

How to Survive Your Period Without Getting Fat(ter) or Killing Anyone

A practical guide to menstrual zen.

I practice the [Miracle Morning](#), which means I get up early every day to start my day with intention. I begin with a short period of meditation, followed by affirmations and visualization. I then exercise for 15 minutes. Finally, I read from an uplifting book and end this edifying hour with journaling.

Except for when I am on my motherfucking period.

I do not feel zen when I'm on my period.

It's hard to meditate when my uterus is seizing.

“Picture someone about whom you have neutral feelings,” says the clueless voice on my meditation app.

“There is no such thing as neutrality!” I seethe. “You are with me or against me!”

“Send loving kindness out into the world,” he chants.

“I'd like to send the demonic spawn trying to claw his way out of my womb out into the world,” I snipe.

My visualizations all center around various combinations of dairy, salt, and chocolate and the most indulgent ways in which I can consume them.

I could eat them on a couch,

I could eat them while I slouch.

I could eat them in a bed,

I could eat them 'til I'm dead.

My creativity tends towards the angry. Violent. Rebellious. And I don't feel particularly bad about any of it. When my hormones are raging, I am 10-feet tall and bulletproof. Consequences can't touch me!

Unfortunately, I have recently started tracking what I eat and weighing myself every day. I want to stop being fat. My traitorous body, however, does not stop responding to the laws of physics for 3–5 days out of each month. Those pints of salted caramel ice cream scooped with pretzels will interfere with my not-being-fat goal.

I brought up my concerns with my health coach.

“Claire, surely no one gets through their period without ice cream and Netflix,” I said.

“This is what they'd call a trigger,” Claire said.

“Right, but everyone soothes themselves with caramel and chocolate when they have PMS,” I said.

“It sounds like your challenge is to find healthier ways to self soothe,” said Claire.

Clearly, Claire is avoiding the question because Claire has a box of Thin Mints stashed away for her own Hell Week. But Claire is still young and vibrant and isn't going to gain five pounds just by thinking about those god damn cookies.

Just writing that paragraph made my jeans tighter.

Let me stop here for a minute to say: this is complete bullshit.

If womankind must be responsible for the continuation of the species *and* bear the physical ramifications of that responsibility *long after we stop procreating*, we should at the very least get a free pass on weight gain during menstruation. That would only be fair, and if I'm put in charge of the Universe next time, I will prioritize this issue. Vote for me for Queen of the Universe!

Anyway — back to me trying to lose weight and maintain my zen while menstruating.

I decided to consider approaching Hell Week in a new way this month. A more mature way. A way that did not wreak havoc on my body.

Goooosefraba, I said. How can I do things differently this month?

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1. Do not use a man as a meditation guide.

I do not want advice from a man when I'm carrying the weight of his very existence in my lower back. It makes me resentful. "Oh, sure, it's easy for you to breathe in the light, *Dan*; you aren't sacrificing your body for the sake of humanity, *Dan*!"

Instead, I found a [guided meditation specifically for menstruation](#) on YouTube. Surprisingly, it does not annoy me and I do not hate the woman (much) when she speaks calmly to me. I actually feel a little bit better after listening to her. Find a woman you do not hate listening to.

2. Skip the affirmations and visualization.

In fact, skip anything extraneous. Having your period sucks and it's perfectly acceptable to tone down the obligations for a few days. This is not the time for dreaming big and doing the hard things. This is about surviving and honoring yourself for being born with the ability to endure *completely unnecessary pain* without dying or killing anyone.

3. Take it easy on the exercise.

You can work on your six pack abs next week. This week focus on stretching and breathing. [Restorative yoga](#) is a good option. Don't worry that you're slacking off in the workout department:

stretching is an important part of overall fitness, and relaxation is an important part of not killing anyone.

4. Eat stuff that will actually make you feel better.

So here's how I really got over my rebellious tendencies: I realized that eating crap when I feel like crap actually just makes me feel more like crap. Ice cream is a sneaky bitch. She looks good, she tastes good, but she doesn't make me feel good. At all.

Instead, I focused on eating fruits and vegetables with a high water content to help with bloating. I let myself go wild with red meat and other iron rich foods to make up for the blood loss. I resisted the urge to soothe my nerves with a bottle of wine and instead indulged in a few extra lattes. (There's no benefits in the lattes, but they're better than booze.) I made an effort to eat and drink warm stuff, because heat in all forms is my friend when I have cramps.

That's it. Do not add more steps because this is something you have to deal with every single month and it's not supposed to be complicated.

I'm happy to report that doing these four things made me feel better during and after my period. I was (slightly) less irritable, and didn't have to climb out of gluttonous hole when my period ended. I did still have to take ibuprofen by the handfuls, but I didn't threaten to maim, murder, or divorce anyone. I call that a win.