CHANGE MY DIET?

Throughout the course I will suggest health tips, such as dietary suggestions, for you to try. Your physical wellbeing is not separate from your psychological and spiritual wellbeing. In fact much premenstrual moodiness can be significantly eased with a great diet. Feeling nourished also makes it easier to expand into, and handle, the heightened states of menstruation. If you suffer from extreme menstrual problems, this course will be a vital step in healing them, and may even prove revelatory to you.

WHAT ABOUT DRUGS?

If you are dependent on drugs (legal and illegal), alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine or sugar they will affect your experience of the cycle and the degree of depth you may access. The irony is that if you're using these substances heavily it may be that you are psychologically highly sensitive already but you don't yet know how to live into it for whatever reason. Some of you may enjoy the above on an occasional basis. During the course I will suggest that you go without, particularly leading into and during bleeding. Menstruation itself is already an altered state of consciousness, and to take a mood altering substance during that time can both aggravate and blunt the natural experience.

DOES IT MATTER IF I MISS A MONTH OF DOING THE COURSE?

Even with the best will in the world life intervenes and you find a month has slipped by and you've barely attended to the Quest. That can happen. And it's fine; simply pick up where you left off. You might find you can combine two sessions into one month if you're getting the hang of the process. Don't let it derail you forever. Just do the best you can within the circumstances you find yourself. You are learning a practice; a way of being that is with you for life and not just the 13 'months' of the course. Some women are working with the **Woman's Quest** in groups. This is an ideal way to sustain the program and possibly access greater depth and meaning.