



Supporting Loved Ones with PMDD

Clinical Review Statement

This resource has been developed by The PMDD Project and reviewed by our Clinical Advisory Board for clinical accuracy and alignment with current evidence and guidelines.

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Reviewed by:

The PMDD Project Clinical Advisory Board

PMDD can profoundly impact relationships, often leading to misunderstandings and emotional turmoil.

Recognising the signs is crucial, not just for those experiencing PMDD but for their partners as well. It's important to understand the differences between the external behaviours seen in relationships and the internal struggles that define PMDD.

By understanding both perspectives, we can promote empathy, support, and healthier connections.

What it looks like vs What it is

Acting jealous	→ Struggling with deep insecurity, self-doubt and feeling unworthy
Saying odd things & behaving out of character	→ Coping with anxiety, brain fog and masking true emotions behind a brave face
Picking fights & talking about breaking up	→ A desperate cry for help; miscommunication; feeling lost and exhausted whilst trying to identify the root of the problem
Pulling away or needing too much time alone	→ Trying to recharge, cope with emotional exhaustion and manage overwhelming symptoms privately
Not wanting to be touched, have sex or be intimate	→ Physical discomfort; heightened sensitivity; stimulation overload; low self-esteem; extreme fatigue; emotional exhaustion
Being overly critical or nit-picking	→ Struggling with irritability; heightened anxiety and feeling like everything is too much
Seeming uninterested in your day and not listening	→ Brain fog; mental fatigue; battling emotional numbness
Forgetting important dates or seeming uninterested in milestones	→ Struggling with memory; brain fog; and not being able to prioritise things due to exhaustion
Refusing to talk about problems or shutting down during conflict	→ Feeling mentally drained; scared of being misunderstood; or not having the emotional energy to engage

How you can support

Educate yourself

Understanding PMDD is the first step in offering support.

Learn about the symptoms, causes, and effects of PMDD, particularly how it affects emotional, physical, and mental health.

Realise that PMDD is a severe, cyclic mood disorder, not just PMS.

Be a compassionate listener

Sometimes, your loved one may just need someone to vent to.

Offer a safe, non-judgemental space for them to express their feelings without trying to fix the problem immediately.

Just being present can make a huge difference.

Validate their feelings

Let them know that their emotions are valid and that it's okay to feel overwhelmed.

Saying things like "I understand this is difficult for you" can go a long way.

**"I understand
this is difficult
for you"**

Help them track symptoms

Offer to help them keep a journal of their symptoms.

Tracking patterns may help in understanding when the luteal phase (and PMDD symptoms) are likely to hit hardest.

There are also apps that can assist in tracking menstrual cycles and PMDD symptoms.



Encourage self-care practices

Support your loved one in establishing self-care routines like regular exercise, mindfulness practices, and eating nutritious foods.

Small acts like offering to join them for a calming walk or preparing a healthy meal together can be deeply appreciated.

Support their treatment choices

Whether they're exploring medication like SSRIs, hormonal treatments, or therapy, encourage them to seek the treatment that feels right to them.

Offer to go with them to appointments if they need support or simply respect their autonomy in managing their health.

Be mindful of timing

If there are important discussions or decisions to be made, consider when they are in the cycle.

PMDD often impacts clarity and emotional regulation during the luteal phase, so it may be helpful to hold off on intense conversations until they are in a more balanced phase.

During the luteal phase, even everyday tasks can become overwhelming.

Offer to help with things like household chores, errands, or meal prep when they're feeling low.

Just lightening their load can make a huge difference and help them avoid burnout.

Check in, but don't hover

Instead of frequently asking how they feel, observe and offer support based on their behaviour.

Regularly checking in shows you care, but giving them the freedom to have "down time" allows them to recharge. Simple gestures like hugs and verbal affirmations can provide great comfort.

Encourage professional help when needed

If they're struggling, encourage them to speak with a healthcare provider, therapist, or psychiatrist experienced in PMDD.

Professional support can be key in managing symptoms.

Look after yourself too.

Supporting someone with PMDD can be emotionally challenging. Make sure to set boundaries for your own mental health, and practice self care.

You'll be able to offer better support if you are also looking after yourself.

Remember: PMDD is not an excuse to treat people badly. If you are on the receiving end of hurtful behaviour, do not blame yourself or accept this as the norm, you deserve to be treated well too.

Further reading

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder harms relationships for both sufferers and their partners – new study - Durham University

Need urgent support?

We know that managing PMDD can be incredibly difficult, and at times, the emotional weight can feel overwhelming. If you are experiencing severe distress, suicidal thoughts, or feel you are in crisis, please know that you are not alone and that support is available. You deserve to be heard and kept safe.

If you are in immediate danger:

Please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department immediately.

Samaritans: Call 116 123 for free, 24/7 confidential support, or visit www.samaritans.org.

Shout: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 for free, confidential, 24/7 text support.

Please note: This resource is intended for information and peer support; it is not a substitute for professional mental health care or crisis intervention. Please reach out to your GP, local mental health services, or the resources above if you need urgent help.

