

It's bloody time we talk about periods

A quarter of the world menstruates yet talking about it is such a taboo topic. Period stigma makes menstruators feel as if having a period is something to be ashamed of. We don't whisper the word burping or make up code words to tell our friends that we need to pee. It simply doesn't make any sense that we should be made to feel ashamed of other natural body processes experienced by millions of other people all round the world.

Period stigma just doesn't add up and so we made it our mission to try and do whatever we can to address it. That's why we designed some colouring in pages that we've handed out around our community that celebrate and normalise periods.

Period stigma has also made so many of us feel as if menstruating is something that we need to hide or keep secret or even made us feel ashamed or grossed out by our own bodies. But period stigma doesn't just affect how we view periods. For many people, it exacerbates the difficulties they already face with getting access to the period products that they need. 1 in 5 Australians who menstruate have had to use whatever they had to make makeshift period products because they couldn't afford the products they needed.

Access to sanitary products should not be considered a luxury. No one should have to wear a pad or tampon for too long because to make things last or miss school because they don't have the products they need. Period stigma makes those without access to the supplies they need feel reluctant to ask for help and stigmatises open discussions about what they may need. That is why we wanted to do our bit to make period products more accessible in our communities. We assembled some boxes containing period products and placed them in public bathrooms around Canberra. Our hope is that these products not only provide these basic supplies to whoever needs them but also normalise talking about periods.

'I'm on my period' is not a phrase that anyone should have to whisper. No one should feel like they have to open their pad wrapper a millimetre at a time to avoid making noise or cover their sanitary products in a million layers of toilet paper to hide them.

It's our vision for the future that the next generation of menstruators are loud and proud about the processes that help their bodies function. In this future no one is embarrassed to be seen out buying period products, menstruation is not a taboo word people whisper and giggle about, no pad ads use mysterious blue liquids, no one feels they are forced to push through the pain and period products are just as common and available as tissues or toilet paper.

This ideal world is possible, but it starts with a conversation that we can all make a conscious effort to have with those around us to start the dialogue on how we can end period stigma for once and bloody all.

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