

*Inspiring Experiences of Arvigo Practitioners and Their Clients*

# *Journeys in Healing*

Compiled and published by the Arvigo Institute, LLC  
**The Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy®**

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Cover Design: Margaret Baker  
Interior Design and Page Production: Jill Shaffer  
Copyediting: Nan Fornal

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# Healing from a Lifetime of Painful Periods

*The uterus is the woman's core.  
If it is out of balance, her  
whole life is out of balance—  
physically, emotionally, mentally  
and spiritually.*

—DON ELIJIO PANTI

*Madeleine* As I write this I am 30 years old. I realize now that for most of my life I have been disconnected from my reproductive cycle and my sexuality. I was on the birth control pill from when I was about 17 until I was 26. During this time I experienced several relationships and sexual encounters that left me feeling hollow and unlovable. For me, sexual connection became divorced from emotional connection. At one point, when I was 26, I had an unwanted sexual experience that left me feeling full of shame, fear, and distrust.

When I was 27 I switched to a copper IUD (intrauterine device) for birth control. My menstrual cycle was starting to be regulated by my own hormones, and my body was starting to adjust back to its natural state. Around this time I started getting back in touch with my body and emotions and I fell in love with a man that I later married. I don't have much recollection of what my periods were like before I had the IUD, but the longer I had the IUD, the more pain I was experiencing. My menstrual cramps during the first one to two days of bleeding were very uncomfortable. What really did me in, however,

was the pain that arrived a week after my period. Somehow I knew it was not normal menstrual pain—it always started a few days after my period had ended, and the pain was different. It made me feel cold and nauseated. I felt a stabbing in my lower abdomen. Ibuprofen sometimes took the edge off but never helped much. On the worst days, I found relief only by going to bed with a hot water bottle, waiting for the pain to pass. Apparently I had bacterial vaginosis that was unrelenting. Further medical tests revealed no obvious cause and the doctors all told me that I had dysmenorrhea and that the IUD was not the reason for my intense pain and chronic vaginal infection.

My situation remained the same for another two years. All the while I continued to explore methods to eliminate the pain and discomfort. I had acupuncture regularly. I learned about herbs that support the female reproductive system and began drinking a quart of herbal tea daily. I took nutritional supplements, used homeopathy, and tried any remedy for bacterial vaginosis that I could find. I explored, researched, and experimented, yet the pain and nausea intensified.

The day that I finally got the IUD removed is blazed in my memory. As soon as the IUD was out of my body, I felt waves of warmth rush to my lower abdomen. I felt euphoric. I felt vindicated. The nurse practitioner who removed the IUD told me that one of the arms was bent, probably had gotten bent during insertion, and could have been poking me in the uterus that whole time. The non-period pain immediately went away as did the bacterial vaginosis. My first menstrual cycle without the IUD washed away the dried blood that had been accumulating inside my body for more than two years.

From then on, I have come to know and trust my body even more. I have had the support to continue the work of integrating my emotions and sexuality. I have been learning how to be kinder to myself. I still typically have fairly strong cramps on the first two days of my menstrual cycle. When the cramping is at its worst, it is accompanied by nausea and diarrhea, and I can barely stand upright. The hot water bottle and bed rest are the only things that offer me

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comfort. These intense period cramps are what led me to enroll in a Self-Care Workshop to learn more about the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy®. I had read somewhere on the Internet that these techniques might help me with my painful periods.

**PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE** The first Arvigo Therapy session that Madeleine received was the 20-minute anterior abdominal massage that is included in the Self-Care class I taught during May 2013. I have the students in the class fill out the full Arvigo medical history intake form for their own benefit of self-reflection, for the benefit of the Arvigo practitioner performing the mini session, and also to use in the future as a gauge of what has changed since starting the abdominal self-care massage or using the other tools taught in the Self-Care class.

Madeleine's abdominal muscles felt tight during the mini session, with the uterus feeling low and full since it was close to her menses, so the lower abdominal massage strokes were done lightly. The upper abdomen also felt tight and from reading her intake form and discussing her past sexual history, I sensed this was emotional armoring. Energetically, my impression from the session was that Madeleine's abdomen has been a place where past hurts have been stored and that it would take time for these emotions to clear for her. My style of treatment with the massage is to proceed energetically at where the person is at and not push into where the tissue is not ready to release. I felt that personal self care would be Madeleine's best route for self healing, both in her womb and in her heart energy.

I was very impressed by Madeleine's resolve to incorporate healing activities into her life, as well as daily self-care massage and taking Female Tonic herbal tincture. Her desire to incorporate activities that are both beautiful, connected to nature, and grounding will provide a good foundation for her physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

Over the next several summer months, I saw Madeleine twice in my acupuncture clinic around week 4 of her cycle. My treatment plan has been to open, move, and soothe the energy around her lower abdomen.

At the end of that summer, Madeleine came to see me to receive her first full Arvigo Therapy session. She reported to me at that time that her period symptoms were improving. However, she was experiencing some consistent right

sciatic leg pain that ran laterally from her sacrum down the back of her leg. Compared to when I first worked with Madeleine, the tissues of her abdomen were about 50 percent softer and more mobile. Her uterus was slightly low but had improved mobility. I sensed tightness and lymph congestion—a feeling of resistance against my pressure—in Madeleine’s left lower abdomen and around her navel. When I assessed her posterior, I noted that her pelvic bones were misaligned. Madeleine’s right mid back and gluteal area (the side of her sciatic pain and the side of where one of the arms of the copper IUD had been irritating her uterus) showed visible signs of tissue congestion. I corrected her pelvic alignment and continued with the posterior Arvigo Therapy treatment. At the end of her session, Madeleine reported she felt very good and relaxed and that the sciatic pain had lessened.

My role is to continue to support Madeleine in her healing journey—a journey that as one can see from her story has its ups and downs. In the long run, however, Madeleine is experiencing significant benefits from her self-care efforts.

*Madeleine's Experience* Since the May Self-Care workshop, I have had several menstrual cycles. My first period came in June just 4 days after the workshop, and my cramps were still pretty bad. They were not as bad as previously, however, because I began menstruating at night and the cramps did not wake me as they usually did. During my next cycle I implemented several self-care activities: I planted an herb garden in early June; I made myself a little home altar which I tend to daily with fresh cut flowers and stand before and ground myself in the morning, I consistently did the self-care massage 3 to 5 times a week and took Female Tonic herbal tincture 10 to 14 days before menstruation, and I started consistently receiving acupuncture in week 3 or 4 of my cycle. I learned that my adrenal glands were fatigued, and I started taking supplements for that. I also suspected that I was gluten intolerant and began a gluten-free diet to see if I would notice any changes in my symptoms. The next time my period came in July I still had cramps, but they were nowhere near as debilitating as usual! The

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pain was much less and I had almost no diarrhea or nausea. This was a huge change for me.

When August came along, I could barely stand when my period came on. It was painful and exhausting. My husband had just left for California the day before, where he would be for 4 months. I had been less consistent with the abdominal self-care massage in the preceding weeks, and had been feeling a lot of anxiety and sadness about his impending departure. It hit me hard when he left, and I guess it hit me in the uterus, too.

Now it is September, and I am glad to report that this month has again been an easier one, with only moderate cramps and no diarrhea or nausea. I still miss my husband a ton, but the initial gut-wrenching impact seems to have worn off. I am in the stage of maintaining now, and figuring out what I need to do for myself to stay balanced in the next few months. I am continuing to do things that nourish me, such as pottery classes and seeing my therapist. I'm being consistent with my self-care massage and taking the Female Tonic. I went to a weekend meditation retreat at the beginning of the month that really reached me. I now meditate every morning for 10 minutes at my home altar. According to my doctor, my adrenal function is starting to improve.

In many ways, I am grateful to my cramps. They have motivated me to explore and really learn what it means to care for myself. I am also grateful to Li-Lan for her support and for introducing me to the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy®. She helped me to understand the importance of taking care of myself and inspired me to take a self-care journey and embrace the things that nurture and heal me most.

I am curious to see what my future cycles will bring!



Li-Lan Hsiang Weiss LaC ([www.armoniahealth.com](http://www.armoniahealth.com)) Li-Lan, licensed acupuncturist, has been incorporating the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy® into her Oriental medicine practice since 2008. She is a certified Arvigo instructor for both the one-day Hands on Health the Maya Way workshop and the transformative Self-Care

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class. Dr. Rosita Arvigo's teachings have had a significant impact on Li-Lan's reconnection to the beauty, sacredness, mystery, and healing power within our bodies and in nature. She helps clients rediscover and understand their innate healing capacity through the poetic language of Chinese medicine and the embodiment practices of the Arvigo techniques. Li-Lan's practice focuses on reproductive, digestive, and emotional well-being for women, men, and children; she is fluent in Spanish and Mandarin.

**Dysmenorrhea** Pain associated with menstruation, dysmenorrhea, is the most commonly reported menstrual disorder. More than half of women who menstruate have pain 1 to 2 days a month. There are two types of dysmenorrhea. Primary dysmenorrhea relates to muscle cramping as the uterus is shedding its lining, and it ends with the period. Secondary is caused by a disorder in the reproductive system (endometriosis, adhesions, fibroids), and pain can be felt anytime during the menstrual cycle. Recent research incorporating Doppler radar confirms that women with primary dysmenorrhea experience pain due to low blood flow to their uteri both during their periods and also at all times throughout their menstrual cycles. Typical treatments for dysmenorrhea include hormonal medications such as birth control pills, anti-inflammatory drugs, and insertion of an IUD. For the more severe cases, surgery is recommended, with hysterectomy as a last resort.