

## **Period Poverty: Breaking the Silence Around Menstruation**

Period poverty is a global issue that affects millions of women, girls, and menstruating individuals who lack access to affordable menstrual products, proper sanitation facilities, and menstrual education. It is not merely about the absence of pads or tampons—it is about dignity, equality, and the fundamental right to health and hygiene. Despite being a natural biological process, menstruation is still surrounded by shame, taboos, and neglect, leading to far-reaching social and psychological consequences.

Across the world, period poverty restricts the daily lives of countless people. Many girls are forced to miss school during their periods because they cannot afford sanitary products or because their schools lack proper toilets and disposal facilities. This results in lower attendance rates, academic setbacks, and, in some cases, early school dropouts. In rural and underprivileged communities, menstruators often resort to unhygienic alternatives like rags, newspapers, leaves, or even sand, putting them at risk of infections and reproductive health issues. In India, studies show that nearly 23 million girls drop out of school every year due to inadequate menstrual hygiene management. Such statistics reveal that period poverty is not just a women's issue but a matter of public health, education, and gender equality.

The problem is further worsened by the stigma surrounding menstruation. In many cultures, periods are viewed as unclean or shameful. Menstruating women are often excluded from daily activities, religious practices, and social interactions. This cultural silence prevents open conversations about menstrual health, leaving young girls unprepared for their first period and unaware of proper hygiene practices. The lack of awareness also perpetuates myths and misinformation, reinforcing discrimination and embarrassment around menstruation.

Addressing period poverty requires a multifaceted approach. Governments must ensure menstrual products are affordable, accessible, and tax-free. For instance, countries like Scotland have taken historic steps by making menstrual products free for all, setting an example for the rest of the world. Schools and workplaces should provide free sanitary products and adequate sanitation facilities. Equally important is education—both for boys and girls—about menstruation to normalize discussions and eliminate shame.

Non-governmental organizations and social activists have also played a vital role by conducting awareness campaigns, distributing sanitary kits, and advocating for menstrual equity.

Ultimately, eradicating period poverty is not just about providing pads—it is about empowering menstruators to live with dignity and equality. By ensuring access to menstrual products, improving infrastructure, and breaking taboos through education, societies can create an environment where menstruation is recognized for what it truly is: a natural, healthy part of life. When we break the silence around periods, we take a step closer to breaking the cycle of inequality itself.

## **The Art of Doing Nothing: Why Rest Is Productive**

In a world that glorifies busyness, the idea of doing nothing often feels uncomfortable—even wrong. We live in an age where productivity is measured by how much we can achieve in the shortest time possible. Yet, amid endless to-do lists and constant digital stimulation, the art of doing nothing has become not only rare but revolutionary. True rest is not laziness; it is a form of self-preservation and an essential ingredient for creativity, mental clarity, and long-term success.

Doing nothing allows the mind to slow down and reset. When we are constantly occupied, our brains operate in survival mode, jumping from one task to another without pause. However, moments of stillness—whether it's sitting quietly, taking a slow walk, or daydreaming—give the brain time to process experiences and make connections that aren't possible under stress. Many great ideas have emerged during such idle moments; scientists call this the “default mode network,” where creativity thrives when the mind wanders freely. In this sense, rest is not the opposite of work—it is part of it.

Moreover, rest is vital for emotional and physical well-being. Chronic exhaustion leads to burnout, anxiety, and declining motivation. In contrast, intentional rest replenishes energy, sharpens focus, and enhances decision-making. When we give ourselves permission to pause, we return to our tasks with renewed purpose and efficiency. Just as a phone needs to recharge to function properly, so do humans. Without rest, even the most disciplined efforts eventually lose momentum.

Culturally, we often equate rest with laziness, but this mindset is deeply flawed. Doing nothing does not mean being unproductive—it means creating space for reflection and balance. Taking a break from constant activity helps us appreciate life's simple pleasures, connect with our inner selves, and gain perspective on what truly matters. In many ways, rest helps us do more by doing less.

The art of doing nothing is, therefore, an act of courage in a world that demands constant action. It is a reminder that slowing down is not falling behind—it is moving forward with intention. By embracing rest as a form of productivity, we nurture both our minds and our creativity, learning that sometimes, the most meaningful growth happens in moments of stillness.

### **Journaling as a Tool for Self-Reflection**

In a fast-paced world filled with distractions, journaling stands out as a simple yet powerful tool for self-reflection. It allows individuals to pause, process their thoughts, and gain a deeper understanding of themselves. Far from being just a record of daily events, journaling serves as a mirror to the mind—capturing emotions, fears, dreams, and growth over time. Through writing, people learn to make sense of their experiences, identify patterns in their behavior, and connect more authentically with their inner selves.

At its core, journaling offers clarity. When emotions are tangled or overwhelming, putting them into words can be incredibly freeing. Writing about challenges or uncertainties helps organize chaotic thoughts, making it easier to see the root of one's feelings. This process of translating emotions into language transforms confusion into understanding. It encourages honesty, as the page offers a private, judgment-free space where one can express even the

most vulnerable thoughts. By revisiting old entries, individuals can trace their emotional journey, noticing how their perspectives and reactions evolve over time.

Journaling also cultivates mindfulness—the ability to stay present and aware. When one takes the time to write about their day or their feelings, it fosters a habit of introspection. Instead of reacting impulsively to situations, journaling helps people pause and think before acting. This reflective practice builds emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. Moreover, gratitude journals, where one records positive moments each day, can shift focus from stress to appreciation, nurturing a more optimistic outlook on life.

Beyond emotional well-being, journaling can serve as a creative and cognitive exercise. It strengthens writing skills, encourages goal setting, and enhances problem-solving. For students or professionals, it can even improve critical thinking by prompting analysis of one's decisions and values. The act of self-reflection through journaling promotes personal growth—it helps clarify what one wants, what one fears, and what one is willing to change.

Ultimately, journaling is not about perfect words or neat handwriting; it is about authenticity and awareness. In a world that rarely allows time for stillness, journaling becomes a refuge—a quiet space where one can listen to their inner voice. By making reflection a regular practice, individuals not only gain self-understanding but also the confidence to live more intentionally. Through journaling, we learn that true growth begins with self-awareness, and self-awareness begins with reflection.

### **Learning Strength Through Stories: My Experience Interviewing Women at the Factory**

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview the women who work at my parents' clothing factory, and what began as a simple project turned into one of the most eye-opening experiences of my life. I had often seen these women busy at their sewing machines, chatting softly during breaks, but I had never truly understood their stories until I sat down to listen. What I discovered was a collective strength born out of hardship and love.

Most of the women I spoke to were widows, each carrying the weight of personal loss yet driven by a powerful purpose—to give their children a better future. Many of them had never worked outside their homes before, but life had left them with little choice. They joined the factory not just to survive but to ensure their children could stay in school and chase the dreams that circumstances had once denied them. Their determination to turn pain into progress deeply moved me.

What struck me most was their optimism. Despite the long hours and modest pay, they spoke with pride about how their earnings paid for schoolbooks, uniforms, and exam fees. One woman told me, "I couldn't finish school, but my daughter will." Another said she wanted her son to become a teacher so that "he can help others learn." These were not just workers—they were mothers, dreamers, and quiet warriors shaping the next generation through resilience and sacrifice.

Through these interviews, I learned that empowerment does not always come from grand gestures—it often comes from ordinary people fighting extraordinary battles. Listening to their stories changed how I view work, education, and privilege. Their courage reminded me that behind every piece of clothing lies a story of perseverance and hope.