

The 3 R's of Cramp-Free Living

Fight Cramps *For Good*

Welcome Friend!

If you're currently suffering through nasty cramps, I totally feel you (and I suggest you skip straight through to the **bonus R** in this guide: a powerful release practice for when you're in the thick of it - I'll still be here when you come back).

If not, but you're already dreading your next period because of them, I feel you, too!

Honestly, there have been more times than I can count when I wished for paid menstrual leave at my previous job... Nothing's worse than pushing through at work, paying attention in a meeting, or preparing a presentation - with cramps! I know because that was me before I discovered the power of cycle syncing: trying to make every deadline happen, being there for my colleagues and my friends in their crises, desperately trying to create a daily workout habit - all while already struggling with lowkey imposter syndrome - and then cramps hit.

If this is you, too, you've absolutely come to the right place! It takes a lot of curiosity and courage to start healing and integrating period cramps. There are so many quick fixes out there, loads of expensive supplements and complicated routines - some useful, some just band-aids. True long-lasting effects take **radical practices**. Remember: "*Radical simply means 'grasping things at the root'.*" (Angela Davis). So, **let's grasp the roots of your cramps**, people pleasing, perfectionism, and imposter syndrome - all in one fell swoop!

What are cramps?

I'm sure we've all heard "*pain during your period is normal.*" But let me be perfectly clear: while menstrual cramps are common, pain is never normal! Some discomfort can occur, but if you need pain killers just to get through the day, there is a problem. What cramps (and any other cycle issues you might experience) are - *first and foremost* - is a signal. A sign from your body that something is wrong, out of balance, or maybe even in the process of being resolved.

"Our whole society is geared towards menstrual denial, and symptoms have a way of disrupting or interrupting the status quo." (Alexandra Pope and Sjanie Hugo Wurlitzer)

Biologically speaking, cramps are most likely caused by increased levels of prostaglandins, which are involved in your body's natural response to inflammation. The shedding of your uterine lining (= your period) is considered a natural inflammatory process. However, when you experience dysmenorrhea (= consistently painful periods), it's possible that your prostaglandin levels are 4 times higher than usual. Stress and trauma trigger the release of cortisol and other stress hormones, which can lead to additional inflammation in the body, exacerbating menstrual pain. Unresolved anger adds another layer, as suppressed emotions can manifest physically, contributing to heightened inflammation and discomfort. Furthermore, societal pressures on femmes, gender expectations, and western hustle culture in general, can perpetuate stress, fueling the cycle of inflammation and pain even more.

Adding all of this up, it's unfortunately no surprise that so many of us struggle with period pain. Existing in a world that values constant, linear productivity to the point of over-extending ourselves just to get our basic monetary needs met, has a very high price: our menstrual and general health.

That's why it's important to **recognize** these patterns in your own life.

That's also why it's an act of **revolution** to call for a slower and more cyclical life.

And that's why I created this challenge for you as a lasting **remedy** to include in your cyclical lifestyle.

Disclaimer

Studies on the interplay of inflammation, stress, trauma, physiological, and genetic factors are ongoing. Conditions such as PCOS, endometriosis, and PMDD further exacerbate what we experience as period cramps. So, please track your symptoms well, in order to identify your unique cycle patterns early. The more you know about yourself, the easier it'll be to speak to your doctors and medical practitioners about your concerns. *But more on cycle tracking later.*

Rage, Rest, Reflect + *Release*

When I first started studying menstrual health and cycle syncing, I spent a lot of time and money on trying different routines to beat my cramps: seed cycling, supplements, specific exercise plans, yin yoga, yoni steams, and cooking according to my cycle phases. There were some months with positive period experiences, but cramps kept returning. Nothing seemed to be a real game changer or working *consistently*. Hearing about hundreds of other people's experiences with period cramps (on the Baba Yaga Instagram and Tiktok), I learned that I wasn't alone! So, through some more experimentation and lots of feedback

rounds with my wonderful app users, I discovered what I am about to present to you in this challenge: your toolkit for a cramp-free life! **Rage, Rest, Reflect + Release**

Rage

"Anger is a valid and necessary human emotion. It's only when we suppress it or act on it destructively that it becomes a problem." (Roxane Gay)

Many of us grew up and still live in societies where it's considered 'unladylike' or even down-right shameful when women and feminine-coded folks express any sort of anger. If you type "female rage" into a stock image platform today, 90% of the results you'll get are of a beautiful young woman shedding a single tear. We are so unfamiliar with and afraid of our own anger. Yet, at the latest since Dr. Gabor Maté's *"When the Body Says No"* or *"The Myth of Normal"*, we know that the suppression of anger (and other emotions), people pleasing, and our hustle culture can have detrimental effects on our overall health, having been tied to increased nervous system inflammation, autoimmune diseases, and even cancer. If you factor in the centuries long history of denying women and AFAB people critical medical care, and the current state of the world with multiple ongoing genocides and ecocides, it's genuinely surprising that we need a reminder to let ourselves get angry.

What has our perfectionism really ever gotten us, other than *stressed out*?

Why are we so strict about pleasing others, instead of *ourselves first*?

And when will we finally see that working harder is not going to work in a world that *wasn't even designed for us*?

Friend, we are entitled to our rage.

"Anger is the energy Mother Nature gives us as little kids to stand forward on our own behalf and say 'I matter'." (Joann Peterson)

Here's the practice: invite your anger to the table.

"Anger in its natural, healthy form is a boundary defense, a dynamic activated when we perceive a threat to our lives or our physical or emotional integrity." (Dr. Gabor Maté)

Whenever you find yourself over-analyzing a situation or tiptoeing around a decision, become aware of your body. Am I tensing up? Am I feeling cold or nervous? What would it feel like to just say No?

Anger doesn't have to become this red rage against every- and anyone in your way. It is as simple as recognizing when something is out of alignment and acting accordingly. This is a practice that will take some time, but that is why I call it a practice. The more you do it, the more natural it will feel. Because "*we should not be afraid of our anger. Instead, we should embrace it as a powerful force for transformation and healing.*" (Audre Lorde)

Reply to today's email and let me know how all of this is landing for you. I would love to hear from you.

→ There's a powerful exercise for you on Day 5 of this challenge! It's *life changing*.

Rest

The most practical thing you can implement is this - it's also the most impactful thing: Sleep (*yes, with a capital S*). We already need around 7 to 9 hours of sleep to promote good health [*sources below*]; the luteal phase, or second half of our cycle (after we've confirmed ovulation) has us needing even more: an additional hour, on average.

Factors for good sleep:

- complete darkness, no artificial light
- create a no-screen bedtime routine
- sunlight first thing in the morning
- create a fresh-air morning routine
- less caffeine throughout the day, especially in the late afternoon
- maximum comfort in your bedroom (think: cozy cocoon)

If you absolutely cannot add any hours to your nighttime rest, I encourage you to schedule frequent power naps throughout your luteal phase: block 30 minutes from your work calendar as often as you can, especially during that last week before your period starts. Close the blinds and rest your eyes for 20 minutes. The more you manage to implement this, the faster you'll see your desired results in the form of more relaxed periods with less severe bleeding and less cramping.

Sources

[Shaver, Joan LF. "Women and sleep." *Nursing Clinics* 37.4 \(2002\): 707-718.](#)

[Nowakowski, Sara, Jessica Meers, and Erin Heimbach. "Sleep and women's health." *Sleep medicine research* 4.1 \(2013\): 1.](#)

[Hirshkowitz, Max, et al. "National Sleep Foundation's sleep time duration recommendations: methodology and results summary." *Sleep health* 1.1 \(2015\): 40-43.](#)

[Chaput, Jean-Philippe, et al. "Sleep timing, sleep consistency, and health in adults: a systematic review." *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* 45.10 \(2020\): S232-S247.](#)

[Grandner, Michael A. "Sleep, health, and society." *Sleep medicine clinics* 17.2 \(2022\): 117-139.](#)

[Lateef, Olubodun Michael, and Michael Olawale Akintubosun. "Sleep and reproductive health." *Journal of circadian rhythms* 18 \(2020\).](#)

Reflect

"Our anger can be a powerful force for positive change if we harness it and channel it into action." (Kimberlé Crenshaw)

I explained how a healthy practice of rage can support your health. But just getting angry alone is not going to save us. We have to practice some mindfulness around our anger in order to create a calm and healthy life. That's where our ability for self reflection comes in.

Whenever you experience a strong emotion (such as anger or fear), let it wash over you, experience it, and then ask yourself these questions:

- What story am I telling myself about this emotion?
- How has this story helped keep me safe in the past?
- What new story can I replace this old story with?

And my all-time favorite:

- What am I not saying No to?

That last one is special. You can do this as a regular practice. In fact, I highly recommend you create a special moment for this journaling prompt some time during your luteal phase. Really let yourself explore this question. Some follow up questions might be:

- Which of my boundaries need to be redrawn?
- Whom do I need to have a serious conversation with?
- What psychic wound am I ignoring and why?

The Bonus R: Release

"Letting go doesn't mean forgetting; it means we stop carrying the energy of the past into the present." (Yung Pueblo)

This works regardless of whether you're a free bleeder or use period underwear, pads, tampons, or a cup. Whenever you have to pee or change your period product - that's the time for this practice.

Note

I must also say this generally: don't hold it in for too long! If you feel the need to go to the toilet, *do*. I know it seems obvious, but once you bring awareness to that part of your anatomy, you'll realize how often you get distracted by work or everyday chores and *forget* to pee even when you have to. So, please, go as soon as you realize you have to.

Ideally, you do this in a quiet moment in a private bathroom at home.

Sit on the toilet.

If that's available to you, raise your heels up (so only your tippy toes reach the floor in front of you). In case you have a little footstool in the bathroom, it's even better to put your feet on that.

As you get ready to pee (tampon, cup, or disc is already out!) envision a situation or a person that frustrated the hell out of you in the last 2 weeks. Something or someone that really made you angry. Visualize them.

On a big inhale, sit up straight, chin slightly tucked under, tall spine. Roll your shoulders up and back on the exhale.

Inhale again.

And now, as you pee, there's 3 things you will do at the same time:

1. Push out actively - you know those Kegels you're told to do all the time?! Do the opposite now! Actively push out, down, and forwards as you pee.
2. You can add a lion's breath to this exercise. As you push out, open your mouth and stick out your tongue on an audible exhale, maybe even add a growling sound for special effects.
3. All the while, imagine how you're releasing that frustrating situation. Really visualize what it was that was making you angry and let it go.

For more tips to relieve period cramps, check out this blog post:

<https://babayaga.app/stories/are-period-cramps-normal>

A glimpse into your empowered future

With this challenge you're learning to embrace the power of **Rage** with your very own premenstrual rage room practice, find **Rest** with effective luteal phase sleep strategies, engage in **Reflection** to set strong boundaries, and experience a powerful **Release** practice. This is your key to breaking free from cramps, *for good*.

Invitation: close your eyes for a moment.

Imagine your life with no more cramps, healthier periods, reduced stress, strong boundaries, increased fulfillment, and enhanced confidence. This is the future you can unlock by incorporating Rage, Rest, and Reflection into your life.

You're so close!

Just one more step to becoming the main character in your own cyclical life:

Your premenstrual rage room

And now it's your turn to get really active: Set up your premenstrual rage room. As soon as you've confirmed ovulation (for example by tracking your basal temperature and cervical mucus with the Baba Yaga app → get it here: <https://babayaga.app/download>), or when you believe your next period is about 10 days out (say because you have a pretty regular rhythm), it's time to block some time in your calendar. Here's how you set up your own unique premenstrual rage room at home:

- Set aside a block of 20 to 30 minutes, at least once during that luteal phase. (I highly recommend doing it 2 or even 3 times, if you have that capacity; apart from being very effective, it's also fun!)
- Choose a room you feel very comfortable in, e.g. your bedroom or a relatively unused guest bedroom in your home. Ideally, there's a bed or a sofa in there, add as many throw pillows and cushions as you can to it; a punching bag is *super-extra*, but not necessary).
- Make a playlist! Yes, this is an essential part: are there any songs that trigger you? Any music that gets you angry? A genre you don't often listen to or even like, but one that totally feels like you wanna rage to it? That's the kind of music you'll want for this practice. (I created two suggestions for you: one more conventional, one very metal.)
- Make sure you can be undisturbed for about 20 to 30 minutes. Let your family and partner know that you need some alone time and that there might be some crazy sounds coming out of that room but that they do not need to worry.

- Set up your journal and this workbook for after the practice. You're gonna wanna write stuff down, trust me.
- **And now it's Go time: hit play on your playlist and *rage*. Jump around on the bed, punch the mattress, scream into your pillows - really hit it!**

This is literally one of the most cathartic exercises. It's such a release, such a high, and such a work-out, too.

When you feel out of breath, it's time to calm down a bit. Play some calmer music and journal about the experience: what came up for you? What needs to be said? What are you ready to release for good?

Invitation:

Take a selfie of your rage face & share it with us! Hit reply in today's email or post it on Instagram (make sure to tag me @babayagaapp) Our anger is sacred, it's a liberating force. We get to reclaim it for ourselves. Why not share what **femme rage** *really* looks like?!

Congratulations, I am so proud of you!

You're well on your way to a healthier premenstrual routine that sets you up for long-term success in the fight against your cramps. Pat yourself on the back, because beating this age-old stigma against a healthy expression of anger is no small feat.

Stay patient with yourself, and always remember: you can't force an emotion. If you're just not feeling it one day, don't beat yourself up. Let whatever happens happen (if tears come, let them; if nothing comes, let that happen, too - turn your session into a moment of meditation instead). Try to leave expectations of what it *should* look and feel like at the door (we don't *should* all over ourselves at the Baba Yaga). If your rage room session ends up being completely different than what I'm describing here for you, amazing! Hit reply in today's email and tell me all about it! I am so here for it.

Invitation:

- Need help figuring out when you enter the luteal phase?
- Want a reminder sent to your phone when it's time to get your premenstrual rage room ready?
- Ready to get to know your inner rhythms so intimately that you won't fall prey to people pleasing or imposter syndrome *ever* again?

Discover the Baba Yaga App - your path to authentic living!

- know yourself
- live your best cyclical life
- become authentically you

Embark on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Download our app now and begin living your best cyclical life with the Baba Yaga Cycle Coach - where period tracking meets life coaching meets embodied mindfulness: <https://babayaga.app/download>

*Don't have an iPhone? → no problem, stay in touch so you don't miss our announcements and future challenges & blog posts around your menstrual health! It's our mission to empower you to a slower and healthier life **in sync with your cycle!***