

COMPANION BOOK TO THE  GUIDING STAR CYCLE SHOW

# WHAT'S GOING ON IN MY BODY?

All About the Female Cycle, Periods, and Fertility

**Elisabeth Raith-Paula, MD**



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**By Elisabeth Raith-Paula, MD**

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American Cover Layout Design: Sarah Ward (The Art Ward) • ArtWardStudio@gmail.com

Translation: Geraldine Groll and Hilary Hodgson

Editing: Sarah Hughes

American English Editing: Elessa Marker

Illustrations: "Ente" Andreas Endres (rights for illustrations: Elisabeth Raith-Paula)

To contact the publisher: [contact@theguidingstarproject.com](mailto:contact@theguidingstarproject.com)

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To contact the author: Elisabeth Raith-Paula • [www.mfm-projekt.eu](http://www.mfm-projekt.eu) • [info@mfm-projekt.de](mailto:info@mfm-projekt.de)

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# A Handbook for Becoming a Woman

*The aim of this book is to accompany you during the exciting years in which you develop from a girl into a woman.*

*In chapters one to seven, you will begin by finding out about the changes in your body. What is it like to have your first period and what is your body telling you when this occurs? You will come to understand that the changes you notice are important signs of what is happening inside of you, enabling you to get to know your body and yourself better.*

*It's quite possible that your body seems a little alien to you at the moment. You may have already noticed some changes and are not quite sure what to make of it or whether you want it to change at all. This book will help you to decipher your body's secret signs, empowering you with knowledge so that you can feel proud to become a woman.*

*There may be times when you're not feeling so great and are perhaps worried that something is going wrong with your body or your menstrual cycle. Chapters eight and nine of this book will help you during these times by explaining the amazing things that are taking place inside of your body.*

*At a later stage of your life, you will undoubtedly have questions about fertility and contraception and want to gather lots of information from friends, the internet, brochures and health professionals. This would also be the perfect opportunity to take this book out again and read the final section. Chapters ten and eleven explain a woman's fertile time and when she can become pregnant in more detail, as well as the effect that various methods of hormonal contraception have on a woman's body. Knowing how it is possible to live in harmony with your body will enable you to make decisions that are best for you.*

*After all, you'll know exactly what's going on in your body!*

# Take a Deeper Dive into the Book



*Are you looking for more resources in order to dive deeper into the wonders of the developing female body? Look no further!*

*The Guiding Star Cycle Show team have created a variety of interactive and fun activity pages to further engage you, your daughter, and/or the students you work with as they discover the wonders of their female bodies. And better yet, ALL of these resources are FREE to you with the purchase of this book. Scan the QR code below to access these downloadable resources to work through with the young girls in your life or allow them to dive deeper on their own time.*

*New resources will be continued to be developed and added for downloadable access so be sure to subscribe to our email list so you know when the next resource is available to you.*



# 1 Secret Signs

## The “Three Corners Game” – Tricky Questions

Try to imagine you’re standing in an empty room. In the room there is a “yes,” a “no,” and an “I don’t know” corner. Someone asks you a question, and instead of giving a response, you have to go to a corner of the room. Ok, let’s get started!

The first question is: “Are you hungry?”

“What a silly question”, you think to yourself. “I’ve just had a big breakfast, so no, I’m not hungry”, and you go and stand in the “no” corner. How would you know if you’re hungry? That’s easy! Your tummy would rumble and the empty feeling in your stomach would have you heading straight for the fridge.

Next question: “Are you thirsty?”

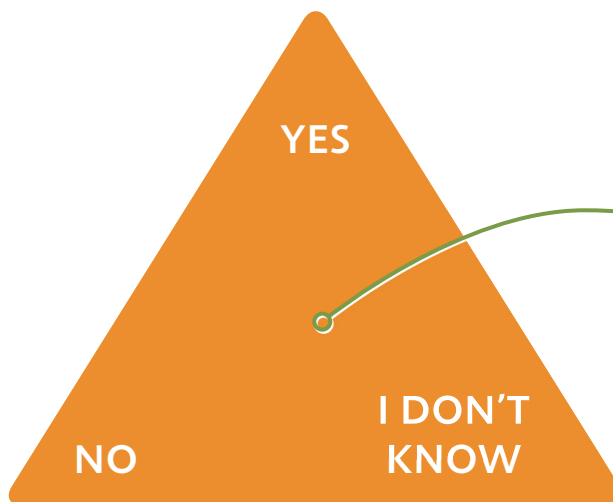
“Yes I am”, you think, and head over to the “yes” corner. Where did you learn to recognize a feeling of thirst? Did you learn it as a baby or at school? The truth is, it’s not really something one needs to learn, your mouth simply feels dry and your tongue seems to stick to the roof of your mouth. Thirst is pretty obvious, even babies realize it.

Onto the next question: “Do you have a favorite pop star?” You think to yourself, “Yes I do!” so you go to the “Yes” corner. What would happen if the door opened this very minute and your favorite pop star came in and walked straight up to you? How would you feel about that? The very thought of it could give you goose bumps, butterflies in your stomach, sweaty hands, make your knees shake, and your heart thump.

Unfortunately, it’s not possible to fulfill that dream right now, but do you notice how your body reacts just at the very thought of it? The body’s messages are very clear: hunger, thirst, excitement and nervousness.

Wait, you’re not quite finished yet! Back to the reality of everyday life and the next question: “Do you need to go to the bathroom?”

You do need to go, so you head straight to the “yes” corner. But hang on a minute, how do you know that? Yet another silly



question! It's obvious isn't it? It's that feeling of pressure from your bladder, which suddenly we're all able to locate exactly within our body without any medical knowledge. Why? For the simple reason that it is the bladder that sends out a signal that makes it clear to everyone: "Now I need to go to the bathroom."

## Are You Fertile Today?

The final question: "Are you fertile today, at this very moment?"

Your response might be something like "Huh? What's that supposed to mean?! How should I know? What does "fertile" mean anyway? Whether I could get pregnant? Have children? That's a strange question, is it even possible to know the answer?"

You go to the "I don't know" corner for the first time. Up until now all the other questions were so easy to answer, however the body does send clear signals to say "today I'm fertile" or "today I'm not fertile" just like it does with hunger and thirst.

A woman's body goes through a number of changes, over and over again each month. The changes we see on the outside give us important information about the changes that are happening inside, acting like signals or messages to tell you a great deal about yourself. If you know how





to understand the signals correctly, then it allows you to recognize what is going on in your body at that moment, and can even help you understand your feelings, moods and emotions.

The strange thing is that these signals often go unnoticed. Even when we detect that something is happening, we seldom know what it means. This is why we often completely misunderstand our body's signals, when actually all it's telling us is that everything is just fine.

It's time we start to correctly understand the body's secret codes – an exciting task!

## What Do You Think of When You Hear the Word “Fertility?”

Some may picture a pregnant woman, birth and babies. For others the word “fertility” will bring to mind Thanksgiving Day, or perhaps the ancient goddess of fertility who ensures the continuity of life on earth, generation after generation. These examples are only the outcome of fertility; however, being fertile means being able to produce new life. For example, if we say that the land is fertile, we mean it is able to produce abundant crops. If an animal is described as fertile, it means it is able to produce new offspring.

Generally speaking, humans have fewer children now than they used to. Today a woman gives birth, on average, less than twice in a lifetime and so uses very little of all the years that she is actually fertile.

### What Does This All Mean for You?

Have you experienced your first period yet? If so, did anyone tell you that it is now possible for you to have children? At the moment that's probably not important to you. Perhaps you



*Usually you think of a pregnant woman when you hear the word “fertility.”*

think that it would be more practical if you could simply download this “fertility” for use at some later point in life. One click of the mouse, and “you’re fertile!” Then after the baby arrives, you could click it off again.

That’s simply not possible. The changes within the female body at puberty enable us to become fertile and therefore able to give birth. This amazing ability is part of being a woman, part of who you are just like breathing, walking, thinking, and loving, and it will be part of you for around 35 to 40 years, whether you have a child or not. Some women may see fertility as a burden, yet for others who desperately wish for a child, it can be a huge, unattainable goal. Many of the changes that take place at puberty in a girl’s body, mind and heart are intimately connected with this gift of fertility.



*Fertility is a part of a woman’s life; like breathing, walking, thinking, and loving.*



## Information on the MFM Project

A Pioneering Fertility Awareness Project to Accompany Girls, Boys and Their Parents Through Puberty.



How girls experience and value their own bodies has a huge influence on their self image and self esteem. It is one of the most decisive developmental tasks to accept oneself and experience the physical changes of puberty in a positive way. The better young girls are prepared for this challenge, the better they can later deal with their fertility and sexuality.

### **“I Can Only Protect What I Value and Respect.”**

This was the guiding principle for Elisabeth Raith-Paula, MD when she set up the MFM Project in Germany in 1999. When taught about their fertility many of her adult female patients had asked “Why haven’t we been told this before?” which gave Elisabeth Raith-Paula, MD the insight to write a book to teach young girls about the signs of fertility. Parent evenings were later set up to help them understand their daughter’s pending puberty, and during these sessions it was suggested that there should be a one day training program to teach the girls. From this request emerged this large, popular European project; which also includes the boys’ workshop.

Since 1999, the demand for the MFM Project has grown rapidly, reaching more than half a billion girls, boys, and parents. In 2002, the MFM Project was awarded the prestigious Bavarian health promotion and disease prevention award; in 2003, it was awarded a “best practice project” of the European Union; and in 2004, it received a scholarship in counseling (Start-Social McKinsey). In November 2012, Dr. Raith-Paula became an Ashoka Fellow. ([www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org))

Currently, in Germany, more than 330 active trainers are running workshops, mainly in schools. In 2017, over 70,000 girls, boys, and their parents were reached by more than 5000 project events in Germany.

Meanwhile, the MFM project has spread to many countries (France, Austria, Switzerland, England, Hungary, Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Mauritius, Ivory Coast, China, Australia, Mexico and the United States.)





# Information on the Guiding Star Cycle Show Workshop



## A Workshop for Girls aged 9-12 Years

The Cycle Show is an educational, interactive, multi-media, fertility awareness workshop for young girls. It is a desirable addition to the standard sex education given in schools; its aim is to equip young girls with the knowledge of what is going on inside their bodies in relation to puberty. This knowledge then supports and prepares them in a positive way for the wonderful changes they will experience within their bodies over the coming years.

Today it is more important than ever for young girls to have high self esteem regarding their bodies, not just when they are in the middle of puberty, but before the onset. The beginning of sexual maturation is the ideal time for girls to learn about and appreciate all the amazing changes that are taking place within their bodies. Participation in the Cycle Show gives girls a healthy respect for their bodies and helps to protect them as they move into their teenage years.

## Language and Images Used

All language and images used within the workshop must come from the trademarked script supplied by the International MFM Project. The script is followed by all trainers to ensure that biological terms are always used simultaneously with positive images or comparisons and is respectful of the age and innocence of the girls attending the Cycle Show.

## What Happens During a Cycle Show Workshop?

The Cycle Show illustrates to girls what is happening inside a woman's body in a loving and respectful way, using colorful materials, scarves, music, and fun games.

In the first part of the work-shop the girls are introduced to the "Equation of Life" (Sperm + Egg = New Life). The girls themselves take on the roles



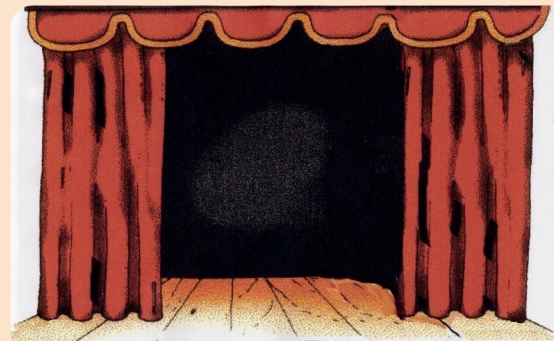
of hormones and experience how the Messengers of Spring (FSH), the Estrogen Friends, the Ovulation Helpers (LH), and Progesterone Team work in the body of a woman to create human life.

After gaining a basic knowledge of the actions of the hormones and seeing them as her friends, the second and main part of the workshop is focused on each girl understanding how these hormones act within her own body. She learns that with each cycle, a new Luxury Suite (lining of the uterus) is prepared for a potential guest (baby), and if the guest doesn't arrive (and shouldn't for her until she is older), she will not worry about the loss of the Luxury Suite, knowing that each month her body prepares a new one because her healthy body can afford it.

Finally, the girls recognize fertility codes within their bodies, such as the Magic Potion (cervical mucus). Menstrual hygiene options are discussed, and girls are taught what to expect and how to manage their first bleed.

### Why Choose a Guiding Star Cycle Show?

Like a theatre audience staring at the red curtains that frame an empty dark stage, waiting for something to happen, many women in our society do the same for their menstrual period. They are completely unaware of what actually takes place in their bodies leading up to menstruation. We explain these events in an impressive behind the scenes show.



## Further Information



For further information regarding the Guiding Star Cycle Show, how to register, or to learn how become a trained instructor, please scan the code below or email the Guiding Star Cycle Show National Coordinator directly at [cycleshow@theguidingstarproject.com](mailto:cycleshow@theguidingstarproject.com). Cycle Show is also an international program and known in many countries. To learn more about the project visit: [www.mfm-projekt.eu](http://www.mfm-projekt.eu)

## The Boys Project – Agents on a Mission

### A Fertility Workshop for Boys recommended for ages 10-11 years

The similar project for boys has been running since 2003. In the workshop “Agents on a Mission,” the boys discover what’s going on in their bodies during puberty. They explore how new life comes into existence as well as what’s happening in the girls bodies, all in a fun, respectful, and age appropriate manner.



To learn more about the history of how the Cycle Show came to be and the development of The Boys Project–Agents on a Mission watch this video on YouTube: “Royal College Video”