

# CDG Facilitators share their experiences

**Anne Hall**, Kangaroo Ground, Victoria, Australia

A reflection on Celebration Day For Girls.....I was fortunate to be able to attend a day with Jane prior to facilitating the Day myself and was able to absorb the Day's structure and its subtleties. It was those nuanced subtleties and the play of energies that are somewhat harder to define.....what Clarissa Pinkola Estes, author of "Women who run with the Wolves", would call "listening with another ear" or Joseph Campbell would call "feeling that you see". It was exhausting "witnessing" as opposed to the more vibrant energy of "holding" and I felt like fudge at the end of the day.....rich....and somewhat dense. I had a couple of weeks for my experience to settle into my body before my own day of "holding" which was wonderful alchemical timing. The mother's meeting reminded me how deeply women emote their menarche experience and the painful dredging it is for some to excavate the story, and then... its potential power to find a way towards healing in its release. Jane expressed her feelings of how what often emerges during the mother's meeting always has potential for further exploration.....but quite beautifully keeps it contained so we can remind ourselves that this day is for the girls and theirs is a new beginning. Of course, the feelings are palpable among the women and you can "feel" many are brought in contact with that which is unresolved inside of themselves and for some you know this inward meeting has been somewhat of a surprise. I like the strength in this.....as mothers we are often re-awakened to our inner selves as our girls forge their own pathways.....but the honest acknowledgement of our experience.....keeping "hold of our own charge" (as Alexandra Pope would say in *The Wild Genie*).....and allowing our girls their own clear way is a wonderful gift. The mother's meeting gently holds the mothers, uncovering their stories, revealing to themselves what they may need to "hold", and indeed all the gifts they have to share.

In Jane's mothers meeting I was able to witness the pain and difficulty one woman had in recollecting her own girlhood.....and watched how this same woman blossomed on the Day alongside her daughter, and could see something new had emerged in this woman's experience of actively honouring her daughter. It was subtle, but it was powerful, and humbling to witness. Another mother who did not attend the mother's meeting was a more challenging energy to work with on the Day.....having missed the mother's meeting, she did not contain the intent of the

day within her, and needed more guidance, and indeed understanding and personal holding. It was good that she had come with her dear daughter but it re-enforced the importance of the mother's meeting and its purpose.

So, I held strongly to two main intentions for facilitating my mother's meeting. The first was the fabulous question Jane puts forth to the group..."tell me a little about your daughter, how does she feel about the coming day, how are you feeling, what are your hopes for the day, and what are your questions?".....oh how the mothers love love love the opportunity to talk about their child and it is in their response to this open question that we learn almost all we need to know in preparation for the day. I found that after a general "comfort" opener, this question and everyone's chance to speak gave rise to all that I needed to convey to them about the day.....and I soaked in what I needed to know about them. The second was the telling of their menarche story. Oh my, you can feel the mood change.....three energy shifts here I think 1. when you tell them that's what we're going to do 2. when they're sharing their stories 3. when it's over and some of them are sharing with the larger group. What happens in those minutes is profound and I feel has great impact to what may happen on the Day with the girls. It is here that realisations come to light and we can set our intention for the Day.....it is a healing for us, an honouring of ourselves, a celebration yes indeed for mothers too, but foremost and most importantly.....the Day is for the girls! All the rest is "housekeeping" so to speak.

I let the mothers know this was my first holding of a Celebration Day but reassured them that the Day was designed by Jane who has honed it over many many years.....and in our prior communications had alerted them to Jane's website. There was a strength in being able to allow women to see that this work has been drawn upon by another woman who has pioneered these Days for years now and this work is blossoming and growing.....not just here in Vic, but in other States....Kate, I told them you were holding a Day in WA, Jac in NSW, Mel here in Melb and even overseas.....how wonderful that felt!

The Celebration Day.....I felt a nervous energy that I was attempting to calm.....but I couldn't shake that feeling that I was bound to disappoint....I stepped into my power circle Carla.....and relied on my yoga breathe.....and before I knew it the Day was beginning. Setting an altar and quietly doing my own rituals was helpful and Jac, I wore the locket you made me in Jane's circle, trusting in its blessings. Having the mothers come and introduce their daughters is a wonderful

beginning.....symbolic and practical..... Even though I have gorgeous girls this age myself, I think I was unprepared for how delightful I found the group of girls to be! They touched a deep groove inside of me.....I felt my girl self very strongly.....and felt my strong mother self emerge to take her rightful place in holding the beautiful trusting maids in my care. We chatted about "pets" as we waited for all the girls to arrive.....there had been a guinea pig death and funeral which was helpful to keep a lively conversation going about the strange and wonderful and tragic ends of various pets.....Starting with the Menarche, Menstruation, and Menopause words is fab to get right to the point of why you're there.....and the girls were gorgeously groaning at the words and in the same instant desperately wanting to "have a go" at saying them and their meaning. This is what strikes me about this age group, they love the freedom to be vocally "OMG" about everything but at the same time enthusing about discussing it. The morning goes quick.....I loved the time alone with the girls.....even as I think of it now, the word "precious" comes to mind. I felt all the information came out of their endless questions and we just kept flowing from their curiosity. The mandala, henna painting, tampon waterlogging (they love this!!!) were excellent backdrops to the information being shared. I know Jane treasures the written questions from the girls and to have those 10 pieces of paper filled with gorgeous clever funny poignant questions from those girls.....so trusting, oh my, I'll be treasuring mine too! One of my questions, in delightfully creative spelling, asked "How old were you when you kissed a boy?" and another asked "When did you get your first period?" Answering questions leads to more questions and as with women, the girls swing from solemn regard to fits of giggles and back again.

I loved it when Jane tells the girls how their mums are bound to be quite excited upon return and asks them to care for them bringing them mindfully to the circle.....I imitated this ploy and loved watching the girls expand as they owned the space, inviting their mothers in, and the energy works with the mothers, as they come respectfully into the circle.

This moment has the feel of an "occasion".....a "ceremonial" event within the Day.....it sets a tone....another nuanced holding gently giving the Day its magical qualities. Lunch feasting then allows mothers to relax and soak in the vibe of their daughters who seem to have crossed some thresh-hold after the morning shared together. The girls energy gets big at lunch....they can spread their wings before resettling together. Upon re-gathering, you can sense the mothers have been waiting for this moment and what comes in their stories is so varied.....and I can only imagine what Jane has soaked in over her years of these Days.....it is a re-affirmation of the strength, courage,

humour that is Woman.

I had two women share Holocaust stories of grandmothers which were strong and moving.....and a fabulous lead into the Anne Frank quote. The menarche stories whilst lockets are sewn is another fabulous holding allowing a lightness to permeate the group, and watching the girls "wait' for their mothers turn tells me the import of this event.....it is a handing over.....it is initiation....for some it is a first hearing and for others it is an honouring of a story already told.....but to all, it's a marker of why we are here! By the time we are conducting the ceremonial bestowing of lockets containing blessings....an energy is truly humming within the circle.....and I can feel its pulse strongly. It is such a gentle and simple guise (perfect for maiden energy) but holds in it an unspoken statement, a fist in the air for girls and women everywhere. We will be honoured, our fertility, our bodies, ourselves will be celebrated. The gathering of the mandala grains and the blessing sent forth to all girls everywhere is a fitting ending.....closing the ceremony and releasing the celebratory energy outwards....It felt very round and full at the end....I felt replete.....the Day was done!

I have contemplated my holding of this Day.....and there were things I forgot, timing slightly askew, and I definitely should have eaten and drank more water at lunch and chattered less.....things I've thought.....oh, I could have, should have.....but I know in my heart these things are unimportant, and I'll slip and slide within this Day with greater ease as I have more experiences of it. Mostly what I hold inside is the picture of those girls, and if nothing else, and I truly mean, if nothing else, I do imagine they drank in a positive feel about their femaleness, about the wonder of their body, and in that, I feel a gratitude and joy! That simple.....that powerful!

**Sharon Weatherby**, Merseyside, UK

So here's my small part of "being the change we want to see" in feedback from my first CDFG. My group was my daughter, her best friend and mum (who is a very good friend of mine), so my challenge was to stay on track and not slide into everyday conversations!

My other concern was that my knowledge might be insufficient to keep the day flowing. I didn't need to worry though as the day flowed beautifully. I was surprised that the girls were interested and engaged to share discussions around cycles, seasons, ovulation, dance of hormones and pituitary gland etc, almonds and pears! vulva puppet and crochet uterus all before the mandala began. The girls retained the info about menarche, menstruation, menopause and concluded that " *If you want to have a baby the best time to try is during ovulation!*"

I told them the story of the Red Tent whilst they did the mandala, and then read *Cycling to Grandmas House* to them. They loved that story, I could see the light bulbs turning on as they realized that they were about to embark on an awesome journey to becoming a woman and that they could choose how to celebrate this event, that they shared with all girls throughout the world and throughout time! When we talked about our menstrual abundance, and how the egg that becomes us was present in our mother, whilst she was in her mothers tum, Jess exclaimed " *So that means if we keep on going backwards it's like we were present in the 'original' woman, awesome!!*"

Here's my daughters feedback:

The Celebration 4 Girls Day was upbeat and fun. I didn't know what to expect, so was nervous (even though it was my mum!) We were soon able to jump up and get involved in a wide range of activities. Everything from a crochet vagina to mandala patterns and henna tattoos!! Last year in science we covered the basics behind it which freaked me and my friend out!! But the Cd4g day was not like that as we learned about other cultures and their ways to celebrate the girls transitions. Throughout the day we laughed (a lot!!) I think all around the day was fun, a great experience and will help not just me, but all girls to understand that "it's a blessing, not a curse!!!"  
Natasha xxx

I felt really well supported by Jane's material. It was an absolute pleasure to facilitate this day, we made deep connections with ourselves and each other, and it was empowering and humbling at the same time when we shared our 'qualities,' the girls just basked in the sunlight of themselves. Hoping we all find our pathway to this work again soon, as it is so wanted and needed, we just need to show up!

**Jacintha Gunasekera**, Sydney, Australia

Hi everyone! Just to let you know that I've done my first CDG and it was a hit! I was pretty nervous (so much that I had a hypnotherapy session a few days prior!), especially that I didn't know enough and that I wouldn't be able to hold the space or the girl's/mum's interest and attention. And 10 girls! Holy moley! I wore the felt locket Anne made me on our weekend at Jane's, to harness all those good wishes we made. And it went so well. I stuck with Jane's format – the timing and activities went beautifully. The girl's had a great time and so did the mum's. There were a couple of

challenging girls (with Asperger's and ADHD), and one girl who really didn't want to be there, but on the whole the activities truly keep the pace and interest going.

**Sally Quinn**, Footscray, Victoria, Australia

It was a great day & process, and I have had some beautiful feedback. I have had lots of enquiries since then too, and will run another day in November.

Carolyn & I both learnt heaps & feel clear on things we can further develop in our approach & delivery. It was really special & valuable to work together ... I'm in the process of writing a funding application to help subsidise the Day for these sorts of families.'

**Kate Waud**, Albany, West Australia

We had a beautiful Celebration Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> August. It was a gorgeous group of mums and girls, I knew everyone and all the girls knew at least two other girls there – so although they were a little nervous at the start they quickly settled in.

I had a blast – I felt that I brought to the day my own flavour (lots of energy!) and felt I held the space more confidently than my first Celebration Day. We played a tampon and spoon relay – which the girls loved – during morning tea break and I received some great feedback from the girls without having to ask (they were more than happy to share!). After the first ten minutes I could see them all relaxing going to themselves 'ahhh this is what it's going to be like!' which was great – they openly said how great it was to have someone like me (a positive third party) to talk to them about it. Even though most of them had my book (well before the Celebration Day) so they had all the information available to them, they really blossomed during the day – you could just see their confidence grow the more the day progressed.

I had some awesome feedback from the mums too – saying how the Day (and mothers evening) had made this process so much easier and they felt more empowered in their mother daughter relationship!!'

**Sally Quinn**, Footscray, Victoria, Australia

Thanks for your message & support! I had a massive week at work leading up to the Day (not to mention the tiredness that the end of school term brings), which meant I didn't have the time to prepare as well as I wanted & was starting feel sickness coming on. So I was feeling like it would be

a struggle & that I wouldn't be able to facilitate with the energy & clarity required.

But the amazing support & love I felt from the CDG community, gave me a peace and confidence that I could trust the process & myself enough for things to unfold in the way they were meant to.

The Day was a beautiful time of laughter, tears & discovery, and at the end no-one wanted to leave! Already the group are planning to have a reunion & are looking for ways to keep the support & sharing going. The group included a 2 mum family & 2 Somalian girls, which brought a richness in diversity & depth of care that is rare to see in a group who have just met!

I feel blessed to be part of it & feel like I'm growing in the role and my journey at the same time.

**Anna Cole**, Lewes, UK

(after assisting at a CDG with Jane)

I loved our day together. It was truly one of the most moving and wonderful things I've ever been a part of. Definitely found my calling! Just got to build it now as more of a business ...

I could go on and on - I thought it was subtle, gentle, but strong, fun - pitched at just the right level, respectful but not over serious. Oodles of experience, care, good thinking and feeling has shaped a pearl of a workshop.

**Dolores Rubio-Fernandez**, Ann Arbor, Michigan, US

(Dolores found a crochet set for fallopian tubes, ovaries, uterus, vagina and vulva, on Etsy for \$50 and made her own polymer uterus's)

'I had seven girls + Cassia (my daughter). It was quite fun for them to do the mandala, they got so much involved and worried to make it perfect that they were very chatty and it was hard for me to be heard! They also loved the experiments with tampons and sponges. I had prepared some words on cards and I ask them to work in groups to guess what they meant and slowly we managed to make sense to some very basic vocabulary like hormones, ovaries, show, fallopian tubes, pituitary gland... etc. They loved to learn about the show!! I put a show on for them dancing!

The one thing that I think I transmitted really well and they got was: WE ARE CYCLIC LIKE NATURE AND IT IS ALL PERFECTLY NATURAL, NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.

[And to her fellow trainees, and all of us, Dolores says: ]GO FOR IT!!! IT IS A VERY REWARDING AND CREATIVE WORK!!!'

**Anne Hall**, Kangaroo Ground, Victoria, Australia

I loved doing my CDG. I knew many of the mothers.....a couple have been long time members of my womens' circles.....I felt so so happy to be asked by them!!

It was a lovely Day and I "felt" it went swimmingly :) Knowing the mums helped form an intimacy so it was special. I took a few of my percussion instruments and the girls helped add "mood" to the fairy story adding sound effects :) It was ace! They were spellbound.... the koala cards made a big impact with this group and it led to quite a meaningful discussion amongst them. Some girls chose up to 4 cards to explain the complexity of their feelings. It was unexpected for me and a delight.

During the Day a little flying fox [bat] found her way into my box and I drove home with her. Found her when investigating the strange "rustle" coming from my boot. Drove her back up to Kangaroo Ground and looked up spiritual meaning of the flying fox and found it to be a connection between wisdom of the ancient past and connecting it to the present!! How's that! It was a lovely little gift at the day's end.

**Emily Stewart**, Bristol, UK

A little while ago I went to help run a menarche celebration for one of the girls who came to the CDG I ran in York last summer and it was so wonderful to see all the girls again. They were very shy during the day but when we all met again it was lovely to see how their confidence had grown, and to hear from their mums how they'd been talking and planning and excited about their own periods starting. I found the first day quite challenging because they had been so quiet, but seeing them all again was really reassuring that CDG still has a huge positive impact, even if it wasn't so obvious at the time!

**Jules White**, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia

On the weekend just gone I held my first Celebration Day for Girls in Mansfield.



It was an amazing day and I believe I am still processing the experience. Anne I have just re-read your reflection of the day and it was such a beautiful summary. Everything you felt, happened for me plus a whole heap more!

For the mother session, the first woman when introducing herself spoke about her recent separation from her partner of over 25 years and the impact it is having on her and the family. The second mum - shared her story about breast cancer, round after round of chemo therapy and mastectomy and being thrown into menopause unexpectedly. All the stories from the mums were all really strong and powerful. All I can say is that if I did not have 5 years of running a womens circle with strong women, plus 15 years facilitation experience, I would not have know what to do! But the magic of the circle sung forth and it was in the listening and honouring that another step towards healing was being woven for all of us.

It is so special to be able to spend a whole morning with the girls, talking, laughing, sharing, questioning all about menstruation and their bodies. I was amazed by the number of questions that just kept coming! They were never ending and usually I would be answering... 'well yes and no..... with me then having to explain how some women experience pain whilst others do not, that we are all unique and beautiful individuals and so were they!' The other thing was their eyes going wide open when I pulled out the various pads and tampons they can wear (especially the super ones). One commented on the pads that it would be like wearing a nappy!

It was such a hot day and by the time the mums were coming you could see the girls had had enough and really needed a break. It was timed perfectly and the energy the mums brought into the circle lifted and sustained as all (so did the scrummy lunch!!)

One thing before I forget is the amazement I hold for you Jane. I have facilitated a heap of courses over my 'professional' career as a facilitator and I have never come across a program that is just seeped with wisdom, grace and perfection. You can feel the knowledge and the divine everywhere through out the program. It is an amazing experience to observe the sessions and watch Jane weave her magic, but to be the centre and creatrix of them and creating a sacred space is a real gift. Thanks Jane!

Mel - I had your locket with me the whole time and used it to show the girls as to what I was asking

of them. So thank you for your blessings. Also on my altar I had a beautiful glass jar of the seeds from our mandala at the training session.

**Imelda (Charumati)**, Croydon Park, NSW, Australia

I feel very privileged to be joining the ranks of such amazing and divine women! I had a lot of support for my first CDFG on Sunday 30th August in Unanderra, NSW from Jane, Jacintha and Melinda. My grateful thanks to you for being there for me.

I arrived at 8.30, cleaned the scout hall, lit incense, chanted and set everything up. The girls were beautiful and the manual was invaluable. In the afternoon it was so beautiful to see the loving mother-daughter relationships blossom into their next adventure together.

I didn't expect it to be quite as rewarding as it was. My heart is full. Now that I've taken that first step, I'm ready for more!!

**Karin van Ginnekin**, Kapellen, Belgium

Today i had my first CDFG and it was amazing. Thank you so much for having brought this concept into the world, Jane. That it was something really deep, i already assumed but now when I experienced it myself, I now feel that this is the work I want to do.

I had 7 mothers and 8 daughters. (2 sisters), the girls were from 10 till 13 years old. some of them were very happy to come and some had to be forced in a kind way by their mothers. but almost immediately they opened up to the program and began to connect with one another.

I had the feeling that most of the girls already knew about the biological side of the story but it is always good to hear it again. The apron worked real fine and they loved it. the mandala, showing the products, how many periods,.. it all opened a deeper consciousness about becoming a young woman and to be proud of it . I also explained a bit about the different phases in the cycle and that they can work with it.

The mothers were a bit nervous, but it all went well. They told their stories. especially the stories about their menarche, menstruation as a young woman was very beautiful and connecting. I felt that the more time passed and the more sharing there was, the more connecting there was... the more CDFG could do her work. :)

I noticed that all the girls felt more confident with themselves afterwards, that there was something

deeply settled in the connection between the mothers and the daughters. it touched me very deeply. Some girls told me that they had much more confidence in themselves now and that they now knew that they were not alone.

I never had a job that was so great as this one. I never had a job that gave me such a good feeling. This is the first time that I find myself doing something that gives another person a deeper inner knowing, which gives great joy AND at the same time also gives myself a deep connection and satisfaction. It is really mindblowing :)

**Sara Spiazzi**, Verona, Italy

The CDG has been wonderful!

All went well and smooth, the girls were committed, interested and collaborative, the one that already had her period came out pretty soon and was keen to share her experience with others, which was very valuable!

The program you built is amazing and really works out, I didn't do henna but we read cycling to grandma book and they loved it, they were following the book reading English while listening me reading my Italian translation, how cool!

What I loved most was the way mums have been involved: they appeared in the circle each one with her beautiful style and a great simple story, super real. I witnessed their daughters looking up at them as mums AND AS WOMEN, sensing that they received the message that growing up as women they will be fine and become great women as all we are.

I share this with you with much love and gratitude from my heart.

**Charlotte Young**, Kew East, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

My first CDG was great!! The girls were gorgeous and by just after morning tea all very relaxed and open and giggly. The mothers offered their stories and wisdom with grace and mostly ease and it was a moving afternoon. I had 8 in the end. One joined the night before and one pulled out on the morning. I loved every minute of it!

**Olaia Melo**, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

I am soooo excited, the mothers and grandmother session was FANTASTIC!

**Jac Gunasekera**, Sydney, NSW, Australia

The CDG I did last October was with the Year 5 girls at the local Steiner school and they were *so excited* about the day. Bursting!

As you know, every group is different, with its own dynamic. This group was so cohesive, so nurturing of each other, and so respectful of each other's questions and space. And they were loads of fun.

I had found out in the mothers session that a few of the girls were already menstruating. One of these girls shared this with the group, the others didn't, it didn't matter - they all got so much out of the day. Even for those girls already bleeding, they jumped at the opportunity to ask questions, to gape and delight in the Vulva puppet, to work out the number of periods they'd have, to be Henna Goddesses, and to *celebrate* menarche!

They couldn't get enough of the Q&A. Some continuing to write questions while snacking at morning tea. The questions were plentiful, thoughtful and, just quietly, such a riot! 'Do you have to cut pubic hair?', 'What are the covers of the fajina made of?'

And the mum's were amazing and resplendent in red. They didn't all know each other, and they came from different backgrounds, but were all there for their girls, were open and honest throughout, and well and truly part of the celebration. One of the mum's even brought in a Celebration cake for us to have after lunch.

Tears were shed during 'Some Day', and there were hugs all round at the end of the day. The girls want to do it again in a few years when they each have their period.

I told Jane I was on such a HIGH for days afterwards. Not only because I get a bit nervous beforehand and it was such a relief that it was over and went smoothly. But also because it was a truly special group, and a special day. And that all the energy I had put into the day, was returned to me in bucket-loads. It is such a blessing for me, that I get a taste of the joy of girlhood, while they are getting a glimpse into the wonder of womanhood. It is such a magic exchange of energies.

