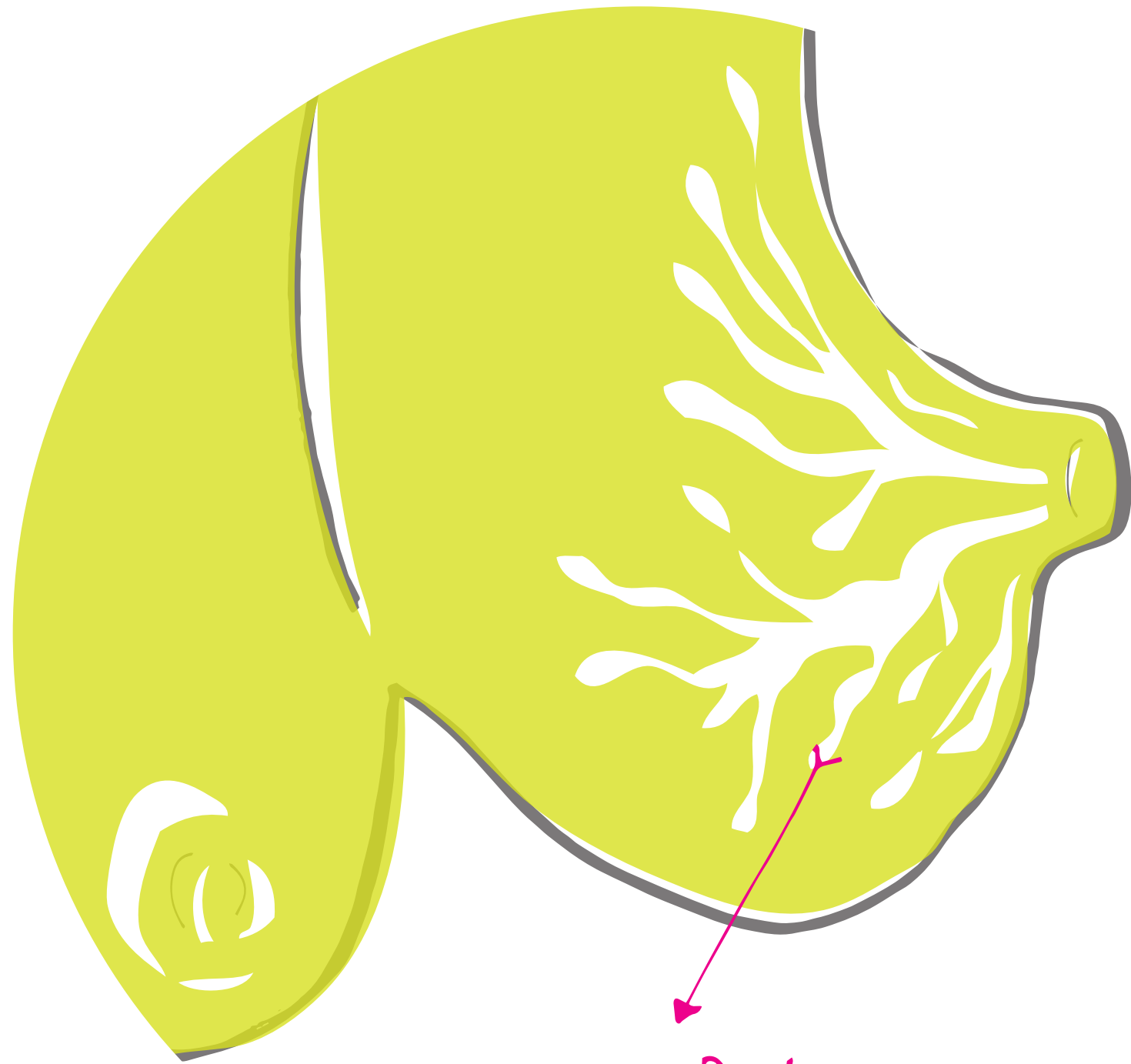




CYCLES



Milk Ducts

CYCLES

a pocket guide to women's health

Written & Illustrated by
Whitney Frazier

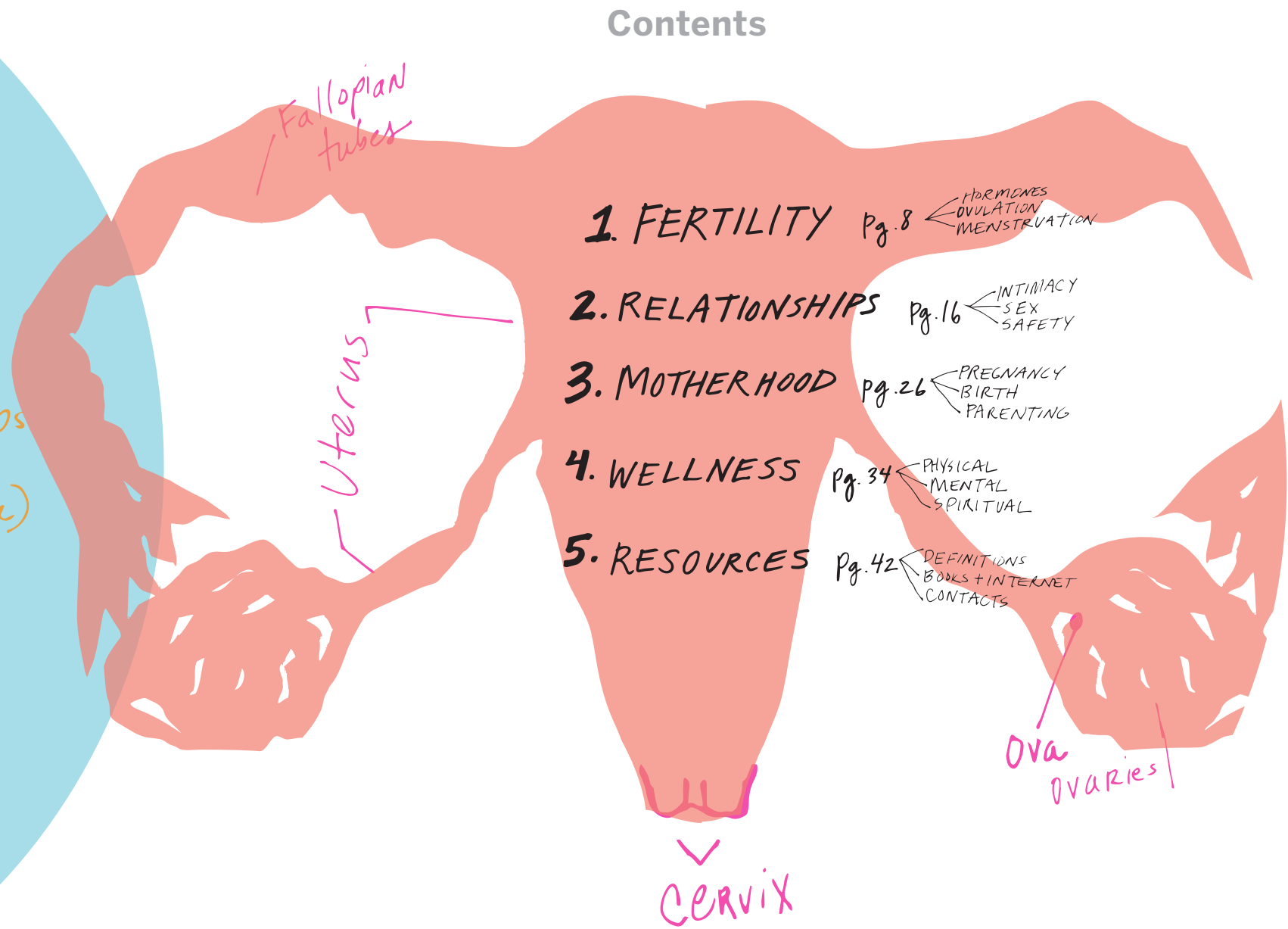
Co-created by
The Sister's Circle at St. Frances Academy

Baltimore, MD

NOTE: This is an interactive book with spaces for you to write and draw. You may want to write or draw in your own journal to have more privacy. Then you can share this book with your friends without them seeing all your business!

Cycles mean the changes that a woman goes through.. we go through a lot of changes!

AF, age 15



FERTILITY



HORMONES

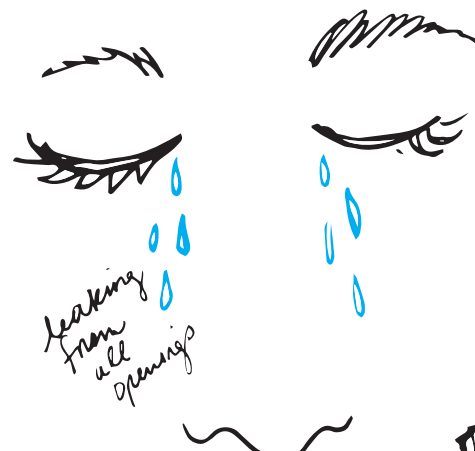
Hormones are circulating in our bodies from the time we are conceived in our mother's body. The balance of hormones is forever changing and helping our bodies develop. There are two key hormones that are shifting every month during our menstrual cycles—estrogen and progesterone. Boys also have hormones and hormonal shifts, but they are not in such a clear pattern. Hormonal shifts are most apparent during the time of "puberty"—very obvious visual changes to boys' and girls' external bodies.

What's PMS?

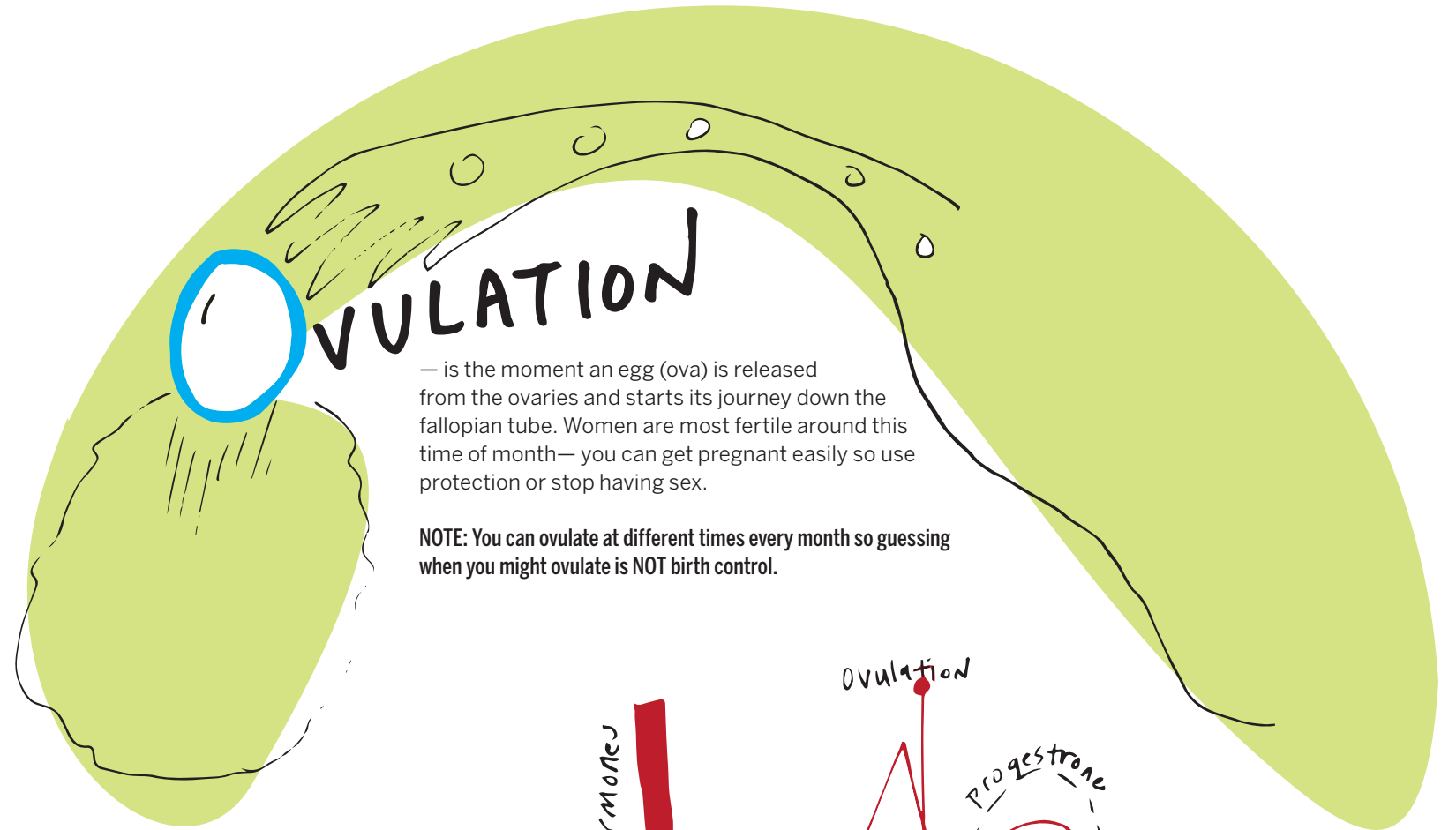
Please Make me Smile?

Pre Menstrual Syndrome reflects the symptoms we experience before our periods due to hormonal changes. These include mood swings, food cravings, tender breasts, bloating, and headaches.

"When I am about to start menstruating, my self esteem is low and I don't feel like being around anyone."
LK, age 17



"Why do girls catch feelings more than boys do?"
CR, age 14

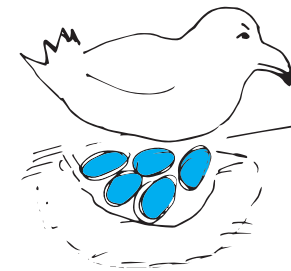
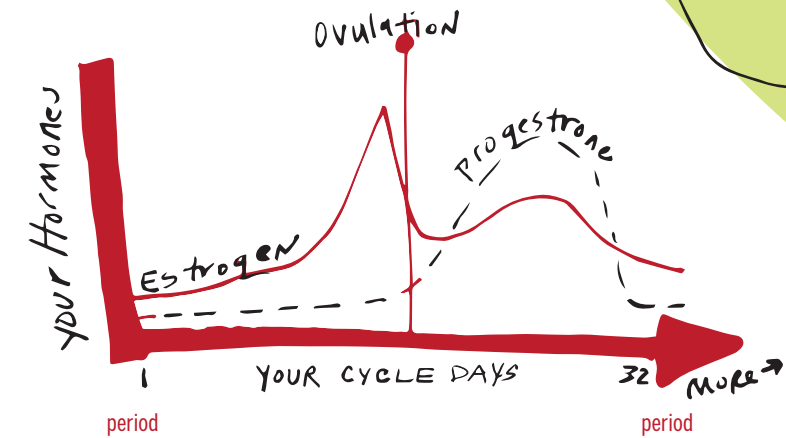


— is the moment an egg (ova) is released from the ovaries and starts its journey down the fallopian tube. Women are most fertile around this time of month— you can get pregnant easily so use protection or stop having sex.

NOTE: You can ovulate at different times every month so guessing when you might ovulate is NOT birth control.

Progesterone is produced in the ovary following ovulation and it prepares the uterus lining for a possible pregnancy. It causes a rise in waking temperature and a change in cervical fluid post ovulation.¹

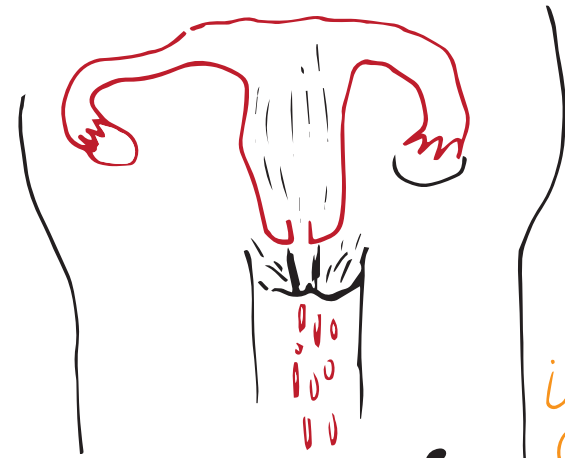
Estrogen is produced in the ovaries and increases during the first part of the menstrual cycle causing changes in cervical fluid and cervical opening.¹



UNLIKE A BIRD, you are born with all your eggs inside you!

¹Weschler, Cycle Savvy, glossary

Menstruation

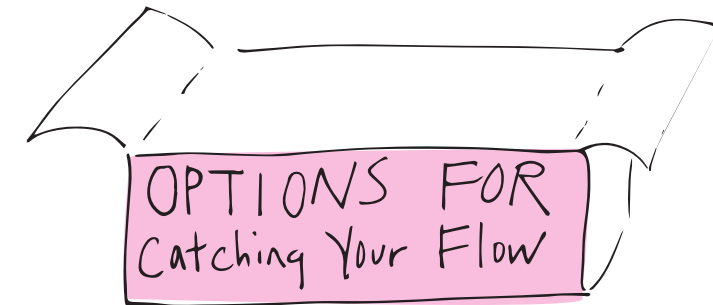


"I thought I was dying... it was just my first period"
WF, age 15

Menstruation is the shedding of the uterus lining that builds up every month, or approximately every 28 days, in preparation for pregnancy. The uterine lining is made up of nutrient rich blood that helps the developing baby (fetus) grow. After you ovulate, if the egg is not fertilized by sperm (conception) then the hormones tell the body to shed the lining because there is no baby. Technically, you can get pregnant before you ever had your first period because you will always ovulate before menstruating. Menstruation can last on average 3-7 days. Cramping is normal but please talk to your doctor about any severe cramps, blood clots or heavy bleeding.

Midol is the most common over-the-counter drug used to relieve discomfort of menstruation. Here are a few other tips that may help:

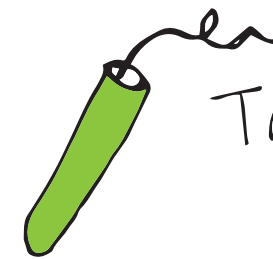
1. Drink lots of water and get lots of sleep.
2. Reduce or eliminate caffeine, sugar and alcohol. These can dehydrate your body and make cramps or mood swings worse.
3. Hot baths, heating pads and stretching can loosen and relax the muscles of the uterus.



* Natural Rubber Cup
Diva Cup.

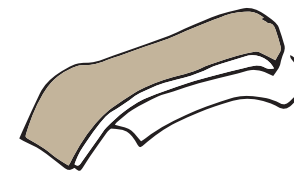
The rubber cup or a common brand called the *Diva Cup* can be purchased online or possibly at a natural health store. The cup is reusable and fits inside the vaginal canal like a tampon. It catches the menstrual flow and must be emptied when full.

Read more at Divacup.com



* Tampons - (Non Toxic + Fragrance Free)

Tampons are great for being secretive and active because they also fit inside the vaginal walls. They are easy to dispose of but please be sure to get 100% chlorine free and fragrance free tampons to avoid irritation and long term exposure to toxins.



* Cloth or One time use Pads

Pads can be disposable or made of reusable cotton. If using disposable pads, buy fragrance free, 100% chlorine free to reduce possible infection and long term exposure to toxins. Cotton pads can be made at home or purchased online at a variety of sites including: Lunapads.com



← Don't want to feel like you are wearing a diaper???

CHART your cycle

Do you want to be able to predict when you will start your next period instead of being surprised in gym class? It doesn't have to be a mystery or surprise every time you bleed. You can track some basic body signs month-to-month to learn about your cycle. The two important signs to chart are your waking temperature and the quality of your cervical fluid.

Waking temperature is your temperature upon waking up before you do any activities. **Cervical fluid** is the mucus or fluid produced by the cervix and acts as a medium in which sperm can travel.²

Charting your waking temperature and the quality of your cervical fluid can help you to know when you have ovulated and when you may start your menstruation. Thicker, wetter and more abundant cervical fluid indicates the most fertile time of the menstrual cycle and usually happens before and during ovulation. The days after your period and before you ovulate can always change, but for most women the time after you ovulate to menstruation is between 12–16 days. This charting is not a method of birth control, but can serve as a great way to learn about your body and how your body changes at different times during your cycle. **See Fertilityfriend.com for more.**

NOTE: Don't confuse normal discharge for a yeast infection. Infections usually have a bad odor, odd color and have other symptoms like itchiness or irritation around the vagina.



²Welschler, *Cycle Savvy*, 41

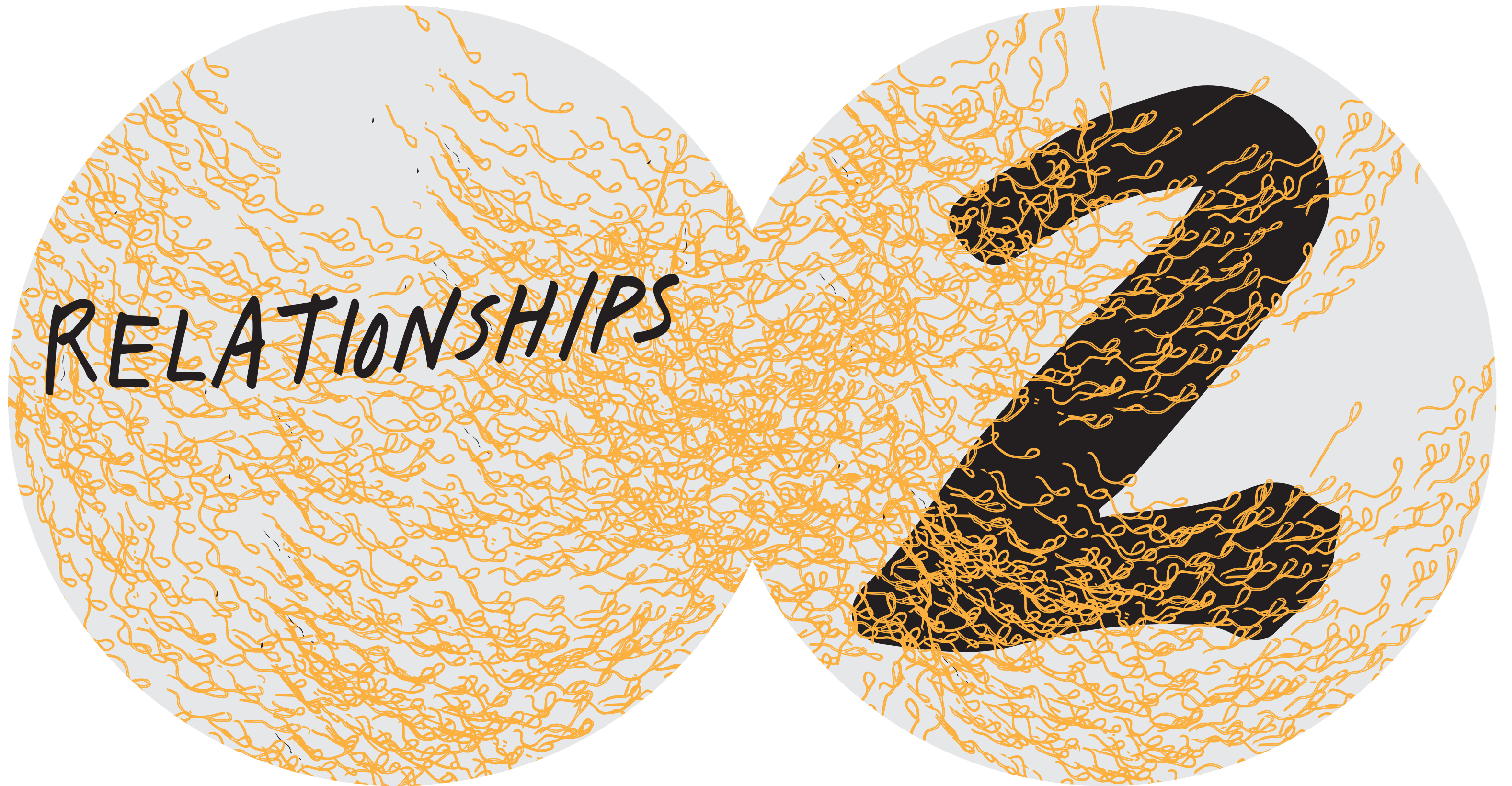


DRAW your VULVA

yes! get a mirror and some **privacy!**

A vulva is the outer female genitalia...The parts you can see. The vagina is on the inside. You can only see the vaginal opening below the urethra (pee hole).

Note: **Yoni** is another word for vagina. It's a sanskrit word for genitalia meaning origin of life and birth.



RELATIONSHIPS

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Our understanding of healthy relationships comes from observing other people's relationships. Think about your parents, friends, family, teachers, mentors and outside influences, like TV.

WRITE
THE NAMES OF 2
PEOPLE WHO YOU THINK
HAVE A HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP:

_____ & _____

VS. THINK OF SOMEONE IN AN
UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP:

_____ & _____

WRITE THE (BAD) QUALITIES
THAT YOU HAVE OBSERVED

**NOW LIST QUALITIES (good things)
OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP:**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

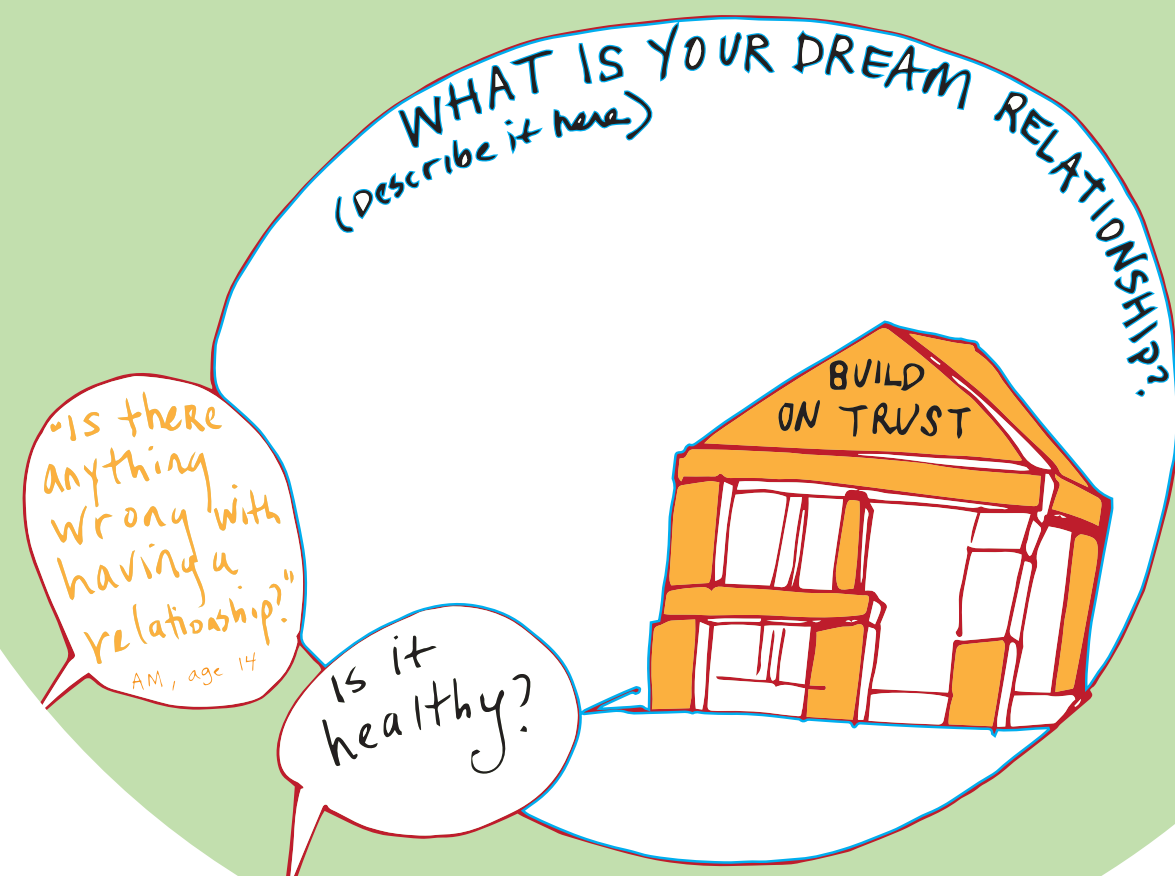
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MAYBE ... MEANS NO!

CONSENT If you say maybe or no to anything sexual, it means that you do not give your consent. You did not say yes! Consent means that you communicated clearly with your partner that you wish to willingly engage in sexual activity. IF YOU DO NOT GIVE YOUR CONSENT, then it is sexual abuse, harassment or rape. Seek the help of a counselor or doctor to discuss your options. See page 44 for resources.

**Warning
Signs of
Abusive
Behavior:**

- too controlling
- overprotective
- aggressive
- puts you down
- threatens you
- manipulative
- talks negatively about you



WHAT IS YOUR DREAM RELATIONSHIP?
(Describe it here)

BUILD ON TRUST

"Is there anything wrong with having a relationship?"
AM, age 14

Is it healthy?

Is it okay to be scared to tell someone you like the same sex?!!
 IS IT SEX?
 making love, fornication, reproduction, intimacy, oral, anal, vaginal

WHAT IS SEX?

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Anal, Oral and Vaginal

Technically, sex refers to your genitalia but we are going to use the word sex to mean sexual intercourse.

People define "sex" in different ways. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as "sexually motivated behavior." People all have their own definitions of what "sex" and "having sex" means.

For some people it's only penis-in-vagina intercourse. For some people, it's only penis-in-anus intercourse (anal sex). For some people, it's genital rubbing without intercourse. For some people, it includes oral / genital contact. For some, it includes masturbation. The possibilities are many. For most experts (like Merriam-Webster), it includes all of the above.³

³PlannedParenthood.org/info-for-teens

ASK yourself these Key questions:

1. Why do I want to have sex?
2. What contraception or protection will I use?
3. Have I (and my partner) been tested for STD's or HIV?
4. Do I trust my partner?
5. Am I ready to be emotionally attached to this person for the rest of my life?
6. Are my friends and family supportive of my choice? Why or why not?
7. Is anyone pressuring me to do this?
8. Are there any other options for intimacy besides sex?
9. Is this a healthy relationship?

BUT (+)

with WHO

+ WHEN?

OPPOSITE SEX (straight)

SAME SEX (Gay/Queer)

Attraction is something that comes from within. There are a lot of theories on what drives attraction—or where it comes from. Attraction is the result of your subconscious interpretation of hormonal influences, and your ability to make sense of attraction is a result of your socialization and self-awareness.

That is, attraction is largely out of your control, but how you make sense of it and act upon it is up to you. Sexual orientation does not depend on gender. If you suddenly became a different gender, you would still be attracted to the same people, or you would no longer be you.⁴

⁴Sam Killermann, Staff Writer for EverydayFeminism.com

Prevent STD's
Sexually Transmitted Diseases

CONDOMS

"Wrap it up!" Condoms are flexible rubber or latex tubes designed to cover the penis during sexual intercourse. If you are too afraid to ask your parents to buy you condoms and you don't have the money to buy them at a local drug store, go to a local health clinic and ask for some free ones!!! Make sure you and your partner learn how to put them on properly. Watch YouTube or ASK someone older to show you.

Symptoms?!?!?!?

Many STD's have NO clear symptoms but over time can lead to serious illness and death. The symptoms you may have are bumps, sores, blood and pain around the genitalia.

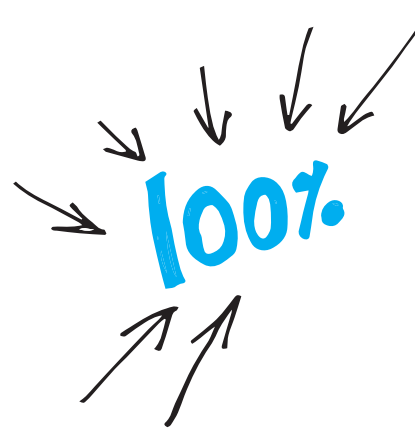
Common STD's

Chlamydia, Herpes, HPV, Trich, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, HIV, Hep-B/C

Ask your doctor or local clinic to test you for HIV and all STD's.

GET TESTED!!

Free testing sites at baltimorehealth.org/std.html



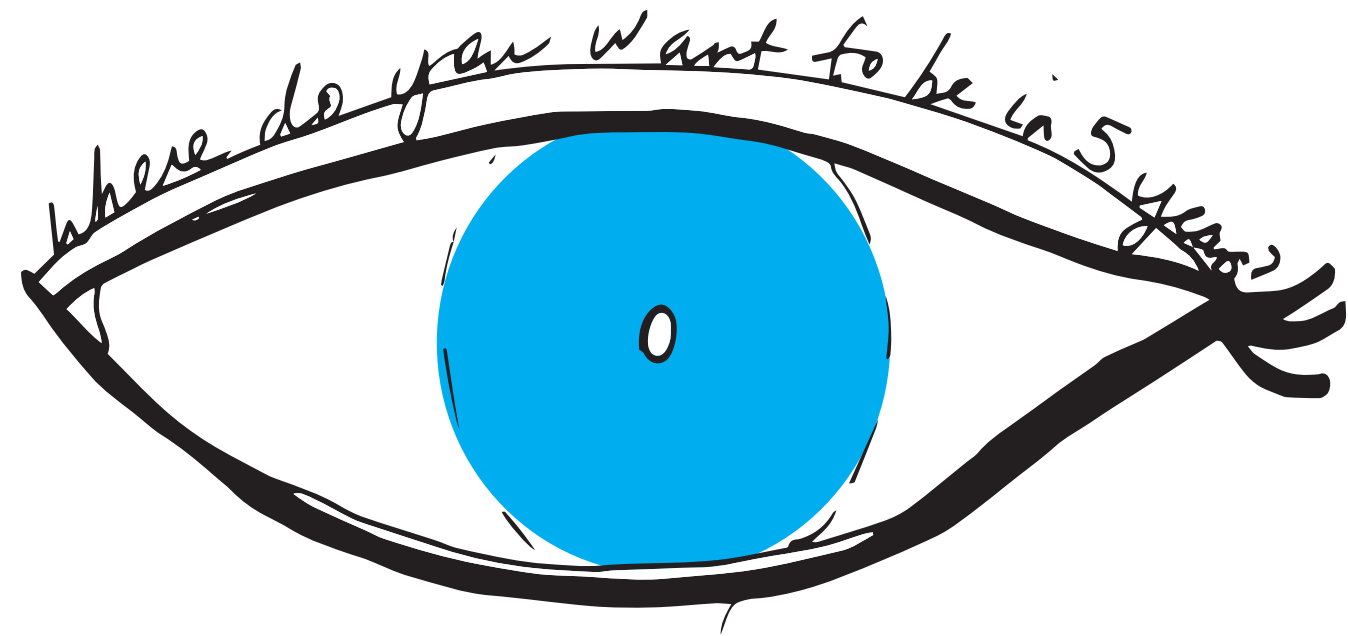
Safe

If you want to be 100% sure that you won't get pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted disease, then you must avoid any sexual activities.

Don't put your mouth, anus or vagina anywhere near anyone's penis, mouth, anus or vagina without protection! Rubbing genitalia can also spread disease because fluids are being exchanged.

*1 in 2 sexually active young people will get an STD by the age of 25! *MTV's It's Your (sex) Life*

*itsyoursexlife.com/gyt/the-most-common-stds/



SAFER Contraception + **FERTY**

Avoid Pregnancy

Birth Control Options

- PILLS**
Hormones taken orally + daily
- DEPO-PROVERA**
Hormone injection every 3 months
- PATCH**
Hormones release through skin, monthly.
- IUD**
Intra Uterine Device
- FAM**
Fertility Awareness Method

EMERGENCY OPTIONS
Morning After Pill or Early abortions

★ NOTE: The Pull Out Method doesn't work and can lead to pregnancy!

We all have a desire to fit in and be loved by our peers. It's part of our survival instincts to adapt to a situation, especially in middle and high school. But saying "no" to peer pressure could save your life or someone else's.

Strategies for addressing peer pressure:

- Find a counselor, teacher or adult mentor to talk about the situation.
- If it doesn't feel right, trust your gut and say "no." Your true friends will respect your choices.

"Is she really my friend?"

KR, age 16



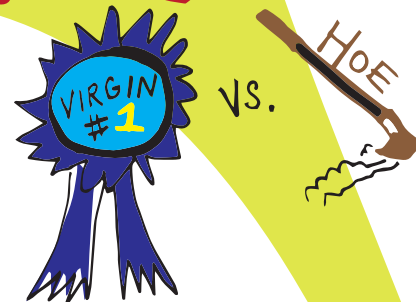
Women are less likely to talk openly about sex like men do. For example, it's less socially acceptable for women to discuss the pleasure we derive from sex or sexual behaviors like masturbation. Many women believe that through masturbation we become more aware of our own body and its needs—especially during sexual encounters with others. If we always rely on someone else to please us, then we may become dependent or create unhealthy attachments.

For women, the most sensitive part of our genitalia is the clitoris which is not directly connected to the vagina. This is why many women do not experience orgasms during vaginal intercourse.

PEER **PRESSURE** or Gossip

"This is a double standard."

Why are women and men held to different standards when it comes to our sex lives? A woman who has multiple sex partners is quickly classified as a "ho," but a man with multiple sex partners gets high fives from his buddies or is classified as "cool." What will you do to change this?



PAIN

RAPE Sexual assault is any kind of sexual activity committed against another person without that person's consent—inappropriate touching, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse. Rape, one of the most common forms of sexual assault, is defined slightly differently in each state. Most state laws define rape as penetration with the use of force and without the person's consent. When rape happens in a long-term relationship, it is a form of domestic abuse.⁵

⁵ TBWHBC, Our Bodies, Our Selves, 702



MOTHERHOOD

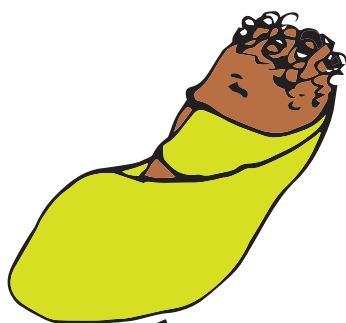
3

WHAT IS YOUR BIRTH STORY?

Ask your mom, dad, grandmother, aunt or family friend to tell you the details about the day you were born. Record your birth story below:

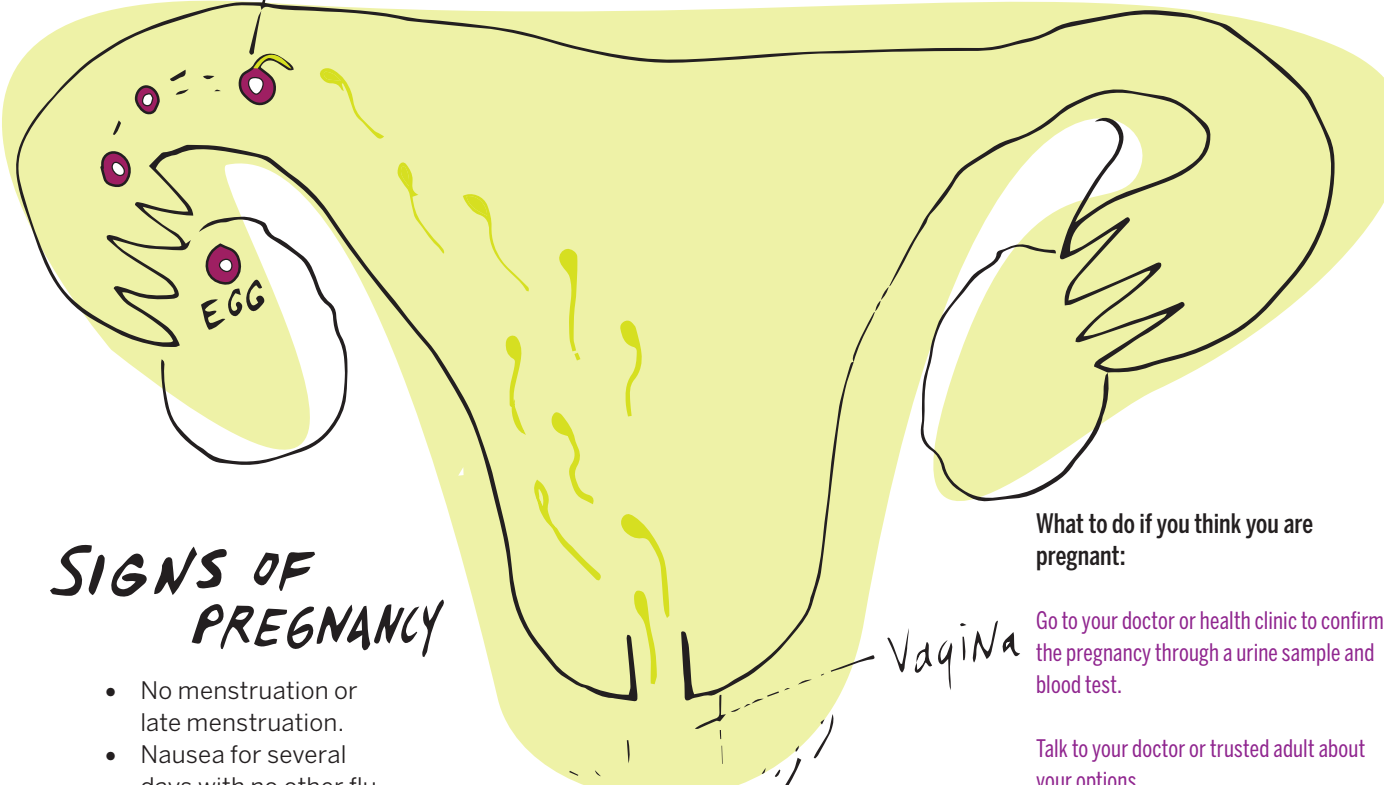
Where was the birth?
Who was there?
How long did it take?
What did you do?

What were you like as a baby?



CONCEPTION

The moment the egg is fertilized by a single sperm—the beginning of pregnancy. Sometimes there are two eggs fertilized creating twins!



SIGNS OF PREGNANCY

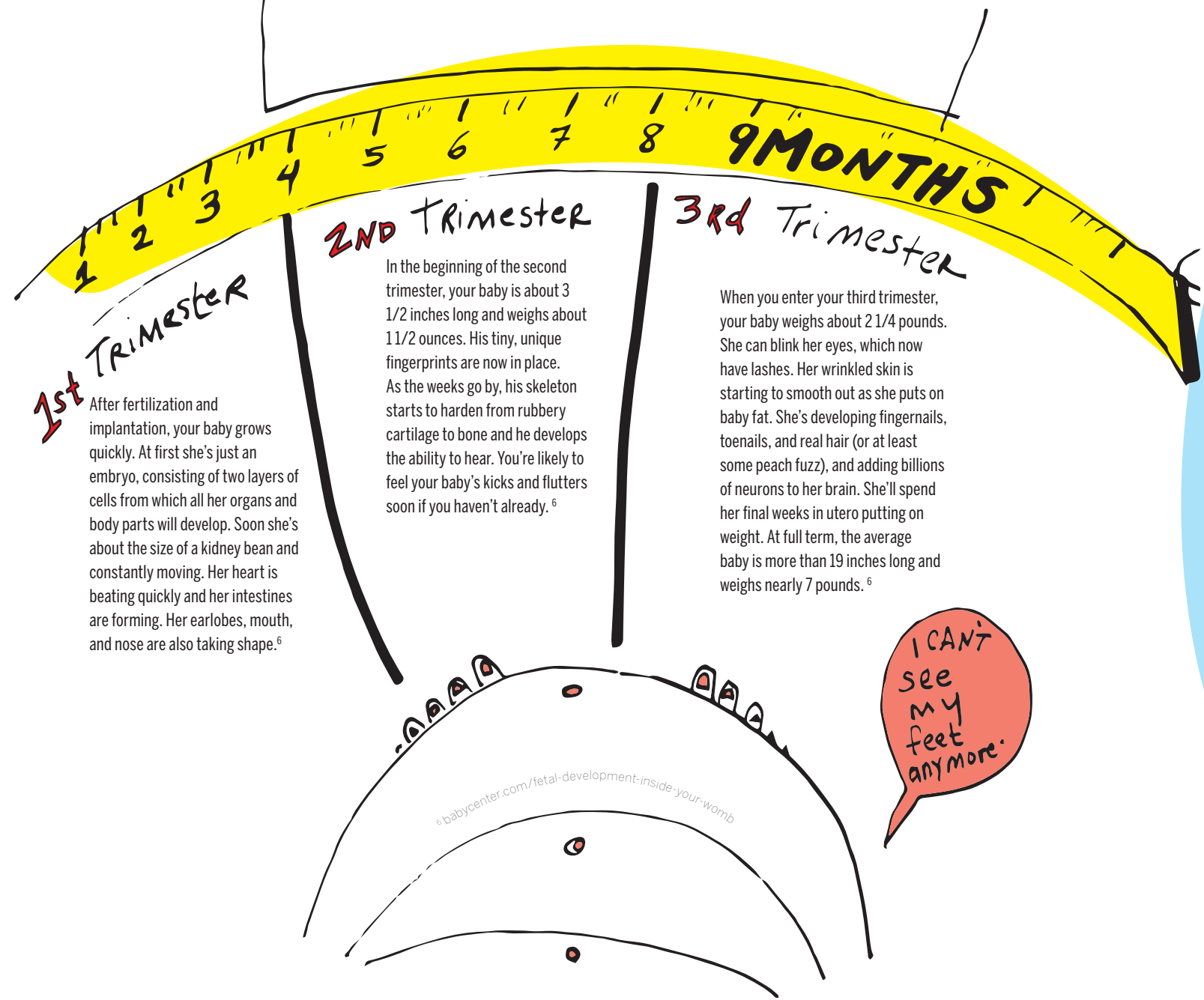
- No menstruation or late menstruation.
- Nausea for several days with no other flu symptoms
- Very tender breasts
- Frequent urination

What to do if you think you are pregnant:

- Go to your doctor or health clinic to confirm the pregnancy through a urine sample and blood test.
- Talk to your doctor or trusted adult about your options.
- Refrain from drugs or alcohol.
- Start taking prenatal vitamins and eating a healthy diet.

Vagina
Vulva

What is Pregnancy?



1st TRIMESTER
After fertilization and implantation, your baby grows quickly. At first she's just an embryo, consisting of two layers of cells from which all her organs and body parts will develop. Soon she's about the size of a kidney bean and constantly moving. Her heart is beating quickly and her intestines are forming. Her earlobes, mouth, and nose are also taking shape.⁶

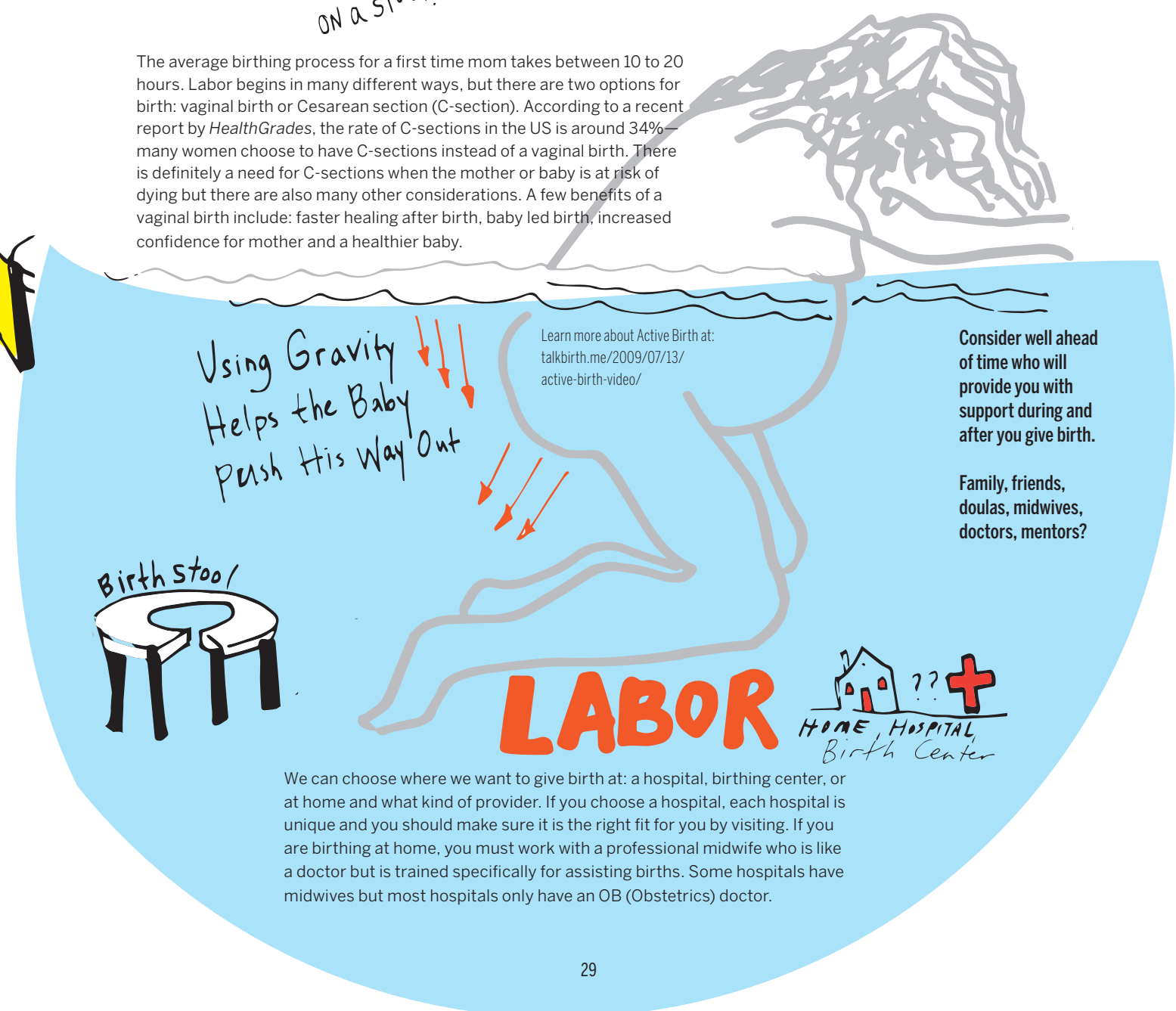
2ND TRIMESTER
In the beginning of the second trimester, your baby is about 3 1/2 inches long and weighs about 1 1/2 ounces. His tiny, unique fingerprints are now in place. As the weeks go by, his skeleton starts to harden from rubbery cartilage to bone and he develops the ability to hear. You're likely to feel your baby's kicks and flutters soon if you haven't already.⁶

3rd Trimester
When you enter your third trimester, your baby weighs about 2 1/4 pounds. She can blink her eyes, which now have lashes. Her wrinkled skin is starting to smooth out as she puts on baby fat. She's developing fingernails, toenails, and real hair (or at least some peach fuzz), and adding billions of neurons to her brain. She'll spend her final weeks in utero putting on weight. At full term, the average baby is more than 19 inches long and weighs nearly 7 pounds.⁶

I CAN'T see my feet anymore.

Did you know that you can give birth **under water?**
STANDING UP?
ON a stool?

The average birthing process for a first time mom takes between 10 to 20 hours. Labor begins in many different ways, but there are two options for birth: vaginal birth or Cesarean section (C-section). According to a recent report by *HealthGrades*, the rate of C-sections in the US is around 34%—many women choose to have C-sections instead of a vaginal birth. There is definitely a need for C-sections when the mother or baby is at risk of dying but there are also many other considerations. A few benefits of a vaginal birth include: faster healing after birth, baby led birth, increased confidence for mother and a healthier baby.



Birth stool

Using Gravity Helps the Baby Push His Way Out

Learn more about Active Birth at:
talkbirth.me/2009/07/13/active-birth-video/

LABOR

HOME HOSPITAL
Birth Center

Consider well ahead of time who will provide you with support during and after you give birth.

Family, friends, doulas, midwives, doctors, mentors?

We can choose where we want to give birth at: a hospital, birthing center, or at home and what kind of provider. If you choose a hospital, each hospital is unique and you should make sure it is the right fit for you by visiting. If you are birthing at home, you must work with a professional midwife who is like a doctor but is trained specifically for assisting births. Some hospitals have midwives but most hospitals only have an OB (Obstetrics) doctor.

Uninterrupted
BONDING

(it's your right!)

BREASTFEEDING

Placenta -
The placenta is the organ that gives the baby food through the umbilical cord which becomes the baby's belly button.

BENEFITS:

- Improves immune system
- Provides the best balanced nutrition for baby's development
- Builds trust through physical connection and skin to skin contact
- Helps mother's uterus contract and return to normal size after birth
- Helps mother lose birth weight
- Releases good chemicals in the brain that prevent postpartum depression. See definitions on page 44

Breast Crawl =

A newborn baby's most developed sense is his sense of smell! They may not be able to see or hear everything right away but if you lay the baby on your chest immediately after birth, the baby will find his way to your nipple.

breastcrawl.org/video.shtml

Parenting
When I become a mother I will:

always

never

"When we were younger we used to get beatings with belts from my dad but then they stopped because my mother said she didn't believe it was helping!"
LK, age 17

One of the best ways to understand your child's needs is to build trust from the beginning through positive physical contact and talking to her even before she can talk back!



"I tell my mother everything. she is like my best friend."
CR, age 14

= TRUST

Many women and men around the world carry their babies on their bodies for extra bonding and to provide two free hands for working! Learn how to make your own wrap and other methods for carrying your baby on YouTube or at local baby stores.



WELLNESS

EATING

DRINKING

TIPS

1. Make a weekly food diary by writing down what you eat/drink and how it affects you.
2. Eat healthy natural foods. Avoid processed foods with lots of preservatives or ingredients that you don't recognize.
3. Drink 8-10 cups of water a day. Sodas and juices have lots of sugar which in excess our bodies can't process.
4. Fruits and vegetables should make up half of your diet.
5. Try new foods. You can retrain your taste buds.

DIETS CAN BE DANGEROUS
MAKE YOUR OWN RULES

Will do:

Won't do:

Chamomile flowers in tea can be calming + help you sleep.

MINT LEAVES CAN BE RELAXING OR STIMULATING

Ginger Root is great for tummy aches + chills

INPUT = OUTPUT

Headache? Cold?

Try some herbal remedies instead of over the counter drugs which may have negative side effects.



ACTIVE

The Benefits of Exercise:

- Improve immune system
- Increase endorphins (happy chemicals in the brain)
- Clear your thoughts
- Increased self-confidence
- More strength
- Better circulation
- Deeper more restful sleep
- Increased sexual health

When? where?
OUTSIDE/PARKS
DAILY ROUTINES
SCHOOL SPORTS
GROUP CLASSES @ COMMUNITY CENTERS
HOME w/VIDEOS + BOOKS

TAKE ECHINACEA, VITAMIN G + D + B TO BOOST IMMUNE SYSTEM



"You're cute for a dark skinned girl?!?"

SOCIAL & CULTURAL Influences

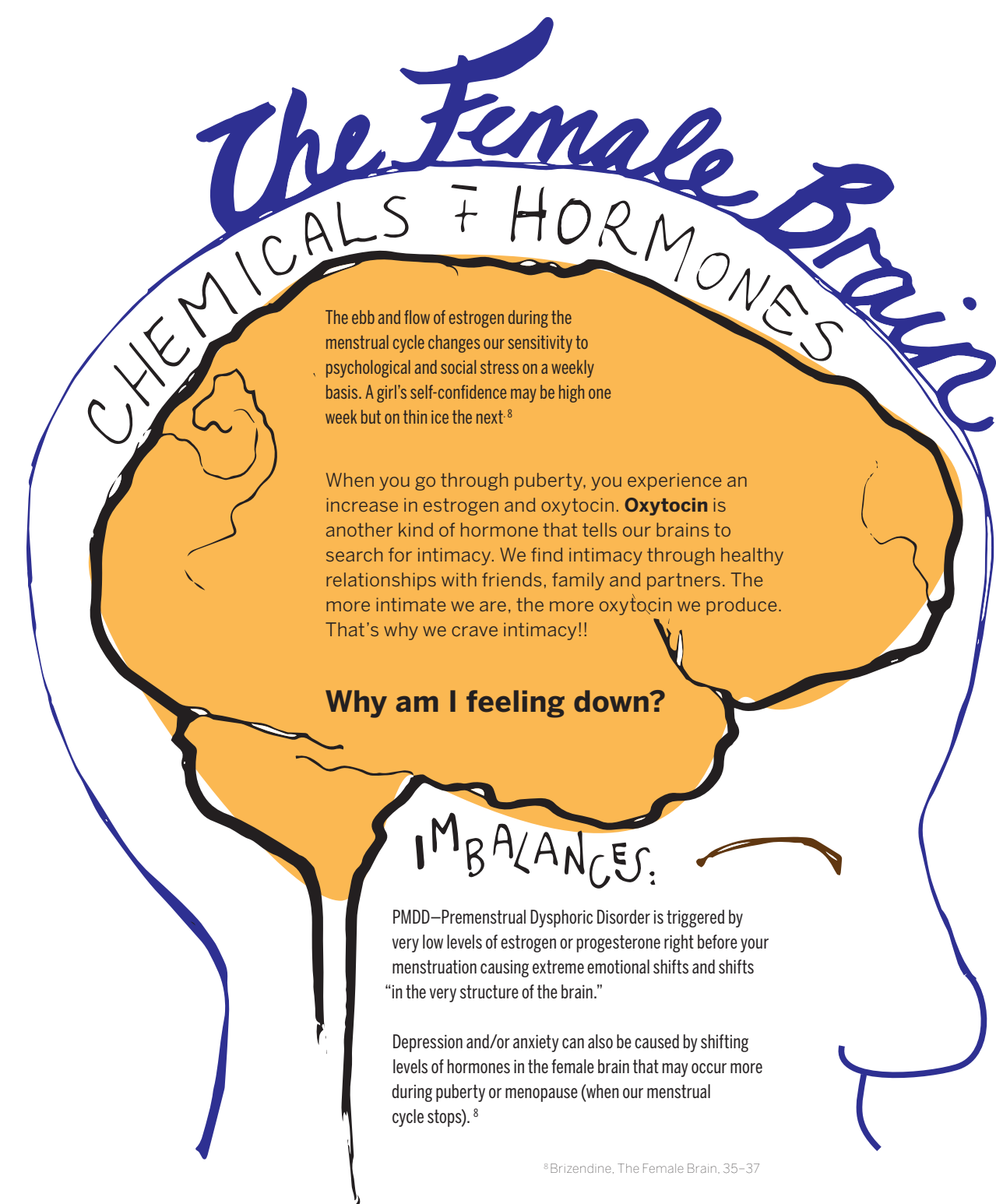


Microaggressions are the little ways that we put each other down everyday through the things we say. "You are pretty strong for a girl." Check out more examples at microaggressions.com

WHAT IS WHO DEFINES

Who or what are the positive and negative influences in your life?

List some of these positive and/or negative people, media images or music lyrics:



The ebb and flow of estrogen during the menstrual cycle changes our sensitivity to psychological and social stress on a weekly basis. A girl's self-confidence may be high one week but on thin ice the next.⁸

When you go through puberty, you experience an increase in estrogen and oxytocin. **Oxytocin** is another kind of hormone that tells our brains to search for intimacy. We find intimacy through healthy relationships with friends, family and partners. The more intimate we are, the more oxytocin we produce. That's why we crave intimacy!!

Why am I feeling down?

IMBALANCES:

PMDD—Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder is triggered by very low levels of estrogen or progesterone right before your menstruation causing extreme emotional shifts and shifts "in the very structure of the brain."

Depression and/or anxiety can also be caused by shifting levels of hormones in the female brain that may occur more during puberty or menopause (when our menstrual cycle stops).⁸

⁸Brizendine, The Female Brain, 35-37

I am MOST HAPPY when:



HAPPINESS?

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions." Dalai Lama

MAP YOUR COMMUNITY

You

Who are your people? your support system?

What are your passions? your interests? your values?





RESOURCES

FERTILITY

- Cycle Savvy by Toni Weschler
- *The Female Brain* by Louann Brizendine, M.D.
- Planned Parenthood.org
- *Our Bodies, Our Selves* by The Boston Women's Health Collective
- Gurl.com
- Fertilityfriend.com
- Guttmacher.org
- New Lens Productions, *The Birds & Bees*: blip.tv/new-lens

MOTHERHOOD

- Maryland Birth Network.com
- *Active Birth* by Janet Balaskas
- *The Baby Book* by Dr. Sears
- Dr.sears.com
- Babycenter.com
- Soft and Cozy Baby, 36th St. Baltimore
- Special Beginnings Annapolis Birth Center
- Kathy Sloan & Associates, Midwives 410.235.0506

RELATIONSHIPS

- House of Ruth, Maryland 410.889.7884
- Microaggressions.com
- Baltimore LGBT Center, thedenbaltimore.org/services/
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: nsvrc.org 1-877-739-3895
- RAAIN Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network: rainn.org 1-800-656-HOPE
- National Dating Abuse Helpline: loveisrespect.org 1-866-331-9474
- Stopcyberbullying.org

WELLNESS

- Gina Corso/Sunlight Natural Health.com
- Metta Integrative Wellness Center, 720 W. 36th Street, 410-207-1297
- *The Art of Happiness* by Gyatso and Dalai Lama
- Womenslaw.org
- Everydayfeminism.org
- *In Defense of Food* by Michael Polland
- Charm City Yoga.com
- JHU- Center for Adolescent Health, jhsph.edu

YOUR CONTACTS

Primary Care
DOCTOR : _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

Save these contacts in a safe place and in your cell phone!

Gynecologist: _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

Emergency Contact: _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

Nearest Hospital: _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

Trusted Adult or Counselor: _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

Insurance Info: _____ name
 _____ phone
 _____ address

DEFINITIONS

say what?

- Abortion** the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus*
- Birth Control** Voluntary limiting of human reproduction, using such means as contraception, sexual abstinence, surgical sterilization, and induced abortion.*
- Breastfeeding** to feed (a baby) from a mother's breast rather than from a bottle*
- Cervical Fluid** the secretion produced within the cervix that acts as a medium through which sperm can travel²
- Circulation** the movement of blood through the vessels of the body that is induced by the pumping action of the heart and serves to distribute nutrients and oxygen to and remove waste products from all parts of the body*
- Conception** the process of becoming pregnant involving fertilization or implantation*
- Consent** compliance in or approval of what is done*
- Doula** a woman experienced in childbirth who provides advice, information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and just after childbirth*
- Endorphins** Any of a group of proteins occurring in the brain and having pain-relieving properties*
- Fertility** the ability of an individual or couple to reproduce through normal sexual activity*
- Gender Identity** the totality of physical and behavioral traits that are designated by a culture as masculine or feminine*
- Gynecology** a branch of medicine that deals with the diseases and routine physical care of the reproductive system of women*
- Immunity** a condition of being able to resist a particular disease especially through preventing development of a pathogenic microorganism or by counteracting the effects of its products*
- Labor** to exert one's powers of body or mind especially with painful or strenuous effort*
- Marginalized** to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group*

*merriam-webster.com

- Menopause** the natural cessation of menstruation occurring usually between the ages of 45 and 55 with a mean in Western cultures of approximately 51*
- Menstruation** a discharging of blood, secretions, and tissue debris from the uterus that recurs in non-pregnant breeding-age primate females at approximately monthly intervals*
- Miscarriage** spontaneous expulsion of a human fetus before it is viable and especially between the 12th and 28th weeks of gestation*
- Midwife** a person who trained to assists women in childbirth*
- Neurohormone** a hormone produced by or acting on nervous tissue*
- OB** obstetric doctor who is trained to deal with birth and complications surrounding birth in a hospital
- Orgasm** an explosive discharge of neuromuscular tensions at the height of sexual arousal that is usually accompanied by the ejaculation of semen in the male and by vaginal contractions in the female*
- Ovulation** the discharge of a mature ovum from the ovary*
- Postpartum** the first month or two after giving birth
- Puberty** the condition of being or the period of becoming first capable of reproducing sexually marked by maturing of the genital organs, development of secondary sex characteristics*
- Rape** unlawful sexual activity and usually sexual intercourse carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against the will usually of a female or with a person who is beneath a certain age or incapable of valid consent*
- Remedies** a medicine, application, or treatment that relieves or cures a disease*
- Sex** sum of features by which a member of a plant or animal species can be placed into one of two complementary reproductive groups, male or female*
- STD or STI** any of various diseases or infections (as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and genital herpes) that are usually transmitted by direct sexual contact and that include some (as hepatitis B and AIDS) that may be contracted by other than sexual means*

*merriam-webster.com

Author's Note

I wanted to make a book for young women who deserve to know about their bodies and their health options. I believe that with knowledge comes power and confidence. With confidence we can make wiser decisions about our health and stand up for what we feel is right. I co-created this booklet with The Sister's Circle from St. Frances Academy in Baltimore City, Maryland. I realize there is a lot of great information in books and on the web, but I wanted something visually appealing, interactive, concise and inexpensive—something girls could keep in their purses or pockets and easily share with friends and family.

The title, *Cycles*, was suggested by a friend and local artist, Crystal Dunn. Originally, I wanted to work with women and girls in the Baltimore City Detention Center. Amazingly, I was told that the content of the project was "not appropriate for the girls." However, I was greeted with open arms and hearts at St. Frances Academy which is located next to the prison. Many thanks to Jessica Hutchinson at the Cosby Community Center who put me in touch with the women's studies teacher, Mrs. Angela Thorpe, at St. Frances whom I've collaborated closely with ever since. Mrs. Thorpe leads The Sister's Circle with her freshman students—giving the girls a weekly opportunity to discuss concerns about their health and wellbeing among peers. Mrs. Thorpe invited me to integrate art into their discussions and the results are integrated into this book. The Sister's Circle girls are the core participants of the project, defining both the content and design of this publication. Thank you all for your help and inspiration!

With love, respect and appreciation,

WHITNEY FRAZIER

whitneyfrazier.com

The Sister's Circle Participants:

Rhea Beauford
Alanica Bell
Zipporah Briscoe
Niyha Davis
Symone Davis
Summer Fields
Kierra Jackson
Kayla Leach
Sherell Leach
Rion Lee
Bianca Lewis
Jalah McCoy
Jada Norris
Adia Stokes

Printed by:

Alphagraphics, Baltimore MD

Edited by:

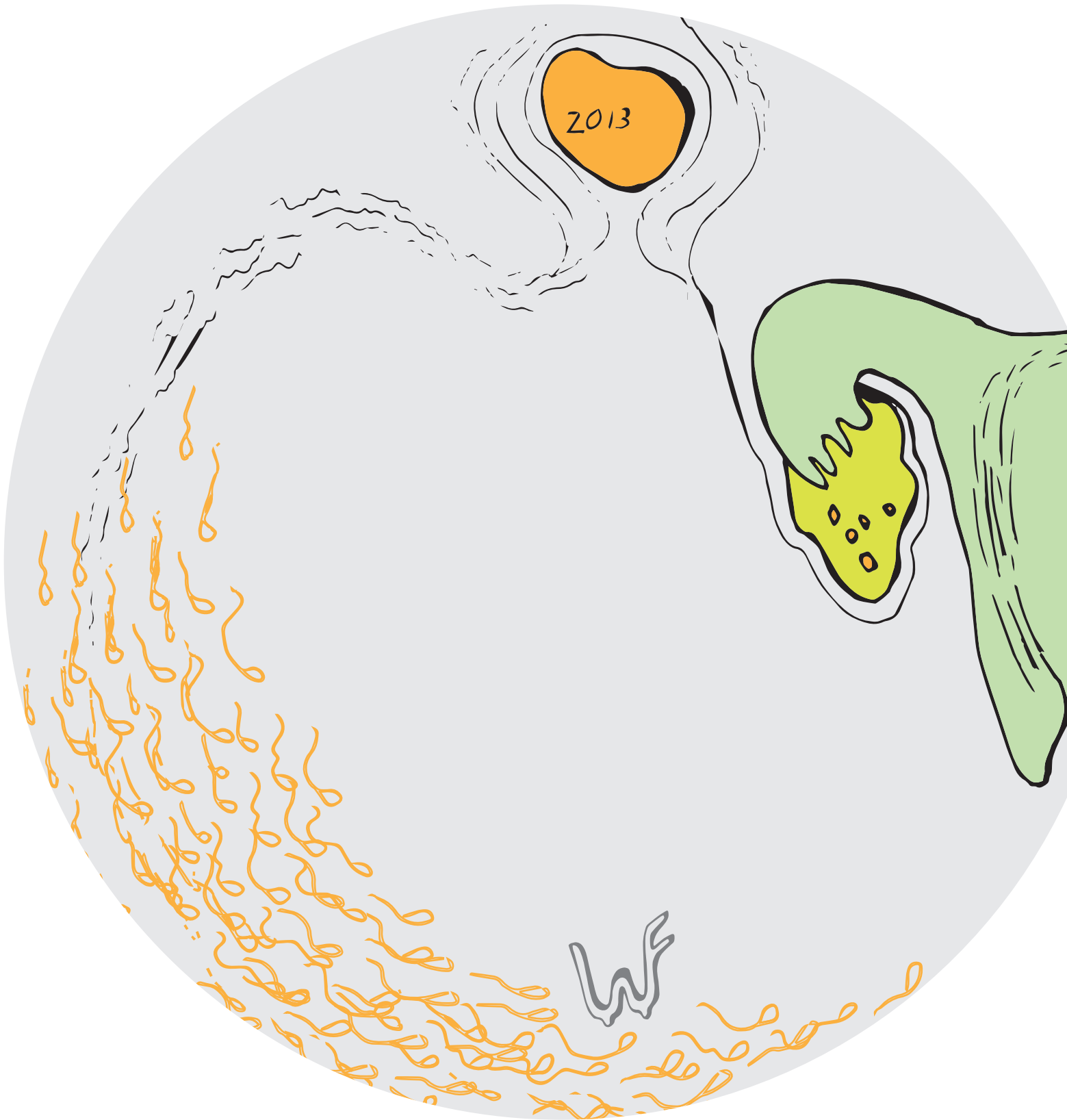
Gina Corso
Ken Krafchek
Kristen Spilman
Sue Linkins
Summer Fields, Kierra Jackson, Adia Stokes

Sponsored by:

MICA's Office of Community Engagement

Special Thanks to:

Gina Corso
Adelaide & Adam Fisher
Nancy Frazier



2013

