

Springmoon

Welcoming your daughter to womanhood
A rite of passage for the Menarche

This ceremony would usually be a women only event. If fathers, brothers or other significant (to the young woman) males are to be involved have them be the welcoming (back) party after the ceremony.

You may choose to do this ceremony with a small group of young women who have all reached their menarche around the same time.

You can choose to keep the details of the ceremony a secret from the Maiden or involve her in the preparation.

Instructions

Read through the ceremony before you do it. Decide who will read out the words (it doesn't have to be the Mother) and add whatever you want to the parts you will speak. You may for example wish to invoke your female ancestors or invited women who weren't able to attend, various angels or particular Goddesses. Several Goddesses have been included in the written ceremony, however you may have other relevant Ones you wish to include. Read through the list in the ceremony and choose which Goddesses you want to invoke, you can of course invoke all of them. Don't worry about making mistakes, if your aim is true and your intention is loving, your 'mistakes' will be an essential part of the ceremony.

Preparation

Ahead of time: INVITING SPECIAL GUESTS

You may decide to invite other women to be present for the ceremony. Perhaps Godmothers, Aunts, Grandmothers, special friends, the young woman's friends - be sure they have themselves commenced menstruation.

Send them invitations.

Tell them they are invited to join you for a ceremony to honour (name)'s rite of passage into Womanhood, to welcome her/them into this new phase of her life, explain the ceremony's purpose, and ask them to prepare to speak or read aloud their written words in answer to:

- What I wish I had been told at the onset of my fertility cycle, or what I was told that really helped me.
- What I have learned through and from my cycles over the years.
- A special specific wish for the maiden from them.

Ask the guests, if necessary, to focus on the positive aspects as their words will be their teaching to the maiden.

Ask your guests to bring a little meaningful gift for the maiden, such as an appropriate crystal, a journal, a bracelet to wear when bleeding etc. This gift can be something for the maiden's altar that she will perhaps maintain following this ceremony. The cycle charting handbook *Thirteen Moons and Spinning Wheels* pack is an ideal gift. This is available through MoonSong (www.moonsong.com.au).

Invite your guests to wear red and bring red foods to share for a morning or afternoon tea or supper to follow your ceremony.

This is also about having fun, celebrating and enjoying yourselves. Remember what happens around a rite of passage is what informs the initiate about their value in their new role.

Things to gather for the ceremony

Matches or a lighter

Sage for smudging

Appropriate Incense (stick) and holder

A heat proof dish

A special candle

An altar cloth (as special as you like)

A special cushion to be placed beside the altar for the maiden to be seated on during the ceremony

Other cushions to make the circle

Keep in mind as you gather these things that you could make a gift of them to the Maiden so she could create a permanent altar for her ongoing menstrual rituals.

THE CEREMONY

Read through this before your begin.

Modify any of the wording for the ceremony to better suit your daughter, guests or situation.

If you are doing this ceremony for more than one maiden, simply speak all their names when called for and conduct the individual part for each maiden, one after the other.

There is a speaking role required for the ceremony - lighting the candle and incense, speaking the invocations, opening and closing the ceremony- this could be the Maiden's mother or another woman or you could share the role between several women. If you share the speaking role, perhaps write out the words for each woman to read.

Make sure you've read the instructions and have everything from the 'Things to Gather' list.

Find a quiet place for your ceremony, inside or outside, where you will not be disturbed for 30 minutes or more depending on how many women are attending the ceremony.

Perhaps you want to nominate a photographer for the ceremony, have this and her gear all sorted out before you start.

GET READY

You can do this just before your guests arrive or with them when they do.

Lay out the cloth to create your altar.

Arrange the things on your altar.

Place the special cushion beside the altar.

The women will be sitting in a circle around this.

CLEANSING AND PURIFYING THE SPACE

You can either do this ahead of time or with your guests.

Do it in focussed silence, the ceremony begins with this process.

Burn the sage leaves in the heat proof dish or use a smudge stick to cleanse and purify the space.

Don't do this where there is a smoke alarm as it will certainly trigger it. If you'd rather not burn sage then you will need to cleanse the space of any energy accumulated in the area from previous activity by another means. You could spray the air with atomised water mixed with eucalyptus oil, or just flick water mixed with eucalyptus oil around the space. It's your intention that matters.

As the sage burns or as you spray/flick the water and oil speak your intention: "I cleanse this space".

When the sage has burned away or enough has, empty the dish of the ash - be sure no part is still burning (put it on the soil around a plant) place the candle in the dish and put it in the centre of your altar.

STARTING THE CEREMONY

(Turn off your mobile phones)

Seat the women in a circle around the central altar.

Ask everyone to be silent.

If you are cleansing the space with your guests present and seated, do it now.

Light the candle and say:

"We call the Divine Feminine to be present and give thanks for our connection to the Earth, our Mother. We call Archangel Haniel - and give thanks for connection with the energy of the moon.

We call the ancient Goddesses that our foremothers called upon:

Artemis - Greek Goddess of Maidens, we give thanks for your protection of this/these maiden/s.

Freyja - Nordic Goddess of fertility, celebration and passion, we give thanks for your blessings today and always.

Ostara -Northern European Goddess of fertility and springtime, bless us with your beauty.

Kuan Yin - the Goddess of compassion and protector of women and children, be with us.

Maeve - Celtic Goddess of cycles and rhythm, bless us with your wisdom.

Yemaya - African Goddess of women's blood.

and Hathor - Egyptian Goddess of women's moontime/bleeding time.

(add female ancestors if desired, eg "we call Grandmother....").

We give thanks for guidance, nurturance, protection and support as we conduct this ceremony to welcome (name/s) to womanhood."

Light the incense stick and say:

"May (name/s) feel the beauty, the honour and the privilege of being a woman."

Main speaker:

"Everybody hold hands, close your eyes, and breathe deeply together - in... out.... in... out.... in... out....

PAUSE

Take your awareness to the Earth beneath you.

Feel the Earth beneath you.

PAUSE

Feel the air all around you.

PAUSE

Feel the warmth inside you.

PAUSE

Feel the water nearby in the river, ocean, lake etc/in the sky above (whatever is appropriate to your situation)

PAUSE

Gently squeeze the hands you are holding and feel the circle we are creating here.

Open your eyes and look around at who is here.

Make eye contact with each woman.

Let go of your hands and sit comfortably.

Go around the circle everyone speaking their name.

"We are gathered here today/night to honour (name/s) and welcome her to womanhood.

Being a woman is a privilege and a responsibility.

One of the privileges is the deep connection we can experience with each other and with nature.

And one of the responsibilities is to live our lives with that knowing.

A woman's life is divided into seasons just like the earth's seasons - spring, summer, autumn and winter.

The time of the first blood, the menarche, is a time of transition and transformation, a rite of passage into womanhood.

It is as if the mid spring, the spring equinox of our lives.

In nature we see the buds bursting forth as blossoms on the trees, the rose bud beginning to open, new growth everywhere.

And this we see reflected in (name/s).

This is the time when a woman begins the journey of her fertility. A precious time to both honour and understand.

This is the place where (name/s) is/are now.

You are a woman now!

Welcome to womanhood."

If you are conducting this ceremony for one maiden, bring her to the centre of the circle now and seat her on the special cushion, perhaps her mother could do this.

Go around the circle and have each woman answer the two questions and then go around the circle again with each woman giving her wish and gift to the maiden.

If you are doing more than one maiden, first go around the circle with each woman answering the two questions whilst everyone remains in the circle, then bring each maiden to the centre of the circle separately to be individually honoured with the wish and gift giving.

"We want to share with you today, some women's secrets, some of the women's mysteries.

Being a woman carries responsibilities - that's why you are capable and strong.

Being a woman is a joy - that's why your heart is big and your smile is sweet.

Being a woman is very special - and that's probably why you chose to be one!

Let's go around the circle now with each woman sharing with (name/s):

*What you would have liked to have known or be told at the onset of your fertility cycle, or what you were told that really helped you, and

*What you have learned through and from your cycles over the years."

Stay focussed on the ceremony, resisting any unrelated conversation. If you are conducting this ceremony for more than one maiden, bring the first to the centre of the circle now and go around the circle again with each woman giving the maiden her wish and special gift.

Bring the maiden back into the circle, perhaps her Aunt or Godmother, someone other than her Mother if she took her to the centre of the circle, could do this.

If you are doing a group ceremony, once you have honoured each individual maiden and all have returned to the circle....

Join hands.

Allow for spontaneity here and perhaps ask if there is anything more anyone wants to say.

The Maiden/s could speak at this time if she/they wish.

At this point, to complete the ceremony, you could sing an appropriate song together.

To Close:

With hands held

"We give thanks for a wonderful ceremony, welcoming (name/s) to Womanhood.

We give thanks for the divine guidance, nurturance, protection and support.

We give thanks for our connection with each other and the Earth and for our knowing of the wisdom of the cycles and the blessings of being a woman.

Blessed Be and Blessed Do"

Snuff the candle out, don't blow it.

Enjoy your red feast.

Plan to gather again.

⁽ⁱ⁾"Her Blood Is Gold" by Lara Owen

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾"Temple of the Blood" a CD by Katherine Cunningham has a wonderful guided meditation for women to use for healing around their menarche and menstrual cycles.

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