Let's go menstrual!

Enjoy your menstrual cycle and LOVE its gifts.





Understand your monthly changes

and how you can enjoy the gifts of your Spring, Summer, Autumn, & Winter phases **every month**

By Miranda Gray

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Introduction

"The menstrual cycle can be a wonderfully empowering and positive force in our lives."

Does that seem like a weird statement to make?

My personal story is that I first learned about my cycle and its effect on me in my early twenties. I noticed that on certain days I felt more self-confident and outgoing, on others I felt more caring and loving, on some I was better at thinking tasks and on others I felt more creative, and more withdrawn and dreamy.

It seemed obvious to me to do activities on days when my energies and skills helped me to do things better. And when I did this I found that I felt happier with myself and my life.

One exciting thing I discovered was a new skill - for one week a month I found I could write well. Pretty amazing seeing as I was an artist at the time.

Rather than thinking this meant I wasn't good enough to be a writer, I simply wrote for one week each cycle. And the result was I had my first book published.

My experience of my cycle has never been easy physically or emotionally. I experience PMS like many women, but when I live and work as far as possible in awareness of my cycle, my symptoms ease, I feel happier, and I achieve much more than I would otherwise!

I hope by exploring your cycle you too will discover the wonder of it, how to live with it to help create well-being and happiness, and that you will understand how exciting and positive your cycle can be in your life."

Miranda Gray, UK, 2010



What is the menstrual cycle?

Our menstrual cycle involves a few days of bleeding, called *menstruation*, that occurs roughly every 28 days. The number of days in our cycles can be less than 28 days or more. The number can also change from cycle to cycle, sometimes with fewer days and sometimes with more.

We usually start counting the days of our cycle from the first day of bleeding – this is our 'cycle day' 1.

Our first day of bleeding is our cycle day 1

As well as bleeding, every cycle we also release an egg.

This occurs around days 14 to 16 in our cycles. Many women don't notice the event, but some women feel a slight pain or notice a difference in the mucus that comes from their vagina.

We release an egg around cycle days 14 to 16

After the release of the egg we enter the *pre-menstrual* phase and women can experience PMS or *pre-menstrual syndrome*. These are days when we can feel very emotional and have a number of physical symptoms such as food cravings, feeling bloated and irritable, or needing more sleep.



How does our cycle make us feel?

Our cycle can have an effect on:

- How we think
- How we feel
- Our level of physical energy

When we notice how we think and feel during our cycles we can start to look after ourselves better and to meet our emotional, mental and physical needs. And the good news is that this **helps us to feel good about ourselves**.

When we work with our cycles, we can:

- feel more comfortable with our bodies
- feel more in control because we know why we are feeling the way we do
- feel more confident about our abilities
- feel more empowered to create positive feelings about ourselves

Our seasons

We can divide our cycle into four *phases*, or groups of days, and imagine that they similar to the four seasons. Just as the land can go through the four seasons each year, we also go through four 'seasons' but once month in our cycle.

Cycle day	Name for the phase
Around cycle day 1 of bleeding to day 6	Winter phase
Around cycle day 7 to day 13	Spring phase
Around cycle day 14 to day 20	Summer phase
Around cycle day 21to first day of bleeding	Autumn/ Fall phase



How we can feel in the different cycle phases

Our monthly cycles can offer us a whole range of helpful, enjoyable and exciting feelings, which we can use in practical ways to feel good about our lives.

Every woman's experience of her cycle is individual to her, but there are some things we can have in common.

* The Spring phase woman

The Spring phase starts around cycle day 7 and lasts until about cycle day 13.

Think about how you feel in the Spring.



The countryside around us is full of new life, with plants creating flowers and new leaves, and birds making nests and laying eggs. Animals wake up from their winter sleep and become active. The increasing sunlight can make us feel more wide awake, active, happy and confident.

In our Spring phase we can

- have more physical energy
- want to do more things
- be better at thinking, and feel excited about learning new things and doing more activities
- feel happier with our bodies
- feel more confident about what we can do and who we are
- make things happen by planning and taking action

* The Summer phase woman

The Summer phase starts around cycle day 14 and lasts until about cycle day 20.

Think about how you feel in the Summer time.



The trees are full of leaves, the animals have their families, and there is plenty of food and warmth for them. In the Summer we may want to have a holiday, we relax and enjoy life and the company of people around us. We are less active than in the Spring, and more likely to let things happen in their own way rather than make them happen.

In our Summer phase we can

- be more able to accept things as they are
- be able to communicate our feelings in a positive way
- reach out to others and create relationships
- be motivated by helping help others
- feel more caring and nurturing towards ourselves and others
- be understanding about other people's feelings and needs
- be willing to allow things to grow at their own pace without us forcing them
- feel happy and contented with who we are
- · feel emotionally strong and confident

* The Autumn / Fall phase woman

The Autumn phase starts around cycle day 21 and lasts until our first day of bleeding. As this is the pre-menstrual phase, for some women it can be a challenging time.

Think about how you feel in the Autumn / Fall.

The days are getting shorter, the leaves start to fall from the trees, birds start to



migrate, and animals prepare to sleep through the winter. In the garden, people burn the leaves and cut back the Summer growth. In the Autumn / Fall we can feel less active as the nights get longer, we tend to turn inwards and not want to venture out into the cold. We can feel the need to clear out our rubbish, to curl up alone, and to sleep more.

In the Autumn / Fall phase we can

- become tired more easily and need more sleep to feel good
- be impatient because we are tired and can't think clearly
- feel emotional highs and lows
- have bursts of energy and then feel exhausted
- experience lots of judgmental and critical thoughts about ourselves, others, out life and our past
- feel frustrated that we can't do things and feel restless
- experience the urge to fix problems and clear out clutter
- want to be left alone
- want to do nothing
- be desperate to fix ourselves and our lives
- be very inspired, have lots of creative ideas

* The Winter phase woman

The Winter phase starts around our first day of bleeding until about cycle day 6. This is our menstrual or bleeding time.

Think about how you feel in the Winter.



The days are dark and cold, we are more likely to see the stars, the land is bare and empty, and we tend to want to stay inside and do nothing but curl up like the animals in the warmth and dark. It is a time when we tend to reflect on the year just over, day-dream about the future, feel what we want to do in the year ahead and commit to New Year resolutions.

In the Winter phase we can

- feel withdrawn and gentle
- be happy to just sit and not think of anything
- want to do very little
- feel tired
- be happy to let go of the things that annoyed us in the Autumn phase
- be more able to forgive and forget
- be less motivated by action and achieving things
- be more able to understand what we want in life and to commit to it
- know that we are okay just as we are
- get to know the real us underneath all our judgments and expectations

How to notice what you feel

To notice how we feel during our cycles we need to keep a record of simple observations. We can make notes on a piece of paper, on a calendar or in a diary, or in a note book.

Action: Making a record

At the back of this e-book you will find tables which you can print out and fill in.

Action: Ask yourself the following questions each day:

These questions can help you identify your feelings and changes.



Physical energy:

- Do I find doing things a struggle or easy?
- Do I feel

physically tired, or full of energy? comfortable with someone touching me? comfortable with people being physically near me? sexy and sensual?

happy with my physical appearance, or very critical?

- Do I knock things over easily?
- Do I have food cravings?
- What do I need physically to feel happy?

Emotional energy:

Do I feel

strong and confident?
loving and caring?
ready to take action?
I want to reach out to people?
confident about speaking to others, or do I feel shy?
more positive than negative, or the other way round?
safe, or vulnerable?
I can cope?
accepting of others?

- Am I good at listening to others?
- Is it important how others are feeling?
- Am I enthusiastic and passionate about my ideas and actions?
- What do I need emotionally to feel happy?
- What is important to me?

Mental energy:

- Am I thinking clearly, or am I day-dreamy?
- Is my memory good?
- Am I good at numbers, spelling and planning?
- · Do I have lots of inspired ideas?
- Can I concentrate easily and focus on what I am doing?
- Do I know what I want?
- What do I need to do with my mind to feel happy?

Action: Write down your observation

Either use the tables at the back of this e-book or use a notebook to write down your observations.

For example:

Cycle day 8: Have lots of energy and I feel confident Cycle day 9: Got a lot of things done today. You may notice that how you feel during your phases is different to those mentioned in this booklet.

Well done however for noticing this difference, it shows that you are really aware of your emotions, thoughts and body. It is very natural for us to have different experiences of our cycles as nobody has exactly the same things happen.

Angela noticed that she wanted to talk to her mother more when she was in her Summer phase than when she was in her Winter phase.

She also noticed that in her Winter phase she didn't want to do much, but in her Spring phase she had much more energy.

Angela knew that she had slept badly for a few nights during her cycle and she made a note in her notebook

Action: Record other events

We also need to make a note of other things that are happening in our lives because they can alter how we feel and cover up our menstrual changes.

For example, we may feel tired in the Spring phase simply because we didn't sleep well, or we may feel stressed in our Winter phase because we are anticipating an important event.

Ask yourself: What else in my life other than my cycle could have an effect on how I feel today?

Activities that can work well

As we get to know our cycles, we discover that what we can do well changes with the phases. This is really exciting because it means that if we do tasks when we know we are good at them we can do things better and quicker than at other times during the cycle.

As well as doing tasks, there are times in the cycle when we are better at talking to people and creating friendships, times when we are more creative and inspired, times when we can build our confidence and self-love, and times when we can find out our deepest desires.

Below are some activities which you can try out in your different phases.

Action: Record things you can do well

Have fun and experiment to see what works for you. Make a note in your notebook or print out the tables at the back of this e-book and fill in the 'Things I find easy to do' column. Doing this means you will remember to do these activities again in the same phase in your next cycle.

You may also find that an activity that you find easy also makes you feel good when you do it, so let's plan to do more of the things that make us feel good each month!

Easy Spring phase activities:

- Get lots of tasks done.
- Make a new start give up smoking, start a healthy eating diet, start exercising!
- Make things happen by taking action.
- Make a plan of things you want to do during your cycle. Look at the phase descriptions earlier to work out the best times to do them.
- Use your self-confidence to do something different to the usual routine.
- Use your thinking skills to learn something new, read a book, fill-in forms, and sort out problems.
- Do things on your own without the support of others.
- Stand up for your ideas and point of view in a calm manner.

Melanie decided to use her Spring energy and skills to learn something new by reading. She found it easier to concentrate and focus on reading even though it was noisy around her at the time.

Easy Summer phase activities:

- Be sociable, contact people you don't know, and make new friends.
- Support others, help to take care of them or meet their needs.



- Talk through disputes. Your emotional strength will help you deal with issues calmly, and help others to feel that you recognize their needs and hurts.
- Reach out to people who you may not have contacted for a while.
- Present yourself, skills and ideas to others you are much more able to be positive about yourself.
- Let projects and people develop in their own way. Help out only when it is really needed or asked for.

Kym found she felt more confident around people she didn't know in her Summer phase, so she used this week to call companies about finding some work.

Easy Autumn / Fall phase activities:

- Find out what you need. Take a full minute and ask yourself each day 'What do I need deep inside, how can I give it to myself?'
- Use your creative enthusiasm to create new things in all areas of your life, and feel the benefit of releasing stress!
- Problem-solve. Find a project that does not involve 'fixing' yourself or someone else, and let loose your powers of creative inspiration.
- Clear out something, create space or order, and feel the benefit of stress relief afterwards.
- Look for problems and mistakes edit letters and reports, check forms you have filled in, and read the small print on products or guarantees.
- Review what works well in your life and what doesn't give you
 the results you want (although don't make actual changes until
 the Spring phase)
- Do things on your own, but delegate when you get tired.

In her Autumn phase Erin found she became more tired and irritable. She gave herself more breaks during the day and used her Autumn skills to clear out her cupboards and make everything feel tidy.

Easy Winter phase activities:

- Sleeping!
- Meditate or pray.
- Doing only what is really important; you'll know what this is.



- Forgive yourself and others.
- Let go of the past.
- Ask yourself what you really want in life, and feel the answer.

- Enjoy the feeling of accepting your self, your situation and the people around you.
- Day-dream a positive future.
- Make a commitment to any changes or actions you want to take in the month ahead.
- Withdraw into your inner cave and enjoy being there!

Anna found she was much calmer in her Winter phase and she didn't over-worry or stress about things. She was able to let go of an argument she had with a friend and decided to make amends in the Spring phase.

When you look at your own observations you will find many more things you can do well than those mentioned here. You may also notice that some activities were easier in phases different to those mentioned in this booklet.

This is okay, as nobody has exactly the same experiences. It's excellent that you are noticing your own experiences - keep up the good work!

Things to watch out for!

Just as there are things that we are better at doing, there are other activities that we may not be so good at. When we try to do them we may feel frustrated and angry at ourselves because we don't meet our own expectations. There may also be situations that we feel less comfortable about.

When we understand that we change in each phase, we can stop feeling bad at what we can and can't do because we know that we will be able to do it better in another phase.

Action: Record what you don't find so easy

Make a note in your notebook or in the 'Activities that feel less easy' column in the record tables, of activities, tasks and situations that you feel are more difficult to do or that you feel are extra challenging in each phase.

The tables below give you some ideas of some of the experiences you may have during your phases. Many women have these experiences, and they are not 'good' or 'bad' - but we do need to be aware of how our feelings, attitudes and behaviour may affect others.

Watch out in the Spring phase for:

- Needing to do things alone.
- Being less caring of other people's views and needs.
- Feeling the need to achieve something to feel selfworth.
- Doing too many things at once.
- Being impatient with others or activities when results don't happen quickly enough.

Watch out in the Summer phase for:

- Doing too much for others.
- Feeling we have to give or be needed to feel worthy.
- Taking on too many tasks or responsibilities for others.





- Ignoring our own needs.
- Wishing we could be this person forever.
- People taking advantage of our generosity.

Watch out in the Autumn phase for:

- Believing the negative emotions and inner stories we make up in our heads.
- Being self critical.
- Poor memory, so write everything down.
- Creative pressure. Do something to release frustration even if it is only doodling or colouring.
- Dominating creative enthusiasm which can overwhelm all other thoughts and needs.
- Seeing the faults in ourselves and our relationships, and trying to 'fix' them
- Frustration, irritability, aggression and vulnerability, caused by tiredness and low mental abilities.
- Food cravings and the need to soothe yourself emotionally through food and drink.

Watch out in the Winter phase for:

- Irritability because you haven't made time to rest.
- Distress caused by trying to do everything you would do normally.
- Having more cups of coffee to beat tiredness.
- Lack of motivation to do anything having a 'whatever' attitude.
- Lack of mental and physical energy, creating mistakes, misunderstandings and forgetfulness.
- Lack of appetite.



Meeting our needs

When we feel our needs are met we automatically feel happier!

Each of our four phases can have different needs, so to have feelings of happiness and well-being throughout the month:

- 1. Notice your needs in each phase
- 2. Meet your needs in each phase

Below are some suggestions on activities which can help you to meet the needs of your phase and create feelings of well-being.

In the Spring phase we can create feelings of content and well-being by:

- · Being active.
- Getting positive results.
- Feeling that we are moving forwards in our lives.
- Feeling that we make a difference.

What activities make you feel good in this phase?

In the Summer phase we can we can create feelings of content and wellbeing by:

- Being sociable.
- Taking part in teams.
- Caring for other's needs.
- Keeping in contact with people.

What activities make you feel good in this phase?

In the Autumn phase we can we can create feelings of content and wellbeing by:

- Having a quick and easy creative activity.
- Slowing down when needed.
- · Reducing our expectations and doing fewer tasks.
- Doing things which make us feel nurtured and feel self love.
- Creating magical imaginary stories that feel empowering.

What activities make you feel good in this phase?

In the Winter phase we can we can create feelings of content and wellbeing by:

- Rest and relaxation.
- Alone time.
- Connecting to nature.
- Having extra sleep.
- Having time to day dream and imagine our hearts desires.

What activities make you feel good in this phase?

The secrets of the Autumn and Winter phases

The Autumn and Winter phases can be the most challenging for many women, especially if our lives don't allow us to have more sleep and relaxation. They can also be times of intense emotional experiences, but rather than being a problem they can be seen as a positive part of our lives.

The Autumn / Fall phase:

The inner storyteller

Our Autumn / Fall phase is probably the most difficult for many women because of the two amazing abilities we have in this phase:

- 1. To experience emotional messages about our deepest needs.
- 2. To create very real seeming emotional stories.



In this phase we can create a whole argument in our heads with someone, we can imagine a future based on one small thought, or imagine thousands of reasons why someone doesn't love us just because they didn't do what we wanted.

This amazing storyteller inside us creates these stories for one simple reason - to tell us that there is **something deep inside that we are missing**.

None of the stories are really about other people or situations; they are about listening to ourselves, meeting our needs, and feeling self-love and self-acceptance. The storyteller uses intense emotional reactions to everyday situations to get our attention and say 'hey girl, you are not feeling like you love yourself, do something loving!'

Knowing this is a huge relief. It means we don't have to fix ourselves, our situation, or the people around us, because nothing is really wrong. We just have to let go, relax and say 'it is okay to love me'.

When we think about the same situations in the Winter and Spring phases, the chances are they won't bother us so much - or at all! This just shows how unreal the stories we create in the Autumn / Fall phase are.

We can however put our inner storyteller to positive use by asking her for ideas and inspiration. We just need to think about what we'd like to know and then be open to letting the ideas come to us. They can come in surprising ways; for example, in a magazine story, on the TV, in a snatch of overheard conversation, or in a moment of brilliant intuition!

Problem-finder

In this phase we also have great abilities to spot problems and things that are not right, making this phase ideal for recognizing problems. We may read a report and use our ability to look for problems with the ideas, to notice spelling errors or missing information.

Sometimes we can immediately know when something feels out-of-balance or if something is not working well, but it may us a little longer to work out the reason why 'it feels wrong'.

Once we find a problem we can use our inner storyteller to help us to imagine a solution and create a new alternative.

Using our Autumn / Fall storyteller and problem-finder abilities are positive in our lives if we use them on projects, tasks, activities and our surroundings.

Try not to find problems with other people, your relationships or with yourself; instead use your storyteller to create positive ways to love and nurture.

The Winter phase:



The Winter phase is all about resting and allowing our minds, bodies and emotions to be renewed for the Spring phase. It's a time for us to reflect and ask ourselves what in our hearts we really want to do in life. When our mind works with our heartfelt emotions we are able to build the commitment to take action in the Spring phase and throughout the cycle.

Every cycle we have the opportunity to renew our commitment to the path ahead, whether it is reducing or giving up something - such as losing weight, getting on better with people or changing our behaviour - or just looking after ourselves better.

We can also use our amazing imagination and daydream abilities in this phase to create future scenes and to experience how good they will feel. For example; 'How will I feel when I have given up smoking completely?', and 'How will I feel when I change this behaviour'.

Every cycle this phase helps us to really feel and see our goal and to generate a positive attitude towards achieving it.

Comparing our phases:

After one cycle

When we compare one phase with another it can be easier to recognize how we change during the cycle:

Action: Comparing Winter and Spring

Look at your Winter phase and Spring phase notes.



What was different about how you felt?
What was similar?
How did your levels of physical and emotional energies change?
What did you find surprising?
Were your needs similar or different?

Action: Comparing Summer and Autumn / Fall

Look at your Summer phase and Autumn / Fall phase notes.



What was different about how you felt?
What was similar?
How did your levels of physical and emotional energies change?
What did you find surprising?
Were your needs similar or different?

Action: Comparing the other phases

You may also like to compare your Winter and Summer phases, and your Spring and Autumn phases.

When we compare our different phases we begin to understand that during our cycle:

- We can feel very differently about ourselves and our lives.
- We can have different levels of abilities to do things.
- Different things can be important to us.
- · We have different needs.
- We are okay how we are.

After two cycles

Once we have a record of more than one cycle we can compare our phase notes between cycles and look for things which are the same – both positive and negative.

If we keep recording our cycles we will build a better picture of how they affect us.

We will know for each of our phases how we are likely to feel, how we are likely to behave, what is important to us, and what are our needs.

This knowledge helps us to feel more in control of our feelings and thoughts, and gives us the ability to know how to meet our needs to create feelings of well-being.

For example, we can start meeting our needs to look after ourselves better by:

- taking it easier when we know we are going to be tired
- getting more tasks done when we know we will have more energy and enthusiasm for action
- nurturing our bodies when we feel caring
- · giving ourselves space when we don't feel sociable

10 hints & tips to well-being

Tip 1:	Live in tune with your cycle. Do less in your Autumn and Winter phases and more in your Spring and Summer phases.
Tip 2:	Try to do activities in each phase which meet your needs and which use your skills and abilities.
Tip 3:	Start projects and new activities in your Spring phase when your energy, enthusiasm and self-confidence is highest.
Tip 4:	Support and reach out to friends in your Summer phase as you will be emotionally strong enough to cope.
Tip 5:	Use your Winter phase to discover your real thoughts and feelings about yourself and problems.
Tip 6:	Create commitment to change in your Winter phase by being aware of what your heart wants you to do, and imagining the outcome.
Tip 7:	Don't believe your Autumn phase stories. Accept them as useful messages and do something nurturing to help you feel self-acceptance, self-love and belonging.
Tip 8:	Let people know how you feel. Tell them if you want to withdraw in your Winter phase or do things on your own in your Spring phase.
Tip 9:	Focus your energies on the important things in the Autumn and Winter phases and catch up on the other tasks in the Spring phase when you have more energy.
Tip 10:	Do the things you find easy, when you find them easy to do.

Tip 11: Do more of the things that make you feel good in each phase!

Your menstrual cycle is a wonderful cycle of exciting and enjoyable experiences.

Have fun with it!



A final note

As we record our cycles and do activities in tune with our phases we become more able to recognize the changes in our bodies, emotions and thought processes without keeping a record. Our cycles become a welcome and empowering part of our lives, helping us in our relationships, work and self-understanding and growth.

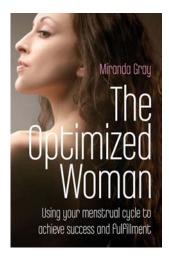
If you find that you can do one thing better each cycle in a particular phase, tell another woman and inspire her to do the same. It's only by trying this out for ourselves can we enjoy this amazing gift in our lives!



Also by Miranda Gray

The Optimized Woman

Using your menstrual cycle to achieve success and fulfillment



The menstrual cycle has had a longstanding negative image, but this book will change your mind! In a daily plan of information and activities, you will learn how to recognise your *Optimum Times* – days in your cycle of heightened abilities and skills – and discover how to apply them to everyday life to create feelings of happiness and well-being, to achieve your dreams and goals, and to get ahead at work.

We don't have to do things the same way as men!

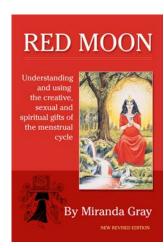
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Also available from

www.amazon.co.uk www.amazon.com www.brumbybooks.com

Red Moon

Understanding and using the creative, sexual and spiritual gifts of the menstrual cycle



When we look at ancient legends and folk stories we make an amazing discovery; that women in the past wrote stories about their menstrual cycles which teach us how to understand ourselves and enjoy our changing energies. We encounter goddesses who guide us through our changing month and who show us how to embrace and express the wonderful female energies of the menstrual cycle.

www.redmoonthebook.co.uk

For news of workshops, videos and articles, and to ask questions see Miranda Gray on Facebook.

Using the record tables

Our cycles do not run like clockwork!

It doesn't matter if you are just starting your menstrual life, in the middle of it, or towards the end of it; we can all experience irregular cycles!

These record tables are designed to get you started on recording your experiences during your different phases and the cycle day numbers are just an idea of when these phases may appear for you in your cycle.

You may find that after making notes for a few months that your cycle tends to be longer or shorter than 28 days.

You may find that you have a longer or shorter Autumn / Fall Woman phase or Winter Woman phase than in the record table.

You may find that every month appears to be different.

This is all great observation and shows that you are getting to know your cycle.

What really helps us to benefit from the gifts of the different phases is to notice when we change. So ignore the numbering if it doesn't work for you and use your own instead.

You are the expert on your own cycle!

Note: Cycle day 1 is your first day of bleeding

Record table: Spring Woman



Cyclo	How I feel					
Cycle day number	Thinking	Physically	Emotionally	Things I find easy to do	Activities that feel less easy	
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						

man





Record table: Summer Woman

Cycle day number	How I feel					
	Thinking	Physically	Emotionally	Things I find easy to do	Activities that feel less easy	
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

Record table: Autumn Woman



Cyclo	How I feel					
Cycle day number	Thinking	Physically	Emotionally	Things I find easy to do	Activities that feel less easy	
21						
22						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						



Record table: Winter Woman

Cycle	How I feel					
day number	Thinking	Physically	Emotions	Things I find easy to do	Activities that feel less easy	
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						