

My Husband Tracks My Period and It's So Good for Our Relationship

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Courtesy of Chaunie Brusie

My husband, Ben, likes to tell the story of the time I had a breakdown over mozzarella sticks on our second date. There were tears involved. After being seated and served drinks at the restaurant that I chose specifically because I really, really wanted the mozzarella sticks, the waiter casually announced that they were no longer serving mozzarella sticks.

My cravings and ensuing tears were the result of my rather unpredictable roller coaster of a menstrual cycle, which resulted in pretty severe PMS. Although Ben looked at me like I had lost my mind that night, he quickly learned the best way to foresee these kinds of meltdowns was very simple: Within a few months, he started tracking my period.

He isn't strict about noting when my period is going to start, but he's always aware—sometimes more aware than me. From shortly after that fateful night through 14 years of dating and marriage, we've changed our ways of tracking, from using a fertility thermometer to phone tracking apps. Whatever method we use, the result is the same: He's able to predict when I'm likely to be struggling emotionally and is always ready to help me through it.

My husband tracking my period isn't a weird or controlling way to "prepare" himself for the onslaught of his PMSing wife.

It's him acknowledging what being a woman means to me, honoring the role that we both play in our family planning, and respecting my physical and emotional needs. For years I struggled with debilitating PMS and a lot of shame about how my period affected me. I would shut down for days before my period started, go into a very dark depression, and hide away at home, crying and unable to focus or function. And the rage—I truly felt out of control because of the sudden anger I felt, like clockwork, in the time surrounding my period.

Although it was never confirmed officially, I suspected I had premenstrual dysmorphic disorder (PMDD), a severe form of PMS that can result in extreme mood swings. However, I chose not to take hormonal birth control, which in some situations can alleviate some symptoms of PMDD, and I knew I would have to find alternative methods of managing my emotional changes every month.

I had a lot of guilt surrounding my monthly breakdowns. Like almost everything about the female experience, I had internalized that there was something wrong with me and how my body functioned, despite the fact that I was healthy with typical periods besides those few

days of extreme sadness, anger, and irritability.

It was life-changing that my husband not only accepted my PMS as part of who I am but made an effort to be there for me during my period.

Before Ben was even my husband, he proved that my PMS was simply a part of me he was going to accept every month without judgment, criticism, or comment about me being “crazy.” By tracking my period, he's willing to acknowledge the very real physical and emotional changes I go through every month and just see them as part of the package—not something that defines me or makes me harder to love.

In the time around my period, my husband is particularly diligent about supporting me, and tracking my cycle makes it easier for him to do so. He gives me distance when I want to be alone, offers me back rubs, and encourages me to take time for plenty of self-care. Especially after we added kids to the mix, he's made sure the things I need the most when I'm feeling the worst—exercise and alone time—are always a priority.

This may all sound strange, but I'm not the only woman in a long-term relationship whose partner tracks her menstrual cycle. When Mary Justine Sauer, 28, threw up one day while checking on her Crock-Pot chicken dinner, she realized with horror that her nausea might have a different source than the stomach flu she thought she had been fighting. Two positive pregnancy tests later, her husband wasn't surprised. “He said, ‘I kind of figured because you're like seven days late,’” Sauer tells SELF, adding that she was still glad her husband let her figure out she was pregnant on her own.

After I had children, my PMS symptoms decreased significantly. But my husband still tracks my period, and I'm still glad he does.

My PMS symptoms likely abated due to a combination of being pregnant and/or breastfeeding for almost nine years straight and simply growing older. But Ben continues to be aware of my menstrual cycle because I do still have different moods, emotions, and challenges when I am about to start my period and because we don't use hormonal birth control.

The truth is, people with periods experience hormonal changes that can affect their moods, and that's not a bad thing. It's natural. Beyond the benefits for our relationship, us treating my period like a matter of course has helped me to accept myself more as a woman. I no longer feel the need to hide tampons up my sleeve when I'm headed to the bathroom at the gym or to pile groceries on top of my box of pads at the store (the horror!). Yes, I get a period, and, yes, it affects me physically and emotionally. So what?

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