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Moon Time

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Historically a Moon Lodge was in some ways the female counterpart to the Sweat Lodge ceremony. It was believed that women found their balance through menstruation in the Moon Lodge and also through honoring their Moon time.

I spent the past year taking special care of myself during menstruation. I typically spent 1–3 days alone in a primitive Birch bark and Marsh Grass thatched wigwam constructed for women to spend their Moon Time in. Anyone, women only if I preferred, would bring me hot cooked meals, bring water to drink from the lake, sit and keep me company if I so desired. I was taken care of. All the women in my community would come upon my request to share emotions and stories in a circle and sing songs. I spent time writing in my journal, drawing pictures, reading, and lots of time just being. I felt and still feel that Moon time offers me an amazing gift of introspection. During this time I've had the clearest insight as to what my dreams are telling me, where my emotional struggles are rooted, and what I need to happen in my life. It's become a time I look forward to in place of dread.

This monthly ritual wasn't easy. I struggled a lot with this concept, especially in the beginning. Knowing that this was a

tradition that women followed in many indigenous cultures, but having little to no information about it and what it all meant confused me. I would sit there some nights wondering what I was doing there, what I was supposed to do. I was bored. I connect this feeling to how I've felt in other instances alone in the wilderness. Sometimes I would grow angry and blame others for my struggle. I wished there was other women or an Elder from my tribe to show me the way. But that's not the world I live in now. I've had little success finding information about Moon lodge traditions. I listened to an audio tape by Brook Medicine Eagle about creating the Moon lodge ritual in your home that was somewhat helpful.

I know now that just quietly being alone is the hard part. A lack of distraction is frightening. It's not easy to break your routine & go be alone without distractions. Once I was able to recognize that this was no one's fault I could begin to work through the feelings that were coming up.

I believe the most important part of this ceremony is time alone, and time to feel emotions and where they're coming from. I found having women's sharing circles with a talking stick to be very fulfilling. Spending time alone in your bedroom, in the backyard, a tent, a shack made from scavenged materials, a cabin, debris hut, primitive lodge, etc., or going for a walk at a nearby nature trail are all ways to bring this ritual into your life. Collaborating with other women and making a place that could be shared might work. It doesn't have to be a moon time only space. As long as other folks can respect a space designated for this purpose for as many days as you need it. Try bringing this idea up with the people you live with. Maybe you could avoid the responsibilities of cooking or cleaning for a short while. Indigenous people didn't always have a special lodge for this time. This can be a lot of energy and materials if the tribe is small. So a lodge for sleeping or a room in your house could be set-aside for a woman to spend her Moon time. Write, draw or just be. Eat well during this time and take good care of your-

self. Some women I know enjoy fasting for short periods during menstruation. Try to have a positive attitude about menstruation. Give it a shot and don't let that voice in your head tell you that you have better things to do. Stick with it through the boredom and confusion. If you love yourself this can be more important than anything else you may have planned. Try to see it for the gift that it is, rather than something to dread and that gets in the way. I myself have very intense and painful moon times and it's never easy. But every once in awhile I'll grow impatient and skip the alone time, pop some painkillers, and pretend that nothings happening. I notice the difference. And I crave my next moon time.