

Rosh Chodesh Group *Eat Pray Dare*

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SUMMARY:	The marking of the new moon has a long and meaningful history as an opportunity for Jewish women to gather, reflect and celebrate together. At this "Eat Pray Dare" we'll celebrate the beginning of the Hebrew month of Sivan with ritual, art, reflection and sharing. This session is open to any female-identified Fellows.
TOPIC(S):	Prayer - Alternative, Gender
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will have the opportunity to celebrate communal gatherings that are led and oriented around those who identify as female. Participants will also mark the beginning of the Hebrew month and set an intention for the month ahead.
AUDIENCE:	Female-identified participants. Program below is oriented towards teens or staff but can be adapted for younger campers (see notes at the end)
TIMING:	60 minutes
APPENDICES:	Copies of the Blessing for the New Moon
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Assorted art supplies, large pieces of paper (big enough that they can be rolled up)
SET-UP DETAILS:	It would be great for this program to take place outside. You'll also need there to be a hard surface for people to be able to draw and write.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Intro/framing:

- Start with explanations of how the Hebrew calendar is constructed (in relationship to the moon) and how the Rosh Chodesh holiday came to be. There are great resources for that information at the following websites:
 - <https://wrj.org/rosh-chodesh-0>
 - <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/category/rosh-chodesh/>
 - <https://www.atthewellproject.com/about>

- Clarify that even though some explanations of the significance of Rosh Chodesh emphasize the significance of the connection between the moon's cycle and menstruation, that should not be a limiting entry point into this ritual. Important points to cover here:
 - Not all women menstruate. The bodies of female-identified people can (and do) look different, feel different, and function differently from each other.
 - This ritual is open to anyone who identifies as female and who wants to be in a space exclusively with other female-identified people.
 - These customs and practices become messy as soon as we consider questions of gender more deeply and recognize that the ways that we all practice and experience gender are wildly wide-ranging and individual (at the same time that they're influenced by societal norms). This structure is not meant to presume that there is anything essentialist about anyone's gender experience. This structure builds off a larger premise that there is value to gathering in identity groups of many types to reflect on the shared aspects of that identity and to celebrate and create ritual in ways that are exclusively contained by relationships within that identity group.
 - Encourage people not to have to set aside any discomfort they might be having with this premise. If you want, this can be a good time to give people a few minutes to discuss those potential discomforts in pairs or trios, sharing their concerns and also what drew them to this particular practice/structure and what they hope to get out of it.

Blessing those who came before:

- Ask everyone to think of someone in their lives who has especially influenced their female identity (however they define it).
- Ask everyone to go out into the nature surrounding the space where you're meeting and bring back an item that reminds them of that person.
- When everyone comes back, go around and have each person honor the individual they're thinking of and place the item they brought back in the middle of the circle. Depending on how much time you have, this can be an opportunity for everyone to talk about that individual and what that person meant to them, or (if time is more limited) they can simply share the person's name and relationship to them (i.e. Alana and Aaren and Adina, my sisters).

Blessing the month ahead:

- Read the Blessing for the New Month together. If there's time, study it in hevruta (study partners) - look at the language of the blessing and discuss questions, possible interpretations, any aspects or phrases that especially inspire you or make you wonder or that you struggle with.
- You can also write your own blessings - what do you want to wish for in the month ahead?

Month-specific learning and ritual:

- Each Hebrew month has particular themes, sometimes linked to whatever holidays are coming in that month. For any Rosh Chodesh group practices, someone should prepare specific readings or text study or discussion or ritual linked to that month's themes. There are wonderful materials available at the sites listed in the first section of this outline, and you can also contact Moving Traditions for their "Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing" materials: <https://www.movingtraditions.org/programs/rosh-hodesh/our-approach/>

Opportunities for general reflection and support:

- In addition to exploring the specific themes of each coming month, Rosh Chodesh groups can be wonderful opportunities for regular reflection. Here are some potential questions for participants to share about:
 - What were your successes and challenges in the previous month?
 - What are you proud of? How do you want to bring those achievements into the month ahead?
 - What are you struggling with? What do you want to leave behind as you go into a new month? What do you want to approach differently in the coming month?
 - What do you need from this group over the coming month?
 - What is an intention you'd like to set for the coming month? Do you want to give yourself a motto or slogan or guiding phrase?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

This kind of conversation and program will look very different depending on the age of the participants and the relationships between them (i.e. are these people who know each other well and spend ongoing time together?). Be sure to craft your specific set of rituals with all of those factors in mind. For younger campers, spend more time on the art projects related to that month's themes. For groups of people who don't know each other as well, it can be best to stick with more individually-focused activities (like journaling or art projects).