Celebrating Girls

‘*I’m so scared of getting my first period*’, ‘*I thought I was dying*’, ‘*where does the blood come out?* ‘*I was terrified when I got my first period and now, aged 32, I still hate them*’. All of these are recent comments left in online-forums by girls (and one woman) about menarche. As a woman and as a mother of 2 girls it is heartbreaking to see that even in this day and age many young girls are unprepared for their first period…and the ramifications of this in later life.

Studies have indicated that girls who are better prepared for their first period enjoy greater self-esteem; have a healthier body image; have better emotional and menstrual health and are more likely to delay first sexual experiences. Some reports even suggest that girls whose parents talk openly about subjects such as menstruation in a positive way may do better at school. I’m willing to stick my neck out and gamble that almost every parent would want their daughter to experience these benefits.

And here’s the good news. Every girl can experience these benefits. All they need is a parent or carer who takes the time to talk to them about menstruation and what will happen during their first (and subsequent) bleed. And even more good news, now every girl can attend a wonderful workshop which has been successfully run for the past decade in Australia by Jane Bennett, teaching menstruation in a positive fun way.

Earlier this year I was truly honoured to be the first person mentored by Jane Bennett to teach her amazing ‘Celebration Day for Girls’ workshop here in the UK and last month I had the chance to go to Lewes near Brighton where Jane was bringing this training to a group of other passionate women – including some whom I did Alexandra’s Women’s Quest Apprenticeship Training with and some who are doing it this year. It was the perfect way for me to consolidate my own training and meet, listen to, and connect with an inspiring group of women full of ideas for how to prepare more young girls for their first period.

Sitting in our beautiful workshop space I couldn’t help looking around at the women present, each with their own unique skills base, and thinking how wonderful it is to live in a time of growing passion for this subject. A time where we can benefit hugely from women, like Jane, who have done the hard graft, putting themselves out there when no-one else was doing this kind of work and who are now generously sharing their knowledge and experiences. A time when more and more women are looking at menstruation and wanting so much more for themselves and their daughters.

During the weekend Jane shared every aspect of her workshop and gave us a wealth of hand outs and advice ensuring that every woman present would be able to go out and run this workshop easily. We tried our hand at Mandala making (as the girls do during the workshop) made beautiful lockets each with their own unique blessing held inside and quizzed Jane endlessly on every aspect of the workshop and working with girls. Jane’s tireless generosity was inspiring and I am sure that many, if not all, of the women present will go on to run successful workshops in their areas

A Celebration Day for Girls is aimed at girls aged 9-12 and is a lively, beautiful day full of stories, sharing, craft and time for the girls to ask questions about menstruation and growing-up. The mothers get to attend a session with the workshop facilitator before the workshop and join the girls in the afternoon for more sharing, craft etc.

Jo Macdonald is based in the West Midlands. If you would like her to facilitate a ‘Celebration Day for Girls’ workshop in your area then contact her on [jo@jomacdonald.com](mailto:jo@jomacdonald.com) or visit her website [www.jomacdonald.com](http://www.jomacdonald.com) for more information on her work, books, and testimonials from previous workshops.