



The Period Positive Pledge Explained and Explored

Are you ready to be period positive? Great!

But you can't just *say* you're period positive – you've got to work at it. Sometimes folks don't know that when they say 'period positive' this means a specific set of inclusive values and high standards developed through many years of founder Chella Quint's research and outreach work with young people, specialist organisations, audiences and volunteers. We ask partners and fans to agree to some basics. Our *red lines*, if you will. That's why the phrase was coined and the logo designed.

Want to support the campaign and be more period positive? Commit to one pledge, several, or all of them, embed them in your personal and professional practice, and share the pledge posters on social media to show you support these values. The poster is laid out like the Sustainable Development Goals and the International Declaration on Human Rights - it's a framework that we believe is our right and our duty to aim to achieve.

Here are some more detailed explorations into these topics that aim to help summarise each of the pledges on the poster in a bit more depth.

This will always be a working document and is only as good as how well it is understood by those who wish to work with the Pledge.

Please use our contact form at www.periodpositive.com to ask questions, recommend changes and reflect on which of the individual pledges resonate — or don't resonate — with you.

1. *It's period positive to say menstrual products not sanitary products*, because periods aren't dirty*

**or feminine hygiene or sanpro, or CSPs, or femcare*

Phrases made up long ago by the disposable menstrual product industry like 'sanitary protection' make it sound like people who menstruate are dirty, need to be sanitised, and must be protected from menstrual blood. 'Feminine hygiene' implies these products help us to be more 'dainty and sweet' and that periods, and therefore people who have them, must be inherently unhygienic. Neither is true. Euphemisms hide valuable information and distort attitudes. When we call products by their proper name, we're not hiding what they are — in our own thoughts or on the supermarket shelves — and we're not letting companies redefine who we are or influence negative perceptions about a normal bodily function. *'Menstrual' is preferred to 'period' because avoiding the word menstruation maintains the stigma.* It may be a tough habit to break, but it's one worth breaking: reclaiming language is powerful for everyone who menstruates and everyone who doesn't.

2. *It's period positive to include all genders, because whether you menstruate or not, everybody had a room that was a womb.*

This pledge has two aims — to talk openly to people who don't menstruate, and to include everyone who does. We are just starting to see the value in sharing menstrual knowledge. It leads to more honest dialogue about reproductive health at home and with doctors, and to open communication and decision making at healthcare and policy level, which can save lives. Making sure every child is taught about periods regardless of their gender — and that any adult is knowledgeable about how to have that conversation — promotes inclusion of marginalised gender identities and welcomes everyone into the menstrual space.

It is important to teach all genders *together* — we should ensure boys and girls aren't taught separately and that mixed classes are also inclusive of intersex or nonbinary pupils in order to reduce the shame and secrecy surrounding menstruation. If we separate by gender we promote the idea that this is something we don't talk to 'the other gender' about. Not to mention how confusing and exclusionary it is for pupils who identify outside the binary.

3. *It's period positive to teach yourself and others about sustainable menstrual products, because single use plastics and disposable culture are unsustainable.*

The disposable menstrual product industry has only been around for about a hundred years, with plastic top layers, applicators, OTT packaging, adhesives and gel inserts added to pads and tampons as they gained their market share. Before then, menstrual products were homemade, from natural fibres, reusable, and free.

Because we usually only see disposable products such as single-use pads and tampons, and particularly ones that contain plastic, sustainable products are pushed out of the public eye. Sometimes words like 'convenience' and 'necessity' are used to focus both consumers and manufacturers away from the environmental costs of our choices. Education around sustainable products means we are thinking long-term about both our menstrual management and the management of our planet. Period Positive is working hard to support ideas for integrating this attitude into the current focus on menstrual equity. True equity ensures people are offered sustainable and affordable alternatives to the name-brand disposable products that dominate the market. Informing people about sustainable products such as menstrual cups, period pants and reusable menstrual pads means the market is diversified and people are given a range of sustainable options.

4. *It's period positive to learn and teach about the entire menovulatory lifetime, because we all deserve to know what happens from menarche to menopause and beyond.*

Focusing only on the period part of a menstrual cycle, or just on the menstruating years separates them from being an integrated part of a lifelong process. Reclaiming menstruation means reclaiming the whole process in context and ensuring that menstruation is not discussed in a 'vacuum'. This means knowing about and understanding what is happening biologically from before menarche (the first period) through fertility, perimenopause, menopause (the end of menstruation) and after that.

Through awareness of the entire menovulatory process, people who menstruate will be able to seek support for concerns regarding their menstrual cycle and ask for help with increased ease, and those supporting them or researching this will have a clearer understanding of the breadth of this body of knowledge.

5. *It's period positive to audit your environment to make sure it supports people who menstruate and doesn't reinforce taboos.*

Menstruation happens everywhere. At school, at work, when socialising, in hospitals, prisons, food banks... In order to normalise menstruation and remove stigma, we need to recognise the needs of menstruators in

public, community and commercial spaces. We can do this by reflecting on and actively seeking advice on what our facilities, building designs, printed materials, resources, policies and organisational culture 'say' about attitudes to menstruation. This way, we are consciously working towards creating more inclusive, period positive spaces, essential to the movement.

6. *It's period positive to read more about the biology of menstruation and reproductive health, because knowledge is power, and it empowers those addressing ignorance.*

Medical information can often seem like it has gatekeepers, and patients can feel disempowered. Understanding the physical and psychological processes of menstruation and reproductive health gives individuals a greater sense of agency and empowerment about menstruation and the tools for self-advocacy.

Anyone can become more familiar with menstruation and more confident when discussing it, including people who don't menstruate. This will further normalise the topic in society and help with navigating medical settings and fighting for reproductive justice.

By using up-to-date, trustworthy resources (such as peer-reviewed articles from reputable journals, books, ethically collected testimonials, or other resources recommended or produced by reliable experts or expert organisations) to acquire factual and scientific knowledge on menstruation, we can ease embarrassment and uncertainty. This lessens 'fear of the unknown' and the specific language of menstruation can be normalised for both healthcare practitioners and laypeople alike.

7. *It's period positive to advocate for menstruators on the margins because oppression is intersectional*

In the current paradigm, menstruators are already a marginalised group, so minorities within this group have to deal with that on top of any other shame or prejudice that comes with their identity. We should all advocate intersectionally, and those with privilege should share their platforms (being careful not to speak for or make assumptions about marginalised groups (ie. 'nothing about us without us'). This involves creating safe, inclusive and accessible spaces for all, whether this is online or in person, ensuring resources and events are sensitive and accessible, and listening to and amplifying what marginalised menstruators and menstrual activists have to say.

8. *It's period positive to centre education, training, and choice in rigorous holistic solutions to period poverty because anything less is ineffective long-term.*

Only short term period poverty can be alleviated with short-term solutions like product donation. Long-term period poverty is a consequence of several interrelated global issues that include the influence of corporations, institutionalised menstrual taboos, austerity, infrastructure and access. It did not come about in a day, and it is much deeper an issue than having the money to buy disposable menstrual products. Simply providing disposable products to those perceived to be experiencing short-term period poverty or legislating that disposable products will be made available to all is not sustainable. The path away from period poverty is a long journey and every step should be building towards sustainability and positivity.

We need to accept that long-term period poverty will not be solved by partnering with companies to provide disposable menstrual products to those in need. It only perpetuates the unhealthy influence multinational companies have on governments around the world and is evidenced by their leading roles in procurement and donation initiatives. There is no immediate fix to such an intersectoral issue. Effective change will only happen when we consistently focus on improving awareness through education of menstruators, teachers, and leaders. Through better regulation of international standards, or a code of ethics that does not favour the success and positioning of corporations, charities or activists over the responsibilities of policymakers or the needs of service users, sustainable change can be achieved.

It is crucial that we find sustainable, long-term solutions to period poverty that treat both the causes and effects. We must continue to both work towards a society comprehensively aware of menstruation and the challenges it can sometimes bring, and simultaneously challenge the multifaceted injustices that continue to contribute to this state of affairs. We must strive toward solutions that allow people who menstruate to feel they are knowledgeable about their biology and consumer rights, and can make informed choices to assertively manage their menstrual cycle, to centre sustainability education and sustainable products in all period poverty and menstrual equity solutions, to hold corporations to a high standard, and to ensure this issue is not sensationlised or seen in isolation.

9. *It's period positive to challenge corporate messages that reinforce shame or bias and challenge companies* to find more ethical models for promoting their product.*

****including within your own company***

Multinational corporations have influenced the menstrual discourse since the bulk of their adverts first started appearing in 1921. Although some companies aimed to educate their customers, profit was their bottom line, so many of these companies marketed their products with language that introduced and reinforced ideas that periods should be kept secret, hidden or only whispered about. These messages have impacted and still do affect the public impression of menstruation and the menstruating body. As more small companies enter the market and as staff at larger corporations begin to respond to consumers rejecting these messages by modernising their own adverts and policies, there is more opportunity to challenge this recent history and transform the menstrual discourse. The next step is working collaboratively and cooperatively to innovate in the design, marketing and distribution of products for menstruation management.

10. *It's period positive to cite your sources and give credit where it's due because this movement only has a future as long as it celebrates and draws from its history.*

Period positivity is a holistic movement that understands its roots. It did not pop into being out of thin air! It is the result of not just our creativity and innovation but the ethical and rigorous synthesis building upon the excellent research, activism and art of the practitioners who came before us. They are regularly credited, thanked and included. We hope to lead by example, and invite others who wish to contribute to this movement to examine their contribution, listen, deep dive, signal boost and share their platforms with their more marginalised contemporaries and longstanding contributors. It is essential for avoiding the unintentional duplication or co-opting of the efforts of colleagues, allies and elders. Each individual that has contributed to the movement deserves recognition and acknowledging their inclusion sustains, scaffolds, broadens and deepens this movement.

By acknowledging the work that has come before and is happening currently, we demonstrate credibility and show that we have done our due diligence by researching and studying menstrual discourse to help form our own contribution.

11. *It's period positive to ensure your research and any other research you share is robust, because of the need to be trained and trusted.*

In a time of unreliable media, it is essential that what we read, create and share is as factually accurate and as ethically robust as possible. Objective and reliable research and reporting builds confidence in a growing field of research, reassures readers and consumers and allows individuals to use the research for later studies or educational purposes. Most importantly, it reflects trust across the network of experts working hard to support transformative change for the benefit of many.

Media interest in menstrual scholarship is growing and scholarly organisations like the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research (SMCR) are beginning to enter into public awareness.

Therefore, it is more important than ever that all menstrual researchers — and organisations that take on peripheral research into menstruation topics — maintain this trust. They can do this by utilising robust references, citations, and peer review, and should not sensationalise result reporting for promotional purposes. This will help to maintain credibility and to make sure future research is building on a solid foundation.

12. *It's period positive to set ethical boundaries when working with corporations* and put the focus on media literacy, because periods come before profit.*

****and for corporations to honour these boundaries when working with non-corporate partners***

In our globalised world, competition and financial gain have become the main goals for many corporations. But periods happen with or without the involvement of money, and should be at the forefront of this work. Corporate power comes with an array of responsibilities and being period positive is one of them. Adverts and advertising language are ubiquitous across nearly all cultures thanks to social media marketing, packaging messages and expensive campaigns. Their pervasiveness means that for better or worse, the most influential voice in the menstrual discourse currently comes from corporations, especially those who can afford to including an element of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR initiatives are unethical when they co-opt activism, contain insidious messages which influence brand loyalty in minors, make communities reliant on a particular donated product, or offer products produced to a lower standard than their commercially available counterparts. Public and third sector organisations working with companies should be supported to maintain their highest ethical standards, in the face of lucrative partnership offers.

13. *It's period positive to call in before you call out, because everyone is learning.*

We wholeheartedly encourage clever, artistic and strategic menstrual activism that shines a light on imbalances of power in the menstrual world. Menstrual taboos have been deeply ingrained into the behaviour and thoughts of nearly everyone, and the compound effect of years of conditioning is hard to shift entirely. We are all at different stages in our journeys to becoming period positive and have different levels of awareness of the impact of our visceral relationship to period stigma. We need to be empathetic to the fact that we are all learning and improving, and will frequently meet ignorance and resistance, but approaching problematic behaviour or language from an individual or organisation with humiliation is not the answer. We do not believe that you can fight shame with shame. Public shaming won't reverse the private shame many people feel about periods and rarely leads to perpetrators examining deeply embedded views. We encourage our supporters in this movement to begin by using openness and wholehearted dialogue to positively reshape our own and others' attitudes.

14. *It's period positive to remember that there is always something to learn, because you might not know what you don't know, and learning is amazing.*

Nobody knows everything, it's just not possible! There will always be something new to learn about menstruation, whether it's a term you didn't know, a new product you've never heard of, or an issue that marginalised menstruators face that has never affected you.

And even the stuff you do know, may have more layers to it than you expect. Everyone has a different frame of reference, and sometimes that can offer new insights that inform what you already understand.

To be truly period positive is to accept that you can't know everything, but that you can research and learn and strive to develop or revisit your knowledge and attitudes when you come across new information and perspectives.

15. *It's period positive to reject embodied shame, because acknowledging it may be hard but living with it is far harder.*

No one finds it easy to dwell on or sometimes even acknowledge difficult emotions, but recognising a problem like embodied shame is the first step in finding a solution. By allowing yourself to come to terms with behaviour and perceptions that no longer serve you — and possibly never did — you begin to make yourself receptive to discovering or trying out new ways to be. Positive change is powerful and affects so much more than the individual, but it is only attained once past patterns are acknowledged.

16. *It's period positive to challenge negative media messages, because they have been plaguing us for a century.*

Power is language and language is power — something the media have homed in on to shape and uphold specific sociocultural norms. We have become so immune to a constant influx of media messages that so many often go unchallenged, but they still add up to subtly contribute to the discourse. It's time to question our surroundings and make our own decisions. Next time you see an advertisement for a menstrual product, question it. What is it trying to tell us about menstruation? How damaging are those messages? What influence do they aim to exert over our thoughts and purchasing decisions? This is also true for those creating the media. There are patterns in the media messages communicated to us over the last 100 years, ones of shame and stigmatisation, but we all have the power to change them.

This is a process, and we need to encourage everyone to take their own steps. Now that this change is starting to happen, however, we can't grow complacent. Messages must be continually deconstructed and challenged in order to keep the movement progressing. It is important to acknowledge when there are positive media messages or other steps forward to reinforce that not only is it possible to improve, but that these improvements are welcome and necessary.

17. *It's period positive to say menstruation, because euphemisms allow people to hide from the subject.*

Menstruation, menstruation, menstruation. Say it three times and it will appear! Or not. Is this why people are too scared to use the word in all its glory? Or perhaps it's the years of menstrual taboo that have had such a huge impact on our language that we have become opposed to explicitly stating the actual name for the cyclical shedding of the womb lining. Menstrual euphemisms are so pervasive that we are often unaware that we are using them. In fact, the word 'period' is just a short way of saying 'menstrual period'. By avoiding the word menstruation, we are reinforcing the idea that menstruation is a dirty, shameful process that needs to be concealed both physically and linguistically. It is crucial that we attempt to recognise when we are using euphemisms and actively try to use the term 'menstruation' instead, as, by using the term originally coined to describe the process we reinforce its value and position in our lives. 'Menstruation' does not connote any specific ideas of gender, power, spirituality, cleanliness, or political stance; its existence as a neutral term is therefore crucial for everyday, medial and theoretical discussions.

18. *It's period positive to talk about periods, good or bad, because even when they're a pain in the uterus, sharing and understanding our own and others' bodies will help people now and in the future.*

Complaining about periods is still period positive. It's how we learn to compare notes and it can be essential for menstrual wellbeing. Supporting and welcoming people talking about their menstrual cycles allows everyone to gain a better insight into the diverse nature of menstrual experiences. In the standard 'period talk', most of us were only taught about a fraction of what menstruation is all about, and rarely learn what it feels like. Sharing experiences allows a greater understanding of the ways menstruation can affect individuals, for better or worse. Being able to discuss details in a wide variety of settings can have a lasting impact on health, frequently instigating earlier diagnoses of medical problems. Whether you bleed or not, creating the kind of environment where this type of sharing feels safe and welcome will enhance awareness of changes in mood, diet, energy, libido and motivation. Through this heightened awareness of bodies' natural fluctuation, we can tailor other areas of our lives to our menstrual cycle. The more people talk about periods, the more opportunity we have to examine language around menstruation and bodies in general.

The more open the conversations, the more experienced we will become with the challenges menstruation can bring. This allows us to more comfortably and confidently embody the value of menstrual talk, and are better able to reject internalised shame.

19. *It's period positive for anyone of any age, class, gender, ability, race or culture to talk about menstruation, and for everyone to include those on the margins and who are affected intersectionally in this discourse.*

It is essential to this movement that we not only acknowledge the intersectional injustices experienced by menstruators on the margins, but actively reach out and collaborate with diverse partners. Reproductive health education and access has long been obstructed or denied to those affected by systematic oppression. These prejudices intersectionality affect all aspects of the lives of those in the movement who are members of these marginalised groups, and should not be replicated in the menstrual movement. While being sensitive and rejecting cultural appropriation, it is important to uphold the ethos that the more inclusive our activism is, the better the results will be.

Not only that, but we must remember that menstruation affects everyone, directly or indirectly. If it weren't for the menstrual cycle, none of us would exist! It's crucial that no matter who we are, that we are all equipped with the information we need to have an informed involvement in this conversation and feel prepared to take this next step together.

20. *It's period positive to update and revise these statements because we are learning and growing as a society and these views may grow with us as we learn more.*

Change is the only constant that we can predict and we must be willing to welcome change and make positive adjustments to the work to keep the movement in motion. As a global community and a global movement, committing to revisiting and improving these ideals to meet the needs and high standards of an evolving world is at the heart of this work.