

PRE-MENSTRUAL SYNDROME

PMS, although a joke to society, can be as debilitating as other chronic diseases. A woman with PMS may come to you very frustrated and resigned after many attempts to find help, or to be validated as having a legitimate condition. PMS is more prevalent in this culture than in other cultures where women still have traditional roles and where downtime is allowed for the cleansing process of menstruation. The syndrome is exacerbated by the stress of being required to continually perform at peak levels in so many different roles with no grace period.

The complexity of symptoms seems to be brought about by a drop in estrogen late in the cycle prior to the flow. However, the symptoms may extend through more of the cycle, possibly worse at ovulation. You may hear women say “I have one good week during the month”. The estrogen drop is also associated with a drop in brain serotonin levels and endorphins. Women with PMS are often treated for depression, especially during hormonal changes such as postpartum and menopause.

Some relief for the syndrome is provided by the same therapies that help depression—cognitive restructuring therapies, medication, exercise to promote higher endorphin levels, high carbohydrate low protein diet, stress management, relaxation techniques, and avoidance of stimulants like caffeine. Because there are clearly physical, energetic, witnessing, and source problems, yoga is valuable in helping.

PHYSICAL BODY: Inflammation causing achyness, possible fever, water retention causing bloating and distorted proprioception which leads to clumsiness, being accident prone. Incapacitating headaches, skin changes, acne worsens, digestive changes, pain and cramping, vision and sleep changes, craving sweets, compensating behaviors (eating disorders).

ENERGY BODY: altered state (separation from breath and nature). Definitely tamasic—being resistant, inert, feeling restricted and dejected, concealing and destructive behaviors to self and others. Could be high energy with anxiety or low energy with depression.

MIND/EMOTIONAL BODY: rajasic and tamasic gunas come into play. Self-hatred and self-punishment, uncontrollable emotions, lack of self confidence, indecision, foggy judgement, anger, inability to function, addictions, work and relationship problems.

WITNESS BODY: separation from intuition and wisdom, totally self centered and withdrawn, imprisonment of whole being.

BLISS BODY: separation from all support systems and source connection. Absent, forgotten, abandoned.

MUDRAS:

The body, mind and soul are inherent in every fingertip, and the fingers are associated with individual organs. The ends of the nerve paths of the hands occupy a large area in the brain so cerebral activity, including moods, can be positively influenced through Mudras. A mudra is performed with an accompanying affirmation or mantra to change the inner attitude and induce cognitive restructuring. Mudras synchronize the left and right sides of the brain, restoring balance to all the systems. A mudra creates a special connection to the cosmic consciousness helping to restore the source body which is abandoned.

PRAN OR LIFE MUDRA: bring the tips of the thumb, ring finger and little fingers together while the others remain extended. Pran mudra activates the root chakra stimulating the

nourishing energy in the pelvic floor, increasing vitality, reducing fatigue and nervousness, improving vision, increasing self-confidence, and clearing thought. If combined with gentle breathing, it could help stabilize and calm, serving as a secure anchor during the storm.

GARUDA OR MYSTICAL BIRD MUDRA: clasp thumbs and place R hand on top of L hand. Can be placed on lower abdomen for 10 breaths, navel then sternum. Activates blood flow, invigorates, relieves menstrual pain and helps to deal with exhaustion and mood swings.

USHAS OR BREAK OF DAY MUDRA: called that because it could be done in bed to start the day. Hands together fingers interlaced with R thumb between L thumb and index finger. Press on the R thumb with the L thumb. This can be placed behind the neck to open the heart chakra and done with breath of fire to increase energy or placed in the lap and done with guided imagery to calm the energy. The mudra balances the hormonal system.

You can also include finger massage to help relieve symptoms. The little finger is associated with the sacral chakra and interpersonal relationships. Acupressure relates the little finger to anxiety and ayurveda relates it to the water element.

The ring finger is associated with the Root chakra and maintaining equilibrium in stressful situations. The triple warmer meridian that governs respiration, digestion and elimination begins in the tip of the ring finger and PMS clients need to restore digestive and eliminative balance. Acupressure associates the ring fingers with headache and ayurveda with the earth element.

The middle finger is associated with the Throat chakra and self-expression. Acupressure associates the middle finger with fatigue and ayurveda with the heaven or ether element.

The index finger is associated with the Heart chakra which generally shuts down in PMS. Acupressure associates the index finger with abdominal pain and constipation and ayurveda with the air element and palmistry with a sense of self worth.

The thumb is associated with the solar plexus chakra and PMS sufferers tend to lose all of their power. Ayurveda associates the thumb with the fire element, absorbing excess energy to restore equilibrium. Palmistry associates the thumb with vital self-assertion and reflexology associates it with the pineal and pituitary glands which govern the hormonal system. Also reflexology, holds that the pads at the base of the hand are related to the uterus and ovaries.

The approach to wellness through yoga is seen as a 1st person approach if the client is guiding themselves. This means that they are guiding their inner experience. In yoga we can use many techniques to facilitate awareness of our inner 5 bodies, wisdom and thus healing. Because PMS is comprised of many symptoms it can be difficult to treat for a whole group, as different people have different symptoms. PMS can be looked at as a Vata imbalance. Primarily the symptoms included are experienced thru the 5 koshas as lack of physical and emotional stability, lack of grounding and focus, bloating and swelling, spaciness in thought. The following postures have been chosen to create a sense of energetic relaxation. They are grounding and relaxing and encourage the flow of energy downward (apana), release pain and tension in genitals, uterus, low back, they increase focus, integrate the mind, body and spirit. The client may learn to manage and work thru the feelings of separation, gaining perspective as a witness.

Pranayama:

Dirga breath, Nadi Sodhana, Anuloma (longer exhale), sitali, baby kapalabhatti, ujjayi (gentle), anuloma krama (3 short inhales, 1 long exhale).

Asanas:

Roll around on hips, knees side to side, spinal twist, roll on back to massage (spinal rocks), push knees forward then pull in, drop feet with knees bent lifting one leg with arm rotated back, supine ½ moon, sphinx, reclined half shoulderstand, child modified with knees open, table, cat/cow, sunbird, squat, push one arm into thigh from squat and twist opposite arm, tadasana, goddess, 5 pointed star, tree, roll down into rag doll, moon salutation, tree, dancer, supine bound Angle (chant LAM while in it).

Savasana (guided imagery—visualize earth symbols like tree, earth, H2O)

Meditation: Tratak (candle gazing), mantra, prayer, chant OM.

GUIDED IMAGERY: to close class with Ushas Mudra. Sit in a comfortable position, interlace the fingers of your hands with the R thumb between the L thumb and the index finger, gently relaxed in your lap. Close your eyes and feel your hips sink into Mother Nature and the top of your head lift to the Heavens. Imaging you are sitting on the lawn of Kripalu watching the sun slowly rising. First, a reddish purple peeks up over the horizon and lifts into a vibrant orange filling up with energy as it rises. Then the orange lifts into a happy sunny yellow expanding the energy through the top of your head. Feel the energy from the sun absorbed into the cells of your body connecting you with the sun, the earth, and the whole universe. Tune into this connection throughout the whole day and know that it will continue to sustain and support you. Take some deep complete breaths and know that you have everything within you that you need for the day ahead. Slowly open your eyes, place your hands at the sea of tranquility. Namaste.