Holistic Healing Resource Guide for PMDD and PME

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Materials in this document have been gathered and co-created by Michelle ‘Meesh’ Brandt alongside members of her virtual holistic peer support group for those living with premenstrual disorders.

Every person’s premenstrual symptoms are bioindividual, often with a lot of variation from cycle to cycle, and each person’s personal support plan for healing will be unique. This is part of what makes these conditions so difficult to diagnose and treat.

If you are reading this, **your journey will be unique, but you are not alone**. I encourage you to use this guide as inspiration to create your own menstrual cycle care plan, *slowly* folding in the practices and resources that speak to your spirit and land in your body as medicine.



Your body and your sensitivities are leading you toward alignment in your holistic health, and **they are your true guide**. This is a collection of relevant experiences. You are the magic where the answers live for you.

May this document be a tool that leads you to the threshold of your own wisdom and radical care.

Updated Feb 9, 2026

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About Holistic Healing

A holistic approach recognizes the interconnected nature of our experience. At times, it may be necessary to address individual symptoms or happenings, but holistic healing recognizes that imbalance in one area in the body, mind, or spirit is affecting *all* of these areas of wellbeing. Holistic healing is an attempt to address the root causes of PMDD / PME, which could be related to trauma, chronic stress, histamine intolerance, imbalances in gut health, nutritional deficiencies, inflammation, and/or lifestyle habits that you have outgrown.

Holistic interventions often take longer for the body to integrate fully.

If you are incorporating a new regiment of food, supplementation, exercise, or nervous system regulation practices, **the best way to evaluate is to dedicate yourself to the new routine for at least 3 full menstrual cycles before gauging how effective it is for you.** (Unless you experience adverse reactions; trust your body if it gives you a clear internal "no!" and stop immediately. Honoring our boundaries is the quickest path to building trust with ourselves.)

Dedication

This resource guide is lovingly dedicated to all who are navigating PMDD and PME, with deep thanks to the many courageous peers who contributed to this bank of knowledge and findings by sharing the wisdom of their own lived experience.

Thank you to my teachers and my holistic care team who uplifted me in the moments when I could not find my path alone. Thank you to the parts of myself who never gave up caring deeply for my own wellbeing; I carry you always.

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Complementary / Alternative Medicines and Practices to support PMDD:

- Sleep Hygiene: For most, 7 - 8 hours per day minimum. Women and AFAB tend to need more.

- Meditation and Breath Work

GENTLE MOVEMENT & BODY WORK
- Dancing: Studies show that dancing led to the largest reductions in depression of all treatments. Suggest that dance is superior to other physical activity interventions to improve motivation, aspects of memory, and social cognition and to reduce distress. See here and here.
- Yoga: A more vigorous practice in follicular/ovulation phases, transition to more yin and/or restorative yoga in luteal
- Acupuncture / Acupressure
- Craniosacral Therapy
- Lomi lomi massage
- Pelvic floor therapy & exercises (kegels: release is just as important as engagement!)
- Chiropractor
- Somatic Healing

- Restorative / Rest Practices (Sound Healing, Screen Breaks, Time in Nature, Yoga Nidra)

- Cycle Tracking: Record your symptoms 3+ months to notice patterns (Apps or written logs)

- Cycle Syncing (planning exercise, food, work, social and creative activities, etc… making adjustments based on menstrual cycle phase, when possible.)

INJESTIBLES
- Nutrition (inclusive of hydration and caffeine!)
- Seed Cycling
- Vitamin Supplements (Check magnesium, potassium, folate and B vitamin levels with your doctor. A high quality multivitamin is a great place to start!)
- Herbs (Traditional Chinese Medicine, or TCM, usually in tandem with acupuncture)
- Cannabis (THC, CBD)
- Antihistamines (Claritin/Zyrtec, Pepcid AC, DAO Enzymes) - Start with half doses - H1 and H2 blockers can be taken together (if tolerated)

- Self-Compassion: Highly underrated and readily available! Witness yourself with softness, care, and love. Affirm yourself like you would affirm a child in your life.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONAL SUPPORT
- Therapy (Talk, CBT, DBT, Somatic, EMDR, IFS Part's Work)
- Transparent communication with loved ones / asking for accommodation
- Peer Support

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RESOURCES for PMDD: (Practices and tools to work directly with your nervous system when dysregulation occurs or is imminent. A resource is anything that helps you feel nurtured, safe or protected. Resources raise our window of tolerance so that we can continue to work with stress activation skillfully and mindfully.)

- Breath (Deep breathing, physiological sigh, Cleansing breath: in through the nose, out through the mouth)
- Drinking water (and tea). Nettle tea is particularly good for inflammation.
- Body Scan: Observe sensation in feet, hands, breath. Practice witnessing your experience without judging it and encourage the body to soften and relax.
- Going on a walk / changing your environment
- Crying! (Rest and relaxation response is promoted when the vagus nerve is compressed in a deep belly cry)
- Imagination - Visualizing a safe place, person, or animal
- RITUAL / SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (What connects you to something larger?)
- Repeating mantras or affirmations
- SOUND HEALING (Sound bath, binaural beats, 528 hertz frequency for racing thoughts)
- MEAL PREPPING during ovulation phase (starts day 14-20)
- Safe Touch (self-touch like tapping, palming eyes, giving yourself a hug)
- Push palms against each other or against a wall, feel the solidity and boundary of your body
- Humming / singing (Lowers stress hormones and activates rest response)
- Orient toward your surroundings (5-4-3-2-1 coping technique)
- Withdrawal Senses: Black out curtains and/or sleep mask, noise cancelling headphones
- Journaling / Morning Pages (from The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity - early morning 3 page stream of consciousness journal writing)
- Nutrition (prioritize fresh food over processed foods, increase fruits and veggies)
- Aromatherapy: Use with a carrier oil when applying to skin. Can help with pain, reduce stress, create a safe space for rest (& distract the senses!)
- Using temperature to help regulate intense emotions - splash cold water on face, have a cold shower, walk outside if it's cold etc. (helps calm the nervous system)
- Check-list of supportive activities / intentions / best practices. Make a plan before dysregulation occurs! Make your own, or use one like these:
    - https://caps.ucsd.edu/_files/handouts/handout_grapes.pdf
    - https://embodiedmovement.s3.amazonaws.com/EM_TheMovementFeelingsWheel.pdf
- DBT Skills:
    - OBSERVE: Experience your thoughts, feelings, sensations without judgement.
    - DESCRIBE: Label the experience/emotions objectively. Identify the trigger.
    - PARTICIPATE: Be aware of your existence in the moment. Be present in the activity you're doing unrelated to your inner dialogue.

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Suggested Reading, Booklist for PMDD

1. Wild Power, by Sjanie Hugo Wurlitzer and Alexandra Pope
2. Hope, A Guide to PMDD for Partners & Caregivers, by A.C. Kinghorn
3. Mastering Monthly Madness, By Nadine Evans
4. Relationship OCD, by Sheva Rajaee
5. DBT workbook
6. The Red Zone: A Love Story by Chloe Caldwell
7. Period Power, by Maisie Hill
8. Her Blood is Gold, by Lara Owen
9. Sustain Me: A Handbook of Natural Remedies, The 9 Foundational Pillars for Health, by Barbara O'Neill
10. Self Heal By Design: The Role Of Micro-Organisms For Health by Barbara O'Neill
11. The Cycle - Confronting the Pain of Periods and PMDD, by Shalene Gupta
12. The Optimized Woman, by Miranda Gray (on cycle syncing/productivity)
13. Prayer for Warewolves, Poem by Stephanie Burt
14. Women Who Run with Wolves, by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D.
15. The Road By The River: The illuminating classic for women in search of self and spirit, By Djohariah Toor
16. When the Body Says No, Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection, by Gabor Mate, MD

Suggested Articles

1. PMDD, Gut Health, and the Power of Personalized Nutrition by Behnaz Beigui, CFNC
2. Seed Cycling for Hormonal Imbalance, Stamford Health

Suggested Podcasts

1. https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/my-therapists-a-witch/id1630572423
2. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0bvg9nm/episodes/player

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Creating Your Care Team

Premenstrual disorders are multi-layered, and I encourage everyone living with PMDD or PME to bolster a holistic approach with the support of a collaborative care team.

- Identify the people and professionals who can witness and support you before, during, and after premenstrual symptom flare ups.
- As much as possible, build a care team that centers your autonomy and respects your voice. Not all of your doctors and care providers will honor the intelligence that you have in your body in this way, but cultivate and lean into those who do.
- Your care team could include your doctors, gynecologist, therapists, naturopaths, nutrition and wellness practitioners, as well as trusted friends, family members and PMDD peers who can hold up a mirror to you to support your own clear seeing.

NUTRITION AND SUPPLEMENTS DISCLAIMER

Author's Note: I'm a yoga instructor and a holistic healing facilitator, not a physician or nutritionist, so *I can not recommend any diet plan or supplements*. **The most widely recommended and common best practice for nutrition for PMDD/PME is to swap highly processed packaged foods for more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole foods. Drinking enough water** is also key to nourishing your body. **Food is medicine, care, and protection.** No resource guide would be complete without speaking to it, though every body will need different nutrition protocols, and *recommendations are outside of my scope of practice*.

Planning and making meals is an enormous amount of labor; do your best to eat well and nourish yourself without increasing your stress. **If you are making changes to your diet and lifestyle, make them slowly.** Late ovulation (around day 17) might be a nice time to meal prep or stock up on some nutrient rich options for the luteal phase ahead. Of course, the body is most supported when nutrition is intentional throughout the entire cycle, not just the most vulnerable times.

The sections below contain gathered samples of nutrition and supplement paths that were supportive for members of my peer support groups. I have seen many people share with relief and rejoicing that their symptoms improved tremendously with one or some of the following under the guidance of qualified care practitioners: limiting/eliminating caffeine and/or alcohol, lowering intake of high-histamine foods, and incorporating the use of supplements like fish oil, vitamin D3, magnesium, saffron, and B vitamins.

Foods to Nourish Menstrual Cycle Seasons (that are also low in histamine!)

**Please note that the goal is NOT to eat these foods only, but rather to limit processed foods & ADD IN MORE of these fresh foods to support the current phase of your menstrual cycle.

MENSTRUATION, Winter: Warm Foods **Grains**: Black or Brown Rice, Buckwheat **Seeds/Nuts**: Flax+Pumpkin Seed*, Sunflower, Pecan, Almond **Veg**: Sweet Potato, Mushroom, Bell Pepper, Pumpkin, Arugula, Carrot, Kale, Beets **Fruits**: (Non Citrus) Watermelon, Figs, Apple, Blueberry, Blackberry, Red Grapes, Guava Unfermented Tofu, Black Bean, Chickpea, Falafel Fresh beef that hasn't been aged Dark Chocolate Limit Spicy Foods, Sugar & Alcohol	FOLLICULAR, Spring: Fresh Garden **Grains**: Quinoa, Buckwheat, Brown Rice **Seeds/Nuts**: Flax+Pumpkin Seed*, Pistachio **Veg**: Arugula, Kale, Cauliflower, Carrot, Broccoli, Lettuce, Garlic, Celery, Edamame, Onion, Zucchini, Cucumber **Fruits**: (Non Citrus) Watermelon, Figs, Grapes, Apple, Guava, Blackberry, Raspberry, Pomegranate Unfermented Tofu, Salmon (Fresh or Flash Frozen) Fresh beef (hasn't been aged) Eggs, Chickpea, Chicken, Trout, Mozzarella, Soft Cheeses
OVULATION, Summer: Raw Foods **Grains**: Quinoa **Seeds/Nuts**: Sesame+Sunflower*, Pistachio, Pecan **Veg**: Carrot, Cilantro, Kale, Cauliflower, Edamame, Cucumber **Fruits**: (Non Citrus) Watermelon, Grapes, Guava, Blueberry, Blackberry, Raspberry, Cantaloupe, Fresh Figs, Apricot (not dried) Salmon (Fresh or Flash Frozen) Eggs, Chickpea, Falafel, Tuna, Mozzarella, Soft Cheeses Dark Chocolate	LUTEAL, Fall: Nourish the Root **Grains**: Black Rice, Millet, Buckwheat, Oats **Seeds/Nuts**: Sesame+Sunflower*, Pine, Chia, Pecan, Almond **Veg**: Sweet Potato, Pumpkin, Cilantro, Cauliflower, Cucumber, Onion, Garlic, Ginger, Cabbage, Bell Pepper, Kale, Mushroom, Cauliflower, Celery, Potatoes, Beets, dark greens **Fruits**: (Non Citrus) Apple, Peach, Pear, Guava, Blueberry, Fresh Figs, Apricot (not dried) Fresh beef (hasn't been aged) White Fish, Chickpea Navy Beans Dark Chocolate, MACA adaptogen Limit Caffeine, Sugar & Alcohol

*Seed Cycling
**Low Histamine Diet Source from The Chronic Fatigue (ME/CFS) Clinic at Johns Hopkins
**Food Cycle Sources include Lively App and London Clinic of Nutrition
**RED indicates that the food is high in histamine, however, this author (MEESH) intends to limit eating those foods only when optimal for cycle support.

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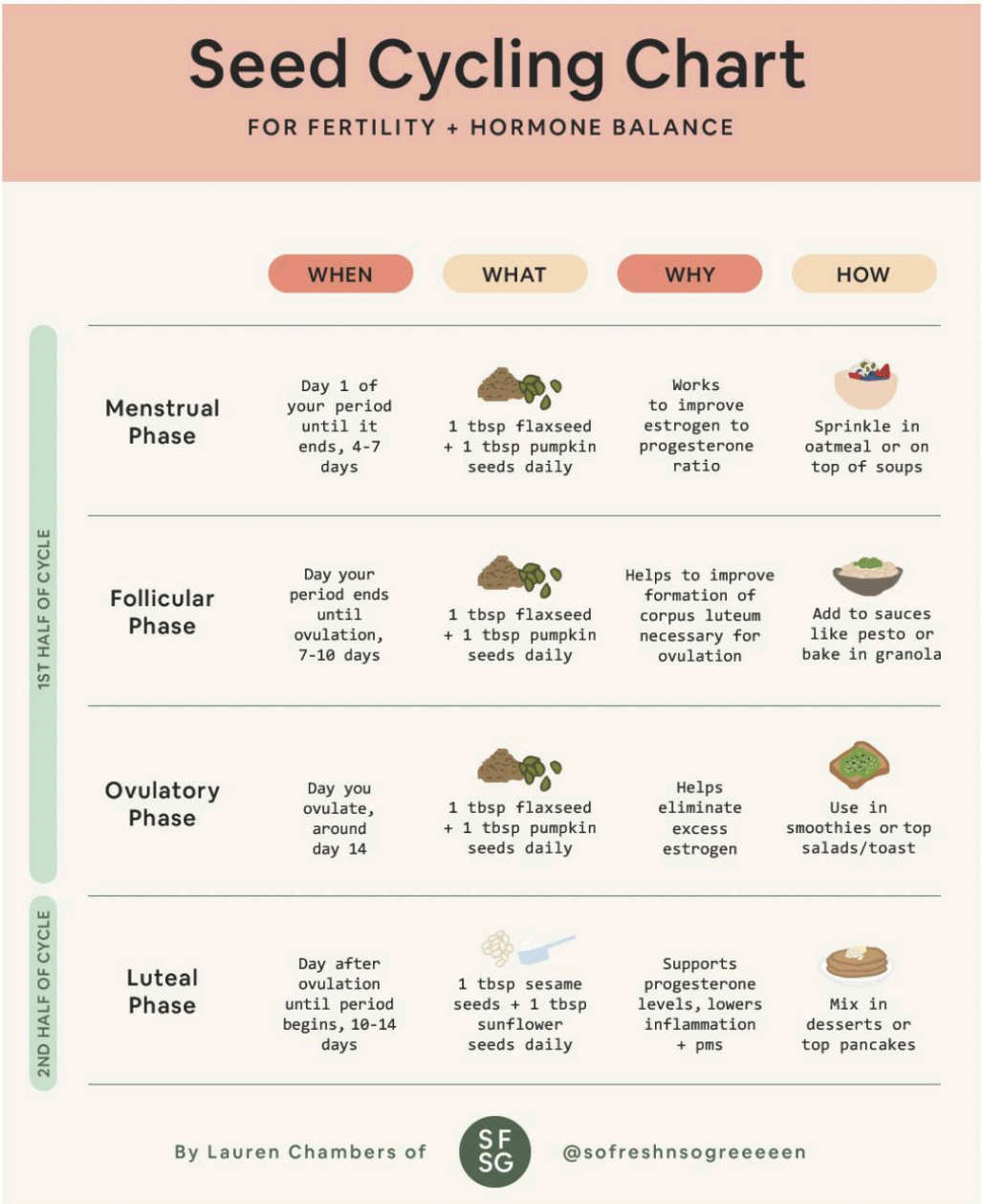
Seed Cycling

Particularly beneficial for those with irregular cycles due to perimenopause or PCOS, seed cycling is the practice of eating certain raw seeds which have specific nutrients that support hormonal balance. Research on this dietary strategy has demonstrated increased cycle regularity, lessened premenstrual pain, and increased fertility, notably with no adverse side effects reported. (source)

See this article and the chart below for more info on how to seed cycle.



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Additional Participant Vitamin Suggestions

Check in with your doctor before starting new supplements, as many can react with medications. If you are requesting bloodwork for supplementation, checking your levels of magnesium, potassium, folate and B vitamin levels can be a good starting point to determine deficiencies and identify supplements that can support you.

Not all vitamins are made the same! Since they aren't heavily regulated for quality, it can be meaningful to select a vitamin brand with integrity. Pure, Bluebonnet and Jarrow Formulas come recommended by the knowledgeable vitamin guy in my local healthfood store, which can be a great resource if you have a Sprouts or a health food store with a vitamin aisle nearby.

- **Fish Oil**: Nordic Naturals makes very high quality fish oil. I like their DHA Xtra for muscle contractions / spasms in the body and for emotional support.
- **B12 + Folate**: Low B vitamins are associated with depression. Look for the word "methylated" as this is a form of the vitamin that the body can use more quickly.
- **D3**: Vitamin D helps elevate mood, and helps the body better absorb B vitamins. Low vitamin D levels can contribute to muscle weakness, pain, and cramps.It's estimated that 30-50% of people globally are deficient in vitamin D! Testing for deficiency can be expensive, but can often be covered by insurance if coded that your doctor is testing for chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia.
- **Calcium**: Certain medications and foods should not be taken at the same time as calcium - check compatibility with your meds! Studies suggest that it can significantly reduce the severity of mood swings, depression, bloating, and food cravings. Please note that many, like this one, are made with animal products.
- **Magnesium Glycinate**: Brain and rest support. Recommended to take after 8pm for the body to make the best use of it. If it gives you an upset stomach, try taking with food or look for "buffered" magnesium, which can reduce GI issues. To enhance mineral absorption, it's best to take calcium and magnesium separately. Wait 2 - 4 hours between to avoid potential interactions
- **FLO PMS** Vitamins (Contains B6, +**Herbs: Chasteberry & Lemon Balm**) https://opositiv.com/products/flo-pms-vitamin-capsules
- **Damiana**: Adaptogen, which is said to build up stress tolerance and balance stress hormones in your body https://a.co/d/gzHde6B
- **Saffron:** backed by research carried out on people diagnosed with PMDD in THIS LINK, saffron is the key ingredient in this cycle supplement, which has been shown to soothe symptoms such as cravings, mood swings, etc.
- **5HPT:** tryptophan supplement said to help with depression, anxiety, & sleep by increasing the body's production of serotonin and melatonin.
- **Wild Yam Cream**: https://littlebarnhealth.co.uk/products/wild-yam-comfort-cream
- **Creatine**+ supplement by Ancient & Brave
- **Zinc**: Found in oysters, pumpkin seeds, cashews and other food sources
- **L-Glutamine**
- **Cinnamon-Chromium**
- **Selenium**: eat only 1-3 brazil nuts per day to satisfy supplementation
- **Amino Acids**

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Rest, Recovering & Sleep 'Best Practices' for PMDD

Adequate rest and **quality sleep** are paramount in the luteal and menstruation phases, though we can really set ourselves up for success by creating habits to restore ourselves in all phases.

Sleep: Nature's Nurse. Quality sleep is a first line defense. Best practices include:

- Going to bed / waking up at a consistent time
- Aim for at least 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Aim for no caffeine after 2pm, no food or drink 2 hours before bedtime. (Matthew Walker)
- Limit screen time before bedtime (struggling with this? Try putting your wifi on a timer.)
- Establish a wake up and/or wind down routine
- Black out curtains, or a sleep mask to block out light. Invite light into the room upon waking.
- Create an optimal sleep environment that is cool, dark, quiet, and feels safe.

Naps: **When stress is physical**, extra sleep and naps can be beneficial.

Regulation, Rest, and Recovery: Identify **if distress is mental or emotional** before deciding how to restore. The environment is key to promote holistic restoration in the acute recovery process.

A physical rest/break is not always effective for mental or emotional arousal. How can you downregulate your energy and arousal to address the stress response?

Ask yourself: What will help me restore mentally and emotionally? How do I restore my energetic resources?

Try these practices rooted in **self-compassion** & connection to the container of the body.

- Arm brushing: opposite hand and arm, stroke from shoulder down to the top of the hand. Repeat on both sides 6 - 10 times, focusing on your breath and the felt sense onf the touch. Pause once finished and see how you feel. (from the Resilience Toolkit)
- Somatic Hug: Right hand under arm pit, left hand on top of right arm or shoulder. Stay for 5 - 10 breaths.
- Slow down exhalations to slow the heart beat. Take a few deep breaths and see if you can extend your exhale without straining. You might count the in and out breaths, working toward a 2:1 ratio. (Eg, 8 count exhale, 4 count inhale)

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Ritual / spiritual / creative practices as a resource for PMDD / PME

Spiritual Nourishment: What nourishes your spirit? What connects you to something larger? Can habits be rituals?

RITUALS are intentional habits & routines and/or singular soulful practices. (as defined by esteemed meditation teacher, Sebene Selassie) She inquires, “Notice what rituals you engage in daily, weekly, monthly. How do you approach these? **Is there a way to bring more soulfulness to them?**”

- Daily Walking
- Movement practice: Dance class, yoga, qi gong, etc
- Sharing gratitude before a meal
- Repeating mantras or affirmations
- Singing (in choir, in your shower/car, or chanting in yoga)
- Gathering in community / practicing (anything) together
- Incense / candles as a container for (any) practice
- Following the moon cycle, or any natural cycle occurring in nature
- Carry stones / crystals as physical representations of intention and/or protection
- Shower / bathe as a cleansing ritual
- Political protesting as spiritual nourishment: Community with a shared cause
- Journaling
- Meditation
- Tarot
- Wake up / wind down habits: Morning beverage as sacred ritual
- Write what needs to be released mentally , emotionally, behaviorally every cycle onto a small piece of paper. Rip up or set on fire. (safely) This can be especially potent on a full moon.

In his book, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, the late great West African spiritual teacher, Malidoma Patrice Somé, outlines a simple **4-step process that anyone can use to design a ritual.**

1. Preparation of Ritual Space (Arranging the Symbols and Elements)
2. Invocation (Expressing the Intention)
3. Healing (Performing the Recitation, Dance, Song, Meditation, etc)
4. Close (Giving Thanks and Sharing the Merit).

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