

Episode 86 - Transforming your menstrual experience

[00:00:00] Hello, my name is Françoise Molenaar and this is That Fertile Feeling, the podcast. If you've been trying to get pregnant for a while and you feel like life has lost a bit of its spark in the process, then this is THE podcast for you.

Every week I speak to experts and peers from around the globe to discover how you can connect to your feminine flow and stop trying so hard to conceive and how to put some magic back in your life and your relationships. Are you ready to make life just a bit more effortless? Let's dive in!

Hello and welcome to a new episode of That Fertile Feeling, the podcast. My name is Françoise and this week's episode is all about the menstrual phase. As I explained last week, I've decided to record four episodes this month that all focus on a different phase of your cycle. So last week's episode was all about the two week wait [00:01:00] and this week, as I mentioned, we'll be talking about the menstrual phase.

Um, Which is probably the hardest phase when you're trying to conceive. Because it's literally life breaking your heart. You know, you take that test, you see only one line appear. If you're anything like me, you throw it in the garbage can and then take it out again five minutes later. I would also just walk away and not look at the results, because it was just the anxiety, my anxiety got so high, I would just leave it in the bathroom and then maybe come back like an hour later to sort of confirm what I already knew, like, that I wasn't pregnant.

Um, or maybe again, if you're anything like me, you start to bleed and then you Google implantation bleeding and you see all these disgusting pictures and you tell yourself, well, maybe I'm just having some implantation bleeding as I go through, you know, three pads. So it's really [00:02:00] intense. There's this hope that you're clinging onto that you see disappear in front of your eyes that you don't want to sort of, you're still in denial.

Um, it's just really painful. And at the same time, there are things that you can do during this phase of the cycle to support yourself. And a lot of that has to do with understanding your hormones and understanding what's possible during this phase or what your natural inclination is during this phase.

Um, why I think that's so beneficial and why I wanted to make this series on these different phases of the cycle is that a lot of what we experience is actually heightened or intensified by what's happening in your cycle, by your hormones. So for me, it really helps to understand what's going on hormonally because that sort of creates a little bit of a different perspective on what I'm experiencing.

I [00:03:00] read this one example of someone who thought They were depressed, and then when they started tracking their cycle, they found out it was actually on certain days in their cycle that they were feeling that way, um, and that's when they realized something was going on with their hormones, and they didn't need to take antidepressants, but that they could really focus on improving their hormonal balance to get rid of those depressed feelings.

So that's why it's so key, I feel, to understand these hormones and to start tracking how you, how you're doing throughout your cycle. So you can take that information and really focus on bringing your body and your hormones back to a more balanced state. Because in the end, that's what our bodies want to do.

That's what our hormones want to do. They want, they want balance. They're primed to always find that balance. So if we can use the information that's there in our cycle, we can actively heal ourselves and our fertility as well. Another thing why I find it so important to understand, [00:04:00] that you understand your cycle is that every cycle has its superpowers.

So there are these aspects that you can work with to improve your well being and your fertility. But this is not how we, you know, normally look at our lives. If again, if I look at myself as an example, I always used to think like I needed to be the best version of me every single day. And the best version of me meant someone who was outgoing, was doing well at work, you know, had lots of energy.

Um, and thereby I was not recognizing that my body isn't the same body every day. My hormones aren't the same every day and that there's these natural fluctuations and rather than expect something different from myself, I could actually flow along with them and in that way also see that every phase has its superpowers that I can use for different things

in my life. And that's, I think, really the beauty of this work, the cycle, menstrual cycle awareness, is [00:05:00] that, you know, you can start to see great changes in how you experience life. And also it's a really useful tool to support your fertility. Um, so for today, I will quickly dive into what's

happening at the hormonal level when you get your period, and I will explain how that affects you at the physical level, the emotional and spiritual level.

And I will also provide you with a couple of strategies to really harness the power of this part of your cycle, because it is a painful time. There's a lot of grief and there's something really amazing that can happen you won't believe it when I tell you what is possible during this part of the cycle until you start trying it out for yourself and then you see oh my god this might become Like one of the favorite parts of my cycle.

So what happens with your hormones? Um, during the [00:06:00] previous episode, during the episode on surviving the two week wait, I walked you through all of the hormones that are at play in the entire cycle. And hormones are chemicals that are made in one part of the body to deliver messages to another part of the body.

So they're really, yeah, they really tell the body what it needs to do in order to, remain balanced, uh, in an environment that's constantly changing. Now, today we're talking about menstruation. So what happens before the bleed is that your endometrium, that's the inner lining of your uterus, is really plump and thick.

Um, it's, your body has created this very hospitable environment for an embryo. And the hormone that's responsible for maintaining your endometrium this way is progesterone. That's the hormone that's there to really make sure that the pregnancy, uh, is sustained, but when there's no pregnancy, progesterone [00:07:00] crashes.

So your period is actually triggered by the progesterone withdrawal. Progesterone is no longer there to maintain the endometrium, that inner lining of your, your womb. And what happens instead is that you see an influx of inflammatory cells into the endometrium. So they start, these cells, they start to break down the lining.

And it is a repair process as well. Inflammation is generally a good thing, it means your body is healing. So what we're seeing happening in the womb is that all of these blood vessels that got really enlarged to make sure the endometrium had a lot of blood for your baby, these blood vessels start to narrow down, they start to tighten.

We have these inflammatory cells that break down the lining of the womb. Your womb contracts to expel the blood from your womb. That's the cramps that you feel. And in the process, your body completely heals itself. So there's no trace of

wound. There's [00:08:00] no scarring, scarring after, um, menstruation. Now what I just described is like the ideal period, um, the ideal menstruation. So that means that you shouldn't feel too much pain. Um, cramping is normal, but if you have to take painkillers to deal with the cramps, something isn't going as it should.

Same for blood loss. Like, blood loss is normal, but if you have too much blood loss, where it really interferes with your daily life, you know, something's probably going on there. Um, I won't go into too much detail here, I've recorded an episode, two episodes ago on hormonal balance, so you might listen to that if this is something that you're experiencing.

Definitely go talk to your doctor. These complaints are often not taken seriously, but they are an indication that something is not happening as it should in your body. So that is what happens at the hormonal level. So what [00:09:00] happens at the emotional and spiritual level? Now, this is a big cleanse and unfortunately that is why getting your period feels, you know, so emotionally painful.

You have that hope of a pregnancy and as your hormones collapse, so do your emotions. There's grief because there's no pregnancy, but that is heightened by the fact that your hormones, your emotions are already, like, hypersensitive.

And this is something that really helped me deal with the despair of a negative pregnancy test or getting my period. Um, It's not to say that you shouldn't feel sad or you shouldn't feel pain, um, but it really helped me to remind myself that I was also just in a feeling very vulnerable. Because of my hormones, that sort of my armor had come crashing down, my heart was wide open, and that's, you know, everything could just fly in there, [00:10:00] feeling everything.

Um, it's recognizing, and I feel in a sense that's also where surrender might start, recognizing that you are just super vulnerable at this time of the month, and that, that is why the negative pregnancy test or getting your period is such a punch in the gut.

There are things, other things happening, that you can use to improve your experience and your fertility. There are some natural powers in that menstrual phase. There's a power of detachment, of inner connection, effortless presence, stillness, expansive awareness, altered states of consciousness, restoration, bliss, acceptance, inner guidance and instruction.

And I can imagine you thinking, what? What are you saying? I don't recognize that at all. And that's why it's so crucial to harness the power of your menstrual phase, because these superpowers are there [00:11:00] and they can really help you set yourself up for the entire month. They can have a huge impact on your fertility journey.

But the key element is to really take time to rest, retreat within yourself, replenish your energy and connect to your intuition. That's what you should be doing during your menstrual phase. And if you do that, okay. there's this whole world that opens up for you. Um, so I can understand you saying, well, I feel so low.

I just want to wallow and distract myself and watch Friends on the couch all day long, you know, or just retreat into work because it's so painful. But, um, but there is a different way possible. Um, and once you experience that, you will not want to go back to the old way of living. So a great book, if you want to read more about this, is called Wild Power.

It's written by two authors, Alexandra Pope and Sjanie Wurlitzer, and they mention [00:12:00] that there are five stages to your menstrual phase. And I will walk you through them all and show you what's possible for you. And the first stage is the one that you may be very familiar with. It's called the separation phase.

So as your period approaches, Or once you've gotten that negative pregnancy test, you might feel that you want to retreat within yourself, you know, especially when you're trying to conceive, you can feel, you may feel so devastated that you don't want to interact with anyone or with life. And in part, that's what's, you know, um, inherent to this phase

of the cycle. There is this call to go within, um, and there's an invitation to truly embrace that and to see how you can carve out some space for yourself. So don't go to any gatherings, really create that space to wallow, allow yourself to be with what is, do a ritual to honor that pregnancy that wasn't.

[00:13:00] Really sink into the moment, stay on the couch with a hot water bottle, cry, you know, and cry some more. And then once you're done crying, continue to stay on the couch, couch feeling miserable. And then, you know, at some point you think, well, I need to get on with my life. No, just stay in that couch and feel how you can also rest.

Because once you start resting, you allow your body to prepare, repair itself. And this is where, with rest, you move into the second phase of the menstrual phase, which is surrender. Surrender to this repair process. Um, this is where you can really change how you support your fertility. I've talked about the role of the nervous system on many

episodes of this podcast, the role that the nervous system plays in fertility, how our systems are on overload, how we structurally experience way too much stress. And still, you know, I know this, and [00:14:00] still, during my menstrual phase, when I try to stay on the couch, it feels so frivolous to slow down and do nothing.

Um, that's how we're programmed. Here is your body telling you to do just that and it's the best thing you can do for your body is to follow, for your fertility is to follow your body's lead and really signal to your system, okay, I'm listening. You're telling me that it's time to rest. I'm doing that, just that, and thereby I'm showing you that it's safe to conceive.

Um, everyone always has practical objections, like I said, we are not wired this way, society tells us that it's wrong to slow down, maybe there's the feminists within you telling you, um, I'm not a weak woman, right? There's so many reasons why you may tell yourself that you don't have time to rest. And ideally, that's what Wild Power, the book also mentions, every now and again you would want [00:15:00] to plan a 'big bleed', I think they call it, where you have a couple of days where all you do is retreat and be with your bleed.

But you know, normally we all have lives, um, that's not possible. But there are things you can do to carve out that space for yourself to rest and recover. Um, Something, it's a tip that's also from the book, it's called the 1 percent rule. So, you can start by just envisioning what your ideal bleed would look like.

Like, if you had all of the, all the time in the world, how would you design these 4, 5, 6 days, so that you can really, Surrender to the bleed, to the emotions, really give your body that body, that rest that it craves and then just give yourself one percent of that. So it can look like getting healthy takeout rather than, you know, having to cook dinner for yourself.

It can look like, um, something I love to do. Just taking a hot bath every day. [00:16:00] Um, there are so many things that you can slightly shift to create a little bit of space for rest. You can use the time that you normally use for exercise, like you don't want to be doing high intensity training during your period anyway, so why not

stay home rather than go to the gym and use that time that you already have, you know Blocked in your schedule to just sit on the couch I keep coming back to the couch just sit on the couch and do nothing a great thing to do is to be a slacker For a couple of days where you just try and see if you can get by with doing like your minimal best um Whenever your mind tells you that you should be doing, I should be doing laundry, I should be doing this, ignore it.

There's no to do lists allowed. You only do what's absolutely essential to get by at work, at home, but that laundry can wait until after your [00:17:00] bleed. Um, You know, order your groceries in, don't go to the store, just find ways to, to really slack off. Another thing to create space for yourself, throw all your social media and other apps from your phone so that you, you know, whenever you feel that urge to sit down and scroll, that you've actually created space to be and rest in the moment.

Resting is not the same as distracting. And that's what will come up in the next phases as well. You actually want to be really present in that sensation of rest, because that's where the deep restoration happens. And know that even half an hour can do wonders. That's usually the most that I can do is half an hour in the morning, maybe half an hour in the evening.

Rather than watch television with my husband during these days, I will do a little ritual or like I said, take that bath. Um, there's time for us to connect during the rest of my cycle, but during those forced rest. Those first four [00:18:00] days, this is my time to really be with myself. So really create that space where I can savor the feeling of resting and giving myself what I need.

What will happen once you start doing this? And this is where I was blown away myself and I feel you will be blown away as well. Your body actually produces oxytocin as your womb contracts during your bleed. So this is the love hormone. This is what creates that bond between mother and child. This is what happens, you know, when you cuddle with your loved one as well.

It's a really relaxing, really restorative feeling. Um, once you start slowing down and retreating within, you will start noticing the effects of this hormone. So you might be feeling a feeling of bliss, of oneness, of belonging, of restoration. Can you imagine your period being blissful? Well, this is actually how I now experience my period, because I take that space [00:19:00] to feel within rest that the oxytocin is doing its job.

I just, um, looked at my diary, like I always write down in one or two sentences how I feel on every day throughout my cycle, also to start noticing patterns. So

on day three of my period, which just happened, I wrote, floating through life, ecstatic, I feel threads of golden light all around me. I realized I was in this sort of dreamy state all day long. Um, normally you might call it being distracted, but because I was actually, you know, trying to find ways in which I could create that space to just be, um, I could also really savor that dreaminess. Again, I wasn't on the couch all day long, but throughout the day I looked for ways in which I could just slow down and go easy on myself, and that's how I started to notice that really, um, yeah, dreamy feeling.

And this is what made the biggest shift for me. Once I started realizing that this is possible, this is what [00:20:00] made rest easier, because now I know there's sort of the, the reward for rest. This is what makes me come back for more. So that was the third phase. Finding that renewal, but then something else happens that also really beautiful. Phase four of your period is visioning So I just mentioned this during your period there's Um, you have access to a heightened state of intuition and vision.

That's because you're just, it's like all of your layers, all of your protective layers have disappeared. You're so open. That's why everything hurts so much as well, but it also means that you're really open to deeper messages that are coming to you and this is really important for your fertility as well.

Um, um, I think one of the things that happens when you get your period, or at least it was my experience, is that you want to start making plans for that cycle right away. [00:21:00] And then especially when you're in treatment, you know, you have to call your clinic, you have to set up an ultrasound, so it's very easy to get carried away by the logistics of it all.

And you should definitely do that, right? But if you take the time to rest, to sort of get into that blissful state of just floating through your bleed, you have that access to your higher intuition, your subconscious as well. So take those moments, of rest and go within and see if any messages want to come to you.

So you can either journal, meditate, draw, use oracle cards, whatever it is that connects you to your inner state of intuitive knowing. But this is where your subconscious is really accessible to you. It will tell you what would be the best thing for you to do right now. And this phase is especially important if the two week wait was hard for you.

As I mentioned in the previous episode that it's really important to keep an eye out for any themes or [00:22:00] issues that might be emerging here. During the two week wait you have your inner critic who sort of a messenger saying look

there's something deeper here that you need to look at so that's what you do during the two week wait is you start noticing what is presenting itself here what do i need to look at and then during your menstrual phase is where you can actually find the solution. So say during your two week wait you realize i'm just so tired of my fertility treatment, of this fertility journey Um, then during your menstrual phase, you can sit with that feeling of tiredness and say, okay, what is it that my intuition feels I need to do right now?

Or maybe during your two week wait, you felt that you are just so unsupported by your partner. Then in your menstrual phase, you can, you know, go back to that feeling of not being supported and see what is it that I really need to feel more supported and connected. Um, or if there's anything, you know, you have a feeling that there's anything that's [00:23:00] blocking your fertility, like you have this nagging sensation that there's something you need to be looking, at this during your menstrual phase is a great time to connect to your body, to connect to your womb and feel, okay, what messages want to come through? What is it that's happening with my ovaries right now? What is it telling me? Why am I experiencing certain symptoms?

If you feel a lot of pain, can you really dive into the pain and feel what is it that it's telling you? I remember doing one episode with, um, native Canadian healer, Cindy Simpson, I think her name is. And she mentioned she was actually diagnosed with endometriosis. And she used this method by really going into the womb and feeling like, what is it that it's trying to tell me?

That's how she realized that You know, she had to really work through some things that had come up for her with the death of her mother. And it's by really being with the sadness that came up with certain patterns [00:24:00] that she never really noticed before seeing them, looking at them and telling her inner child.

'It's okay. Now you can let go, you know, this, I see you, I see what you've been trying to do. It's no longer necessary.' That's how all of her symptoms cleared. So don't argue with any ideas that come. That's another important thing for this phase. Just record them. Simply receive any insights that want to come through and feel how they make you feel.

That's if it feels good. It's it's the right thing even though your mind has all of these stories about it Just go with the feelings and then we reach the final phase of your menstrual phase the phase of the phase This is the phase of clarity and direction So as you near the end of your bleed, you might feel a surge of energy

and that's actually the estrogen that's starting to rebuild your lining, your, uh, your womb for a next [00:25:00] possibility of a pregnancy.

Um, the invitation here is not to move forward straight away, but to really integrate the ideas and visions that came to you, that came into your system during this time to keep feeling into what would be the right next step for you. And that's how also you will get some clarity on, um, on next steps. And it helps if you keep creating space for yourself, keep limiting those incoming stimuli, like don't go on social media just yet, don't watch too much television, don't watch too much news items, just don't read too many newspapers, just keep using whatever spare time you have to be, simply be what is and what wants to come through.

So this has really revolutionized my health, my life, my cycle. Um, like I said, for me, I can't wait. I'm not actively, I have to say that I'm not actively trying to conceive right now. [00:26:00] So for me, I can't wait for my, my period to come on because I know now how much gold there is in your period, how much direction you can receive, um, and how it's really helping me.

You know, I've been doing this work for a long time and still just allowing myself to take rest. It's a complete rewiring, not only of my nervous system, but of my belief system as well. It's about really embodying that I'm allowed to find balance in my life, that I'm allowed to not just work, but to rest as well.

It's, it sounds so easy and it's probably one of the hardest things to do. So if you want to support, um, with this, if you want to integrate this into your life, I'm actually starting a three month group program called Healing Fertility, where I will guide you through all of these steps. There will be 12 different sessions.

Every Sunday there is a session. [00:27:00] And we will look at connecting to your intuition on so many different levels, connecting to where you might be blocked and finding out what would be good next steps for you. So we're going to connect to your cycle, to your womb, to your emotions, to your subconscious.

There's also a session about your ideas about motherhood, your own lineage. How supported you feel in your journey, about how you're experiencing treatment, if you're in treatment, or how you could create a truly empowering fertility journey. There are sessions on dealing with pain and grief, on learning on how to truly surrender to the process.

And it's not like I will, Usually what my sessions look like is that I will give you a little bit of background information and then I will take you into a guided

practice and I will record it so you can always, you know, do it at other times as well. But in the recorded practice, this is all about embodiment.

It's so easy to tell you what you need to [00:28:00] know, but implementing things is a different thing altogether. And it's because, or I think that's why the guided practices are so important is once you truly start to feel You can do things differently or what that would feel like. That's where change happens.

It's like we open these little doors inside of you and you see like, Oh, I never knew that door existed, but now I know it's there. I can step through it and go there, go to that place of surrender. That's there within me, go to that place of trust. That's there within me. Um, go to that place of love, motherly love, and use that whenever I need, whenever I'm down, there's so much power within you.

And once you start accessing that, um, you can really use that to transform your fertility journey. Um, it's a group program, so that means I'm creating a community for you where you can also really recognize yourself in the other and know that you're not on this journey by yourself. [00:29:00] So of those 12 sessions, four sessions will be live sessions with the group, and there will be room to share and to exchange experiences.

And then there will also be eight pre recorded sessions. You'll have lifetime access to everything. If you want, I'll also connect you to a sharing partner. So you have someone to hold space for you within sessions. And I myself am available on WhatsApp from Monday to Fridays for questions and additional support.

So this is really going to be a transformative three months where, you know, you're going to be working with all of these tools to really rewire your nervous system, work through any blockages that may be there. And feel that you, that this is your fertility journey, that this is not something that, we all want to control it, but in the wrong way.

We try to control it by just trying everything we do to get pregnant, trying to do everything we can to get pregnant, but the way in which you can control it is by learning to Keep finding [00:30:00] back that the place of power and confidence within yourself, regardless of what happens. So we start on Sunday, May 5th.

And as a bonus, I'm giving all of the participants of a one on one abdominal therapy session as well. So that's an online session where I'll create a personalized protocol for you. I will teach you self massage, self massage

practices, They've really been proven to increase blood flow to your womb, to your ovaries, to all of your, your intestines, all of the organs in your belly.

And that helped create hormonal balance, um, by optimizing your, yeah, organ health, I would say. So if you want to find out more about the program, or if you want to sign up, go to thatfertilefeeling.com/healing-fertility. I'll also put the link in the show notes. If you have any questions, you can reach out to me on Instagram @thatfertilefeeling or email me at francoise@thatfertilefeeling.Com. Uh, [00:31:00] any questions about the program, about this episode, about your fertility journey in general. I always love to hear from you and I always get back to you. For now, I'm wishing you a great week, uh, and hope to see you back next week for another podcast episode on the cycle. Next week, we'll talk all about the follicular phase.

Take care.

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It would be much appreciated. I look forward to seeing you again next week. Bye [00:32:00] love.