

THE PMDD PROJECT

COPING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH PMDD

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) can put strain on even the strongest relationships.

With symptoms like mood swings, irritability, and emotional sensitivity affecting you during the luteal phase, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, disconnected, or misunderstood.

You might find yourself questioning your entire relationship each month, leading to tension and conflict, only to feel positive and reassured again once your luteal phase ends. However, with good communication, self awareness, and mutual support, you and your partner can navigate the challenges PMDD brings and maintain a healthy, supportive relationship.

This guide provides strategies for coping with PMDD in a relationship, helping you manage your symptoms while cultivating understanding with your partner.

Set boundaries and manage expectations

During PMDD phases, it's important to set boundaries with your partner to protect your mental health and avoid unnecessary conflict.

Boundaries aren't about pushing your partner away - they're about creating space for self-care and emotional regulation.

Define your needs during symptomatic days:

Let your partner know if you need extra alone time, fewer social commitments, or a quieter environment during your luteal phase.

Setting these boundaries in advance can prevent misunderstandings when symptoms flare.



Manage expectations:

Be honest about how PMDD might impact your ability to participate in certain activities, communicate effectively, or handle stress.

If there are days when you know you'll feel less capable, discuss this in advance so your partner isn't caught off guard.



Communicate openly and honestly

One of the most important things you can do is be open and honest with your partner about how PMDD affects you.

Clear communication can prevent misunderstandings and help your partner provide the support you need.

Explain PMDD to your partner:



Make sure your partner understands what PMDD is, how it affects your mental, emotional, and physical health, and when it occurs in your cycle.

Consider sharing educational resources or articles so they can better grasp the condition.

Be specific about your symptoms:

Let your partner know how PMDD impacts you personally, whether it's increased irritability, paranoia and self-doubt, anxiety, depression, fatigue, or low sex drive.

By describing your experience, you can help your partner understand what you're going through and why you might behave differently at certain times of the month.



Use 'I' statements:

When discussing how PMDD affects your relationship, focus on how you feel rather than blaming your partner.

For example, say "I feel more anxious and overwhelmed before my period, and it's hard for me to stay calm" rather than "You always upset me when I'm like this". This approach encourages understanding rather than defensiveness.



Create a supportive routine

A routine that prioritises both your wellbeing and your relationship can help you manage PMDD more effectively.

This may include self-care strategies that alleviate symptoms and relationship practices that help you and your partner stay connected.

Practice self-care:



During the luteal phase, prioritise activities that help reduce stress and manage your symptoms, such as mindfulness, yoga, journaling, or taking time for yourself to rest. When you take care of your mental and physical health, you'll be better able to cope with relationship challenges.

Schedule quality time:



Plan low-pressure activities that help you and your partner bond without adding stress. This could be watching a movie, going for a walk, or spending time cooking together. Avoid intense discussions or big decisions during your symptomatic days, when emotions are heightened.

Create check-ins:

Schedule regular times to check in with each other about how you're both feeling. This can help prevent tension from building up and allow you to address any concerns before they become bigger issues.



Recognise and manage triggers

PMDD can amplify your emotional reactions to certain situations, making conflict more likely.

Recognising triggers and learning to manage them can prevent unnecessary arguments and emotional distress.

Identify common triggers:



Is there a pattern to what sets off intense emotions or conflicts during your PMDD phase? It could be certain topics, behaviours, or environments. By identifying these triggers, you and your partner can avoid or navigate them more thoughtfully.

Developing calming strategies:

If you feel a trigger coming on, have a plan for how to manage your emotions. This might mean stepping away to take a few deep breaths, going for a short walk, or engaging in mindfulness exercises to calm down before responding.



Agree on conflict resolution strategies:

Discuss how you and your partner will handle disagreements during your PMDD phase. You might decide to postpone discussions or revisit them when you're feeling better. Having a plan in place can reduce conflict and promote healthier communication.



Help your partner understand how to support you

Your partner may want to help but might not know how to provide the right kind of support during your PMDD phases.

Helping them understand what's most beneficial to you can strengthen your relationship and make you feel more supported.

Be clear about what you need:



Do you need comfort, space, or practical support during your symptomatic days? Let your partner know.

Whether it's giving you a hug, helping with household tasks, or simply listening without offering solutions, being specific will help them respond in a way that feels supportive to you.

Encourage patience and empathy:

Remind your partner that your PMDD symptoms are temporary and that you're not in control of how they affect you.

Ask them to be patient and empathetic during this time, and reassure them that things will improve once your cycle shifts.



Discuss boundaries around support:



Your partner might feel pressure to fix things or take on extra responsibilities during your symptomatic days.

Be clear about where their support is most helpful and set boundaries to ensure they aren't overwhelmed by your PMDD needs.

Take care of the relationship outside of the luteal phase

While PMDD symptoms come and go, it's important to nurture your relationship during times when you're feeling well.

This helps strengthen your bond and build resilience, so when challenging PMDD phases arise, your relationship is better equipped to handle them.

Express gratitude:



During the non-PMDD phases of your cycle, express gratitude for your partner's support and understanding.

Let them know how much you appreciate their patience and efforts during difficult times.

Invest in your relationship:



Spend time strengthening your connection when you feel your best. Whether it's going on a date, trying something new together, or just having meaningful conversations, these positive experiences can help you feel more connected during challenging times.

Consider professional support

Sometimes managing PMDD within a relationship can be difficult, and external support may be helpful.

Couples therapy:

If PMDD is causing frequent conflicts or stress in your relationship, couples therapy can help you and your partner improve communication, understand each other's perspectives, and develop better coping strategies.



Individual therapy:

Talking to a therapy about your PMDD can help you develop emotional regulation skills, manage mood swings, and better navigate relationship challenges.



Coping with PMDD in a relationship can be challenging, but with clear communication, mutual support, and self-awareness, you and your partner can navigate these challenges together.

By setting boundaries, managing triggers, and practicing self-care, you can maintain a healthy, loving relationship while living with PMDD.

Remember, every relationship requires effort and understanding, and with the right strategies, you and your partner can thrive despite the challenges of PMDD.

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