



Finding Flow with PMDD

Your guide to learning to cope with PMDD



Hello Lovely,

Thank you for landing on this free guide! We hope to honour your story and your challenges with PMDD. Whilst we hope this guide is meaningful, it doesn't replace therapy and is general in its contents.

Sending you light and energy on your journey x



About Us

At **Raw Psychology Clinic.**, we empower individuals to **reclaim their flow** by providing integrative wellness and psychology solutions that honor the connection between **mind, body, and soul**. We create a supportive space where healing, growth, and transformation unfold naturally.

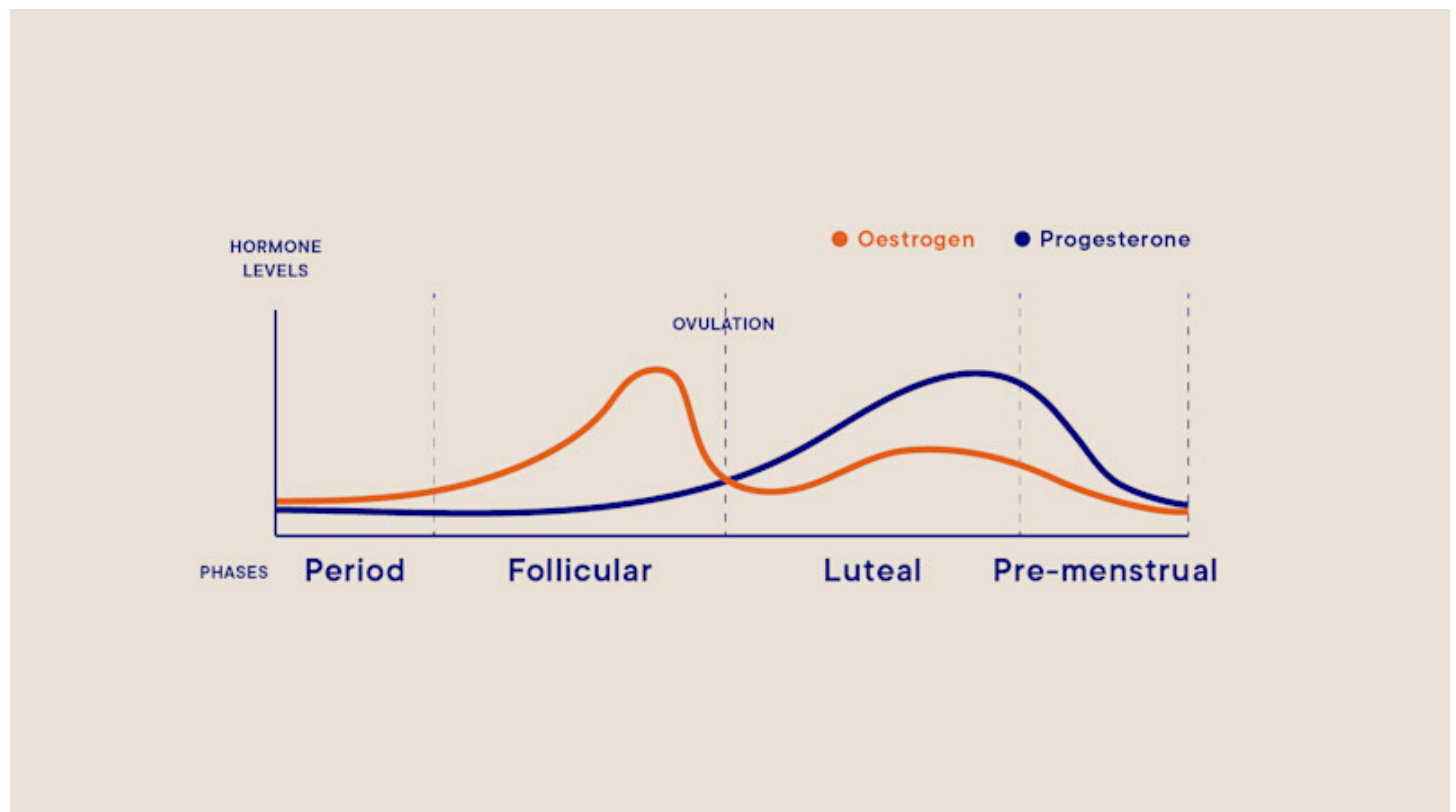
Our mission is to guide you toward **sustainable well-being**—helping you move beyond burnout, restore balance, and reconnect with your authentic self. We believe in **holistic, evidence-based care** that nurtures resilience, fosters community, and makes wellness accessible for all.

What is PMDD (Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder)?

PMDD is known as a hormone-based mood difference. The way to make sense of it, is to understand it as a unique sensitivity to the typical changes in hormones that occur for every

woman. It is not a hormone imbalance, but a unique difference and sensitivity. PMDD is linked to **how the brain responds to hormonal fluctuations**, particularly shifts in estrogen and progesterone. While the exact cause isn't fully understood, it involves **neurotransmitter imbalances (serotonin, GABA, dopamine), inflammation, and stress sensitivity**. The phase of the cycle that impacts women with PMDD most is the luteal phase. Traits generally subside or disappear during menstruation, with traits typically not present during the follicular phase.

In order to understand PMDD and learn to flow with it, we need to better understand our cycles...




The main two hormones we looking at with PMDD are generally Estrogen & Progesterone. Cycle lengths can vary and it is best to track its duration, looking for your unique pattern, If the pattern varies greatly, then always chat with your GP or naturopath. There are four phases we will look at.

Period Time - Inner Autumn (For PMDD): The menstrual phase marks the beginning of your cycle (Day 1-5, on average) and is a time for rest, renewal, and deep inner connection. As hormone levels drop, your body sheds the uterine lining, signaling a natural reset.

💧 **Hormone Decline** – Estrogen & progesterone reach their lowest levels, leading to low energy & mood shifts.

zz **Energy Dip** – The body prioritizes repair & detoxification, making rest essential.

 **Emotional Intuition** – A natural time for reflection, slowing down, and tuning into emotions.

Follicular Phase - Inner Spring : Life starts to feel a little brighter in this phase, we connect to ourselves, can find our calm easier and productivity is a thing!

✨ **Hormonal Shift:** Estrogen levels steadily rise, stimulating the growth of follicles (tiny fluid-filled sacs in the ovaries, each containing an egg).

🧠 **Brain Boost:** Estrogen supports serotonin and dopamine, improving mood, motivation, and focus.

💪 **Energy Surge:** As hormones rise, so does physical stamina—this is a great time for strength training, movement, and social connection.

🌱 **Fresh Start:** Metabolism, digestion, and skin health often improve, making you feel lighter and more vibrant

Ovulation - Inner Summer : But for many, summer is not always sunshine, sometimes its stormy!

🔥 **Estrogen Peaks:** Giving you glowing skin, mental clarity, and increased motivation.

🧠 **Testosterone Rises:** Boosting libido, confidence, and drive.

☀️ **Luteinizing Hormone (LH) Surges:** Triggering the release of an egg, which travels down the fallopian tube, waiting to be fertilized.

💪 **Increased Physical Strength & Endurance:** Your body is primed for high-intensity workouts, weightlifting, and social engagement.


Here is where things can get a bit wild for those of us with PMDD. For many, it is solely progesterone that causes chaos, but for some, ovulation can also come with similar differences. Storms like anxiety and emotional dysregulation. If you have endometriosis or inflammatory conditions, this could increase your physiological symptoms such as pain.

Luteal Phase - Inner Winter (For PMDD)

🌙 **Progesterone Rises:** Supporting your body by thickening the uterus in preparation for pregnancy.

🔥 **Physiological Changes:** you may start to notice bloating, gut changes, headaches/migraines, tender breast and chronic pain.

zzZ **Energy Begins to Dip:** You may feel more introverted, needing extra rest and self-care.

 **Emotional Sensitivity Heightens:** Intuition and self-awareness deepen, but so can irritability, anxiety, or sadness if stress is high. Stress responses can re-awaken trauma related distress, causing difficulties in emotional regulation and relationships.

Now we can look at what PMDD may like look for you...

The signs and traits of PMDD, can vary greatly. You may have heard PMDD described as “PMS on steroids” which is mildly inaccurate. It comes with moderate to severe traits including:

- 🌪️ **Intense Mood Swings** – Feeling fine one minute and overwhelmed the next
- 😞 **Depression & Hopelessness** – A deep sense of sadness or feeling emotionally stuck
- 🔥 **Irritability & Rage** – Quick to anger or frustration, even over small things
- 😰 **Anxiety & Panic Attacks** – Feeling on edge, restless, or struggling with intrusive thoughts
- 💔 **Emotional Sensitivity** – Feeling easily hurt, rejected, or overwhelmed
- 🛌 **Exhaustion & Low Energy** – A heavy fatigue that doesn't lift with rest
- 🧠 **Brain Fog & Forgetfulness** – Struggling to focus or remember things
- 🍕 **Cravings & Appetite Changes** – Feeling out of sync with hunger cues
- 😴 **Sleep Disruptions** – Difficulty falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- 🤒 **Physical Symptoms** – Headaches, joint pain, bloating, and breast tenderness



Why does PMDD occur in some women?

Unfortunately there is no one concrete cause that research has been able to identify. There are several theories, indicators/factors and hypotheses including:

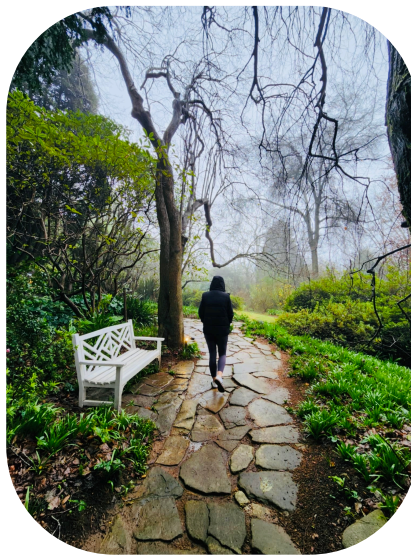
🧠 **Neurotransmitter Sensitivity** – Estrogen and progesterone impact **serotonin, GABA, and dopamine**, which regulate mood, stress, and emotional stability. In PMDD, these fluctuations can cause **severe mood swings, anxiety, and depression-like symptoms**.

🔥 **Inflammation & Immune Response** – Some research suggests that **chronic inflammation and immune dysfunction** may worsen PMDD symptoms by increasing sensitivity to hormonal shifts. Including histamine differences.

🌱 **Genetics & Epigenetics** – Studies show that PMDD may run in families, meaning some women have a genetic predisposition to heightened hormonal sensitivity.

🌀 **HPA Axis Dysregulation (Stress Response)** – The **hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis** controls how the body responds to stress. Women with PMDD often have a **more reactive stress system**, making them more vulnerable to mood disruptions when hormones fluctuate.

💔 **History of Trauma & Emotional Sensitivity, Neurodivergence** – Women with past **trauma, high stress, or nervous system dysregulation** may experience more intense PMDD symptoms due to a heightened emotional and physiological response. Neurodivergent individuals—including those with **ADHD, autism, and sensory processing differences**—often experience **more intense PMDD symptoms** due to differences in **hormone sensitivity, nervous system regulation, and neurotransmitter function**.



How to get assessed for PMDD?

Getting an assessment for **PMDD (Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder)** can be critical in understanding your symptoms and getting the right support. Since PMDD is a **hormone-based mood disorder**, diagnosis requires tracking patterns over time rather than a single test.

Step 1: Track Your Symptoms




PMDD symptoms occur **only in the luteal phase** (the 1-2 weeks before your period) and significantly **improve once menstruation begins**. To confirm this pattern:

✎ **Use a Symptom Tracker** – Track **mood, energy, sleep, physical symptoms, and emotions** daily for at least **2 menstrual cycles**. Apps like **Me v PMDD** or a simple journal can help.

🔄 **Differentiate from Other Conditions** – PMDD can mimic **anxiety, depression, ADHD, or bipolar disorder**, but the key difference is **timing**—PMDD symptoms **disappear after your period starts**.

Step 2: Book an Appointment with a Healthcare Provider

Once you have symptom tracking data, schedule an appointment with a:

-  **GP or Primary Care Doctor** – They can assess your symptoms and refer you to a specialist if needed.
-  **Psychologist or Psychiatrist** – If mood symptoms are severe, they can differentiate PMDD from other mental health conditions.
-  **Naturopath or Hormone Specialist** – Can support **holistic treatment** with nutrition, herbs, and lifestyle strategies.

Step 3: Get a PMDD Evaluation




Your healthcare provider will likely:

- ✅ **Review your symptom tracking** to confirm the cycle-based pattern.
- ✅ **Rule out other conditions** (e.g., depression, anxiety, thyroid issues, or perimenopause).
- ✅ **Discuss treatment options**, which may include **lifestyle changes, therapy, medication, or hormonal support**.

 **Important:** Many doctors are unfamiliar with PMDD, so you may need to **advocate for yourself**. If your symptoms are dismissed, seek a second opinion or a **PMDD-informed specialist**.




Step 4: Explore Testing Options (If Needed)

While there is no lab test for PMDD, **functional testing** can provide insight into hormone and neurotransmitter imbalances:

-  **Hormone Testing** – Checks **estrogen, progesterone, cortisol, and testosterone** to assess hormonal balance.
-  **Gut & Histamine Testing** – Since gut health and inflammation impact PMDD, addressing these can help.
-  **Neurotransmitter Testing** – Can help understand **dopamine, serotonin, and GABA levels** if mood issues are severe.

Step 5: Create a PMDD Support Plan

Once diagnosed, work with your provider to create a **personalized support plan**. Options may include:

-  **Holistic Support:** Nutrition, supplements, movement, and nervous system regulation.
-  **Medical Interventions:** SSRIs, hormonal birth control, or other medication if needed.
-  **Therapy & Nervous System Work:** ACT, DBT, EMDR, or somatic therapy to help regulate emotional responses.

You Deserve Support

PMDD is real, and you don't have to navigate it alone. **Advocate for yourself, track your symptoms, and seek care from professionals who truly listen.** Healing is possible. 💖✨



PMDD Treatment: A Holistic Approach to Recovery & Relief

PMDD (**Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder**) can feel overwhelming, but **relief is possible**. Because PMDD is a complex interaction between **hormones, neurotransmitters, and nervous system regulation**, treatment often involves a **combination of medical, lifestyle, and holistic approaches**. The key is finding what works best for *you*. Every woman living with PMDD, deserves a support team, a collective of practitioners all working together, not in isolation, to support you.

1. Nutritional & Lifestyle Support

🌿 **Balance Blood Sugar** – Stabilising blood sugar prevents mood swings and energy crashes. Focus on **protein, healthy fats, fiber, and slow-digesting carbs**.

☕ **Reduce Stimulants & Alcohol** – Caffeine, alcohol, and processed foods can **worsen anxiety, inflammation, and hormone imbalance**.

💊 **Targeted Supplements** – Some evidence-based options for PMDD relief include:

- **Magnesium** – Supports mood, relaxation & nervous system regulation
- **Vitamin B6** – Helps with serotonin production.
- **Omega-3s** – Supports brain function & reduces inflammation

2. Nervous System Regulation

🧘 **Breathwork & Meditation** – Calms the stress response and helps regulate emotions.

🧘 **Gentle Movement** – Activities like **yoga, walking, and Pilates** can reduce cortisol (stress hormone) and improve mood.

🌙 **Prioritize Sleep** – Poor sleep increases PMDD symptoms. **Set a wind-down routine**, reduce screen time before bed, and try herbal teas (like chamomile or valerian).

3. Hormone & Neurotransmitter Support

💊 **SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors)** – Medications like fluoxetine or sertraline may help **stabilize mood and reduce PMDD symptoms for a minority**, often taken either daily or just in the luteal phase.

🏠 **Hormonal Birth Control** – Some women find relief with **continuous birth control**, which can prevent

hormone fluctuations, though it doesn't work for everyone. Many find it can worsen traits, whilst others find it stabilises.

🌿 **Herbal Medicine** – Herbs like **chasteberry (Vitex)** have been shown to support progesterone balance and reduce PMDD symptoms. A Naturopath or Integrative GP is able to provide more tailored and holistic herbal medicines.

4. Therapeutic & Emotional Support

💛 **Somatic Therapy & EMDR** – Supports nervous system healing, especially for those with past trauma that may amplify PMDD symptoms.

🧑‍🤝🧑 **Community & Support** – Connecting with others who understand PMDD (through groups or online communities) can reduce feelings of isolation.

5. Medical & Functional Testing

💧 **Hormone Testing** – Checking **estrogen, progesterone, and cortisol levels** can provide insight into imbalances. Assessments that consider inflammatory conditions like endometriosis or adenomyosis are also needed.

🌿 **Gut & Histamine Testing** – Since gut health and histamine intolerance can **worsen PMDD symptoms**, addressing underlying issues can help.



PMDD Affirmations for Flow & Self-Compassion

PMDD can feel overwhelming, but **your body is not your enemy**—it's communicating, asking for support, and guiding you toward deeper self-awareness. These affirmations are designed to help you ground yourself, regulate emotions, and **move through each cycle phase with more ease and self-compassion.** 💛

Emotional Regulation & Grounding

- ♥ I am safe in my body, even when my emotions feel intense.
- 👂 I honor my feelings without judgment—they are valid, but they do not define me.
- 🌙 This is a phase, not forever. I trust that this wave will pass.
- 🌱 I give myself permission to slow down and rest when I need to.

Self-Compassion & Nervous System Support

- ♥ My worth is not determined by how I feel today.
- 🧑 I give myself the same love and kindness I would give a friend.
- 🌿 My body and mind are doing their best to protect me—I choose to support them with care.
- 🌟 Even in the hardest moments, I am resilient, I am loved, and I am enough.

Hormonal Balance & Healing

- 🔥 My cycle is not a burden—it is a rhythm, and I am learning to work with it.
- 🌀 My hormones do not control me; I have the power to support my well-being.
- 🌟 I deserve self compassion and calm, and I will take small, loving steps toward it each day.

Overcoming PMDD Overwhelm & Anxiety

- ☀ I am not broken—I am growing.
- 🌊 I release the pressure to "push through" and allow myself to flow with my body's needs.
- ♥ I honor where I am today without guilt or shame.
- zz I am allowed to rest, reset, and begin again whenever I need to.



Resources

Education & Information

- **International Association for Premenstrual Disorders (IAPMD)** – Research-backed info, symptom trackers & support: www.iapmd.org
- **Me v PMDD App** – A helpful **symptom tracking app** designed specifically for PMDD: www.mevpmdd.com
- **PMDD Awareness Resources** – Downloadable guides, advocacy tools, and medical research: www.vitalhealth.com

Professional & Medical Support

- **PMDD Specialists Directory** – Find PMDD-informed doctors, therapists, and naturopaths worldwide: www.iapmd.org/provider-directory
- **Functional Medicine & Holistic Approaches** – Consider working with a **hormone specialist**, **naturopath**, or **integrative doctor** to explore **nutrition**, **lifestyle**, and **nervous system support**.

Support Groups & Community

- **IAPMD Peer Support Group** – A **safe, non-judgmental space** to connect with others experiencing PMDD: www.iapmd.org/peer-support
- **PMDD Support (Facebook Groups)** – Active online communities for sharing experiences & support.
- **PMDD Reddit Community** – Discussions on treatment, experiences & coping: [r/PMDD](https://www.reddit.com/r/PMDD)

Note: Not all online forums and groups are helpful or safe, please check-in with yourself and note how each of these impact on you.

Holistic & Lifestyle Approaches

- **The Women's Brain Book (Dr. Sarah McKay)** – Understanding the **hormone-brain connection** in conditions like PMDD.
- **Podcast: HER Health Confessions** – Covers PMDD, and holistic hormone health.

Contact Details



Tania Attley - Psychologist, Supervisor & Founder
Raw Wellbeing Co. & Raw Psychology Clinic
www.rawpsychologyclinic.com
www.rawwellbeingco.com

